Wings of that Butterfly Called Chaos

by Jess_S

Summary

If a butterfly's first flap caused the first disaster, it inadvertently caused the next one, too. Or maybe that was another butterfly. Felicity has many reasons to stay away from that particular island, unfortunately there's one major reason she can't.

Notes

Dedication: Entirely inspired by JSevick's Of Monsters and Mai Tais; an Arrow-centric Jurassic World crossover that's absolutely fabulous!

Author's Note: This will mostly be Arrow centric, spun off from early/mid-Season 2. The starting point being that Felicity was close friends with Lex & Tim Murphy as a child, and thus was invited to join them in visiting their grandfather's new park not long after her father abandoned her & her mother. She lived through the events of Jurassic Park with Lex & Tim, swearing she never wanted to see a dinosaur again afterwards... but if a visit to the new park may be the key to getting Isabel Rochev out of their lives, Felicity has a much harder time saying no...
• Inspired by *Of Monsters and Mai Tais* by JSevick
Wings of that Butterfly Called Chaos by Jess S.

"[Chaos] simply deals with unpredictability in complex systems.

The shorthand is the Butterfly Effect. A butterfly can flap its wings in Peking and in Central Park you get rain instead of sunshine."

~ Dr. Ian Malcolm

Prologue.

Felicity Smoak's P.O.V.

"Felicity, there's another device. There's two of them!" Oliver's voice finally came through the comm again; moments before the world started shaking and exploding.

"What the Hell's happening?!" Lance screamed into the phone.

Felicity shrieked, glad that her side of the comm was still muted as instinct had her ducking away from the servers just in time to avoid the shower of sparks an explosion sent through the shuddering basement.

Lance's angry, terrified voice came through the phone again. "I turned the damn thing off!" he shouted.

And Felicity focused on him because his understandable outrage was easier to handle than everything else that was happening around her... and the childhood traumas she couldn't help but be reminded of. "Mer-Merlyn had a second device," she gasped out, trying and failing to bite back her terror.

"My daughter! Laurel! She's at C.N.R.I!" was his not unexpected response before the call dropped; hopefully because he'd hung up on her or his cell company's tower had gone down without half as many backups as the private system she'd setup for Oliver.

Felicity squeezed her eyes shut as her hand went back to un-mute her comm without a second thought. "Ol-Oliver?"

"Are you okay?" he asked immediately.

"Yeah," Felicity lied automatically. Then bit her tongue to keep another gasp or shriek from escaping as the ceiling started crumbling overhead.

There was no point in her trying to run from this; she was far too close to what was probably going to be called ground zero. And unlike a dinosaur, an earthquake didn't have any real chance of being outrun. But C.N.R.I was only on the edge of the Glades, and the edge close to downtown, where
Oliver was. He could still save gorgeous Laurel.

Felicity couldn't stop a gasp as something else exploded right next to her desk. But her computers—amazingly enough—were still working, so she dutifully reported, "The damage seems to mostly be contained on the east side. Past Wells Street."

"Laurel..." Oliver immediately realized. "Are you going to be okay?"

"Go, go, go," Digg responded.

And Felicity was glad that the question seemed to be directed at him, because she didn't think she could lie anymore.

Not when the world was trembling like it had that stormy night...

"You feel that?" Timmy had asked.

Twelve-year-old Felicity had turned from fiddling with the ineffective radio, pretty sure that nothing was wrong with it on their end, which only meant that she couldn't do anything to fix it. "Feel what?"

BOOM...

He didn't need to answer.

That next tremble through the earth shook the car too much to miss, and the one after that was even stronger.

BOOM...

Soon the thuds woke the boring lawyer they'd been left alone with—something all three children hadn't particularly liked even before the coward left them alone when the T-Rex attacked.

BOOM...

In retrospect, knowing what was coming—like she did in all of her nightmares and day-mares alike—never made it any less terrifying.

BOOM...

"Is it... thunder?" Felicity remembered saying, not really thinking it was, but with the heavy rainfall and the power outage it fit in her young mind.

BOOM...

Except for the strange ripples in the water. In their cups of water and on the rain pooling on the windshield. She'd never really been outside during a thunderstorm, you weren't supposed to be, but did thunder make water tremble? Make the earth itself shudder?

BOOM...

And why was it getting louder? So loud the Jeep seemed to be shaking?

"Maybe it's the power trying to come back on?" the lawyer had suggested, not sounding sure either.

Timmy putting his borrowed night-vision goggles back on to look around had made some sense, so
Felicity had only watched him as he started looking around outside.

"What is that?" Lex had repeated, even as she and Felicity had both turned to see what'd caught her younger brother's attention. "Where's the goat?" the older blonde had asked before anyone else could.

**SPLAT!**

As if in answer, a bloody leg had landed on their vehicle's see-through roof, but that was only gasp worthy next to the monster they'd all spotted on the other side of the fence just as it was finishing swallowing the goat mostly whole.

"Oh, Jesus!" the lawyer had yelped, before leaping from the vehicle and running off, leaving the door open behind him.

"He left us?" Lex had said it incredulously, because no one had ever abandoned her before. "He left us!"

Felicity, meanwhile, was caught between the terror of realizing the ten-thousand volt electric fence between them and the gigantic predator wasn't working—and since she'd just seen it's claw dragging down the 'danger' warning sign it knew it, too—and the painful memory of her father walking out the door one night, never to come back. What she'd come here to if not forget, at least get a little bit over, and what was happening now...

**CREAK-CREAK-CREAK!**

The clamor of the now useless fence breaking only emphasized the power of the massive monster it was no longer protecting them from.

"Doctor Grant?" Lex had called, voice barely loud enough to be heard inside their vehicle, let alone in the one behind them.

Though that was a good thing, considering they didn't WANT to draw the deadly danger right to them!

Not that it'd make any difference.

**RO-O-O-OAR!**

Felicity had followed the blonde's gaze to the other vehicle, but the sounds of thick metal cable snapping—the fence breaking—meant running to the other car would be suicide. So she grabbed her friend's hand, squeezing tight, scared that she might be scared enough to not think and just run out there into that monster's teeth.

**RO-O-O-OAR!**

"Tommy!" Oliver's voice brought Felicity back to the almost as terrifying present. "You're gonna be fine!" he demanded, grunting as he started working on whatever his best friend was trapped under.

If said best friend had also run to save gorgeous Laurel, hopefully it wasn't too much of the building.

And at least the earth had stopped shaking... maybe. Felicity would probably have to stop shaking herself first, before she could be entirely sure of that.

"Another thing..." Tommy's voice was barely audible, and full of pain. "We gotta... disagree on."
There were more grunts and what sounded like heavy objects being moved by brute strength alone, which the archer had plenty of to spare, but then it stopped.

Felicity focused on every sound coming through the comm, because it was still better than paying attention to what was still happening around her; and hundreds of times better than all the memories it'd all called back up.

"...Tommy," Oliver finally said, sounding so broken that Felicity's eyes flew open automatically.

"Is Laurel safe?" Tommy asked, softly desperate. "Is Laurel safe? I tried to get her out of here."

"Yeah," Oliver answered. "Yeah, you did. You saved her," he confirmed, and she could hear the smile he was forcing as he pushed on. "Now I'm going to get you out of here. You're gonna be fine."

"Oliver, stop..." Tommy wheezed. "I'm sorry."

"No," Oliver insisted. "Don't apologize."

"I was angry. And I was jealous. I..." Tommy sighed. "I am my father."

"No." Oliver cut in firmly. "No, you're not."

"Did... Did you kill him?"

"No."

"...Thank you."

"No. No, no! Tommy!" Oliver's voice broke as he rushed on. "It should have been me! Open your eyes, Tommy!" He gasped out a sob, then pleaded even more brokenly. "Open your eyes!"

Felicity obeyed, biting back a sob of her own.

The montage her mind had made of some of her worst memories wasn't an uncommon visitor to her brain at night. Seeing Oliver again, alive and stronger than he wanted to believe he was, had mostly put them to rest. But sometimes a variation of that nightmare came back anyway.

It didn't matter that rescue responders had gotten to C.N.R.I just in time to save Tommy Merlyn's life. Didn't matter that Felicity making sure the National Guard choppers knew someone was trapped in there, alive but severely injured, had ultimately saved his life.

All Felicity could really remember about that night—as in not stop thinking about it sometimes—was the earth shaking and her hero's sobs. And that on one hand it was a strange relief to realize that that particular man-made monstrosity would only kill her by maybe dropping a building on her. While, on the other hand, she might have preferred to hear the T-Rex roar again to hearing her hero reaching his understandable breaking point.
After several long, deep breaths, Felicity forced herself to close her eyes without looking towards the window or the bedside clock. It was still dark in her bedroom, so it was still the middle of the night. Knowing how long it was till she had to get up after yet another interrupted night's sleep never seemed to help her at all. Anymore than focusing on the unfairness of her frequently short rest periods being interrupted anyway did.

At least she didn't seem to have these particular nightmares—mashing together all her greatest traumas one way or another—more than once a night. So maybe her brain will continue to be kind and just let her sleep, rather than think about shaking rooms or the fact that dinosaurs were no longer extinct.

An accident waiting to happen, as Doctor Malcolm had said. Predictable in its unpredictability. Uncontrollability.

And now that theme park existed. Open to the world. Or at least all those who were brave—and brainless—enough to go see it.

Felicity forced herself to stop thinking about that. Focused on her breathing, trying to calm herself down enough to fall back to sleep...

Maybe she'll even be lucky enough to have one of those dreams that started out with her in the basement watching Oliver up on the salmon ladder. She liked those dreams even better than watching him in real life.

And, for future reference, she might not accept quote-unquote 'aspirin' from Digg ever again. Even if her shoulder was starting to hurt again just lying there in bed.

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*End Prologue.*

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Chapter End Notes

Author's End Note: OK, that's sort of set the stage. If it wasn't entirely clear (obviously it'll get more clear going on, but) I'm going to just clarify my timeline a little for those of you that care:

1. Everything in ARROW is canon up until the end of S2E14: Time of Death, but changed from there because that timeline didn't make sense in my head anyway going into the next episode. I mean, Oliver rushes home to an emergency text from Thea
tricking him to spending time with his mom only to find Slade there (in the morning after Felicity was shot) and yet by the time Felicity gets back with their breakfast from Big Belly Burger (new outfit and no longer dopey), it's nighttime? Yeah, didn't work in my head even ignoring the fact that Felicity's completely recovered from a G.S.W. I mean, even if she was just scraped by the bullet she WAS SHOT and Digg gave her medical cocaine. (And I swear I've heard/seen it called that at some point but can't find a specific reference so I could be wrong.) Regardless, should she really have been the one to drive anywhere for food even if she needed to change?

2. I've made Felicity 3 years older in this fic, and set the events of the 1st Jurassic Park 5 years later (otherwise she would've been 6, and that didn't work for me). She's still younger than Oliver, but only a year younger.

3. Also, I'm saying Jurassic World opened in 2010, rather than 2005, meaning it's been open for 4 years as of ARROW S2. Otherwise it would've been open before The Gambit and Oliver probably would've gone there.

3. Doctor Ian Malcolm and Malcolm Merlyn are two entirely different people - just specifying that for anyone who hasn't seen the first two Jurassic Parks and is reading this with only Arrow and/or the new Jurassic as frame of reference. And if you do exist you SHOULD at least go see the first movie.

4. Tommy's alive. Just because I want him to be. It's in the tags, too, and obviously changed the dynamics of Season 2 going forward. Sort of explained, but sort of not.

*shrugs* I don't think it'll REALLY bother anybody...

OK, I think that's it.

Oh! Except for my promising to not get too distracted from Felicitas. Or at least anymore than I was by the muses for this to start with. Honestly, I really was wondering over here occasionally anyway and just thought it more fair to start sharing some. If you disagree, well, *shrugs* don't keep reading?

Really. Don't.

Everyone else, though, please enjoy this other crazy ride my muses have taken me off on...

What'd you think so far? Questions? Ideas? Comments? *hint hint*

~ Jess S
Agony Before Coffee?

Chapter Summary

Felicity does not have a good morning.

Chapter Notes

Author's Note: Thanks to those who've kudo'd so far! I already had this chapter, too, so here it is! Enjoy?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Agony Before Coffee?

Felicity Smoak's P.O.V.

Ding-Ding-Ding!

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

Felicity wasn't sure how long whoever was at her front door had been there. Unfortunately, it didn't sound like they'd be going away anytime soon. The knocks and bells that'd waken her up weren't getting any louder or faster, so whoever was out there was super patient, but they also weren't going away either.

Ding-Ding-Ding!

As the somewhat familiar sound of her doorbell jangled through again, Felicity finally forced herself to actually open her eyes and look at her nearby clock. Then promptly slammed her eyelids shut again with a groan.

8:09 AM read the big numbers of the clock she'd specifically bought so she'd be able to make them out without her glasses. Who visited before nine on a Saturday?
She knew it wasn't Oliver or Digg. They'd been up just as late as her last night. So had Sara.

And even if those three hadn't had nightmares or gunshot wound pains waking them up in the middle of the night, they'd surely take the opportunity to sleep in. Even if they were inhuman enough to be up already, they wouldn't bother her yet. Sure, Oliver might pick her lock to check on her. Sara might too. And Felicity was sure Digg had his phone beside him just in case she needed anything. But the three of them probably would want her to rest more than anything. Felicity didn't really know Roy well enough to be sure of what he'd do if he heard she'd been shot.

*KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.*

But she doubted he'd be breaking down her door just after eight the next morning... or if he was, just from the number of knocks she'd tried to ignore already, the annoyance probably would've led to one of those knocks literally knocking her door down.

Felicity sighed, then finally forced herself to roll out of bed, gasping as the motion made the healing hole in her shoulder screech. She stayed seated there on the edge of the bed, trying not to whimper as what seemed like her whole upper body *ached* with the aftershocks of that movement.

*Ding-Ding-Ding!*

The annoying jangle of her doorbell echoed in her head, too.

Obviously Digg's quote-unquote-aspirin had worn off some time after it'd awaken some of her worst memories from their little box in the back of her subconscious mind.

What was it Sara said weeks ago? *Pain and I came to a little understanding a few years back?*

Right now, Felicity would *really* like to know how one 'understood' pain.

*KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.*
She'd also like to understand how anyone could ever be this persistent. You'd think at some point they'd get the idea that maybe she wasn't going to answer her door.

Or she might not even be home!

The thought of someone knocking on her door and ringing her doorbell for hours on end till she did finally came home from wherever else she might be overnight—since she'd met Oliver that'd really only be the office or, more often, the club's basement—was almost amusing. But her head still wasn't appreciating that added aggravation to her already fragile fortitude.

How was it that her shoulder seemed to hurt more now, after it was stitched up and she'd rested, than it had when she was first shot?

Ding-Ding-Ding!

"Just a minute!" Felicity forced herself to yell, wincing as her head decided it didn't like that either. And swallowing because her stomach seemed to be threatening its agreement.

Still, she made herself stand carefully, trying not to move her torso as she did so. Her right shoulder especially. Once the walls stopped moving—or her legs stopped swaying, take your pick—she started to carefully looked around. Her glasses were by the clock, like always, and putting them on made the world a little clearer, even though the floor and walls still sort of seemed like they weren't standing still. Her fuzzy, warm bunny slippers were where they were supposed to be, so she slipped into them then stared at her bathrobe for a long moment.

A glance at the nearest mirror confirmed that her hair looked like she'd just rolled out of bed, but it also reminded her that she was still wearing Oliver's shirt. Which made her cheeks warm now that she wasn't distracted by the 'aspirin.'

It'd made perfect sense last night, after Sara had cut her yellow blouse off. It'd already had a hole in it and too much of a blood stain to ever be salvageable after all. And taking her new—and also shot-through—leather jacket off had hurt like hell, so listening to her scar-covered friends about how to not aggravate her injury had just seemed like a good idea.

Now that Felicity was stuck answering her door in what was obviously a man's dress shirt over her green 'I need coffee' pajama bottoms, it seemed less convenient. Especially since she had the distinct feeling that trying to raise her arm enough to get it into her bathrobe sleeve would definitely hurt.
"Miss Smoak?" an unfamiliar male voice called, muffled by being on the other side of her front door. Which was about as far away from her bedroom, where she was, as he could be. But hey, at least he hadn't knocked or rung the doorbell again. Whoever the hell he was.

"Just a minute!" Felicity made herself call back, wincing with each word. The last one sounded more like 'min' than 'minute' because she had to gasp it out, but apparently it was enough just then for her early morning annoyance.

Then, wincing all the while, she took the bathrobe off its hook and tried to put it on. It took at least the whole minute. Even her uninjured side didn't like it. When she tried the injured one, it mutinied entirely, so she finally just tucked her arm and shoulder underneath it instead, deciding she'd have to hold it shut like that for the hopefully short amount of time it took to make whoever the hell had waken her up go away.

Felicity walked carefully out of her bedroom and down the hall to the front room, a little relieved by the fact that she wasn't walking towards more knocks or doorbell-sounds because she still kind of thought the floor might be moving. And the wall might be, too. When she at last made it there, she didn't bother with the peep-hole and instead just concentrated on using her good hand to undo the lock, turn the knob, and pull the door open.

Then she immediately slammed it shut again.

SLAM!

There was a noticeable pause while Felicity scowled at her own door, then the knocking started again, sounding significantly louder since she was right next to it now.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

"Miss Smoak?" the unfamiliar man's voice came again. "Mister Masrani would like you to join him for breakfast."

"Go away! My time's not for sale, so even he can't afford it!" Felicity called back, actually able to ignore the pain and queasiness for the moment as the habitual indignation took over.
It wasn't even that satisfying to say that about the eighth richest man in the world with him standing by his stretch limo down on the street while one of his bodyguards beat up her door. Not when she could think of no good reason for him to be here, but plenty of *not* good ones. Well, really one not good one.

"Oh come now, my dear," the slightly more familiar voice wasn't as familiar as his light, carefree laugh. It'd been a few years since she'd heard that, too, but it still bothered her. "There's no need for such offense. I do apologize for waking you, of course, but I am sure you will want to hear what I have to say."

The confidence in his cheerful voice was irritating, too.

It'd been hard to hate John Hammond. Lex and Tim's grandfather had just been too *grandfatherly* to hate.

But the man that'd taken over all the dinosaur programs after his death, determined to open *Jurassic Park*—renamed "*Jurassic World*"—despite what had happened to the first one, was another story.

Still, Simon Masrani was one of the most successful businessmen in the world. That was why she'd been surprised when he'd willingly paid her twice what he'd probably pay anyone else for the computer work she'd done for while she was still at M.I.T; essentially designing the entire operating system for his theme park with as many added security features as she could think of along the way. But he had paid.

Then he'd wanted her to visit the park. And finally accept that, per John Hammons will, she was a significant shareholder of *In-Gen*. The last one was more because it could be used to convince her to do the first, but it was still something he brought up each time he dropped by like this.

Something he hadn't done in almost two years now. Though the year before that, during '*Jurassic World*’s' first year, she'd heard from him more times than she'd cared to count.

"At the very least, Miss Smoak, you could do me the courtesy of opening the door so that we might speak face to face," Masrani called. "Preferably before any of your neighbors become curious enough to wander over?"

Felicity grimaced, but finally made herself open the door again. "What do you want?" she asked, a little glad to see that despite his words her whole block seemed to still be sleeping. It wasn't nine
o'clock yet and it was Saturday.

"May I come in?" he requested with the cheerfully polite smile he always seemed to wear for her.

Not out of real interest. The man was happily married to a woman who made even gorgeous Laurel look plain; approaching his ten-year anniversary soon. But one trait he seemed to share with Oliver, on top of being a multi-billionaire, was that he liked to be challenged. Loved it, really. So her inflexibility combined with her high I.Q seemed to endlessly amuse him. And thus further infuriate her.

"Do I look like I'm up for company?" Felicity bit the words out, really not caring that her hair could pass for a bird's nest right now and her half wrapped-on robe probably looked only a little less ridiculous than her bunny slippers. She wanted nothing to do with what this particular man wanted to talk to her about, and he had literally woken her up from her restless sleep only some number of hours since she'd been shot. And had a horrific nightmare that was half about the traumatic childhood events that he thought she should be capable of letting go. Like nearly being eaten by monsters bigger than S.U.V's, or hunted by the vicious Velociraptors, was something you just let go.

"You look lovely as always, my dear girl," Simon Masrani actually managed to sound like he meant it, even as he gave her a look up and down. "Though perhaps a bit under the weather? I had thought I remembered you to be a morning person much like myself."

No one was as much of a morning person as he was, especially before coffee, but that wasn't what Felicity responded with.

"It's Saturday," she pointed out dryly.

"So it is," Masrani agreed with a grimace that he forced into a smile a moment later, and spread his hands. "This will not take long, Miss Smoak. I would, of course, be delighted to take you to breakfast if—"

"No. Thank you," Felicity cut in firmly, trying not to grimace as her stomach rolled at the very idea of food.

Then, seeing no way around it, she stepped back, letting the now silent bodyguard take over the door as his boss followed her into her little living room. Another bodyguard also mutely trailing behind like their billionaire boss might need body-guarding from the petite blonde they'd harassed out of bed
this morning.

Felicity ignored both bodyguards more easily than she would have even a year ago.

One plus side to being Oliver's E.A was that guys in suits silently standing guard around the room wasn't that unusual for her anymore. Even if it was unusual in her living room. But neither of these men could compare to Oliver or Digg. Or Sara.

"What do you want now, Mister Masrani?" she asked without further preamble, not offering anything to drink because she didn't think she could handle any kind of smell right now either, and even a glass of water would require getting a glass from one of her cupboards. And reaching up into said cupboards. Something her body did not want to do this morning.

"I was rather surprised when I heard of your career change," the C.E.O of the Masrani Corporation replied evenly.

Felicity didn't let herself bristle, because bristling would probably hurt, too. It was made easier by the complete lack of judgment or criticism on the man's face though.

He looked curious, but only that. "Truly, Oliver Queen is very lucky to have you, but you are tremendously over-qualified for the position of an assistant. Even an Executive Assistant." Masrani cocked his head to the side, "You should be a Department Head, Miss Smoak. Not a secretary. A path I do believe Mister Steele had intended for you, though I can understand holding some squeamishness towards Queen Consolidated's Applied Science Division, all things considered."

"Thank you for the compliment," Felicity made herself reply evenly, not liking that the praise meant as much to her as it did.

This man had been a nearly relentless nuisance every time he'd appeared for more than half of her life. Where old Mister Hammond was willing to honestly apologize and let things lie, his predecessor simply never gave up. She really should've expected a visit from him sooner or later, it'd been more than a month since any of her personal firewalls had alerted to him making an attempt to contact her.

Nonetheless, Felicity knew his appreciation of her intelligence and her abilities wasn't feigned. He wasn't flattering her in an attempt to change her mind, he at least knew her better than that. After all she'd had to put up with at work however, it was something of a relief to know her reputation hadn't yet been completely destroyed.
Especially since she wasn't sure that that wasn't something Isabel Rochev might actively be trying to do in her campaign to destroy Oliver's company. Not that the bitch had to try all that hard inside *Queen Consolidated* itself.

Once Oliver had returned to Starling City and managed to halt *Stellmoor*'s hostile takeover, most of *Q.C* seemed to have forgotten what they'd all been worrying about before that. Forgotten that *Stellmoor International* had gutted every company they'd taken over—firing so many employees each time that more than a few business leaders had referred to the company as 'heartless,' as their heavy-handed, merciless business practices had ensured they made a profit each year but at the expense of everyone else possible. After Oliver managed to stop the takeover with Walter's help, no one seemed to talk about the fact that the *Stellmoor* V.P had no actual interest in being their company's co-C.E.O. Talking about that, of course, might mean their jobs were still in danger, something almost everyone would prefer not to think about.

So water cooler gossip turned to the much more interesting topic of who their former playboy C.E.O was sleeping with. And that he wasn't partying hard like he used to meant he must be sleeping with the girl he'd promoted out of the wrong department to be his secretary. Just because she was a blonde who liked to wear short skirts. That she was the only non-executive employee at *Queen Consolidated* that Oliver had personally met before The Undertaking, when it was mentioned, just meant he'd probably first slept with her back then.

That was something of an overgeneralization, of course. None of the department head's paid the office gossip any mind. All of them went out of their way to help her where they could, and it wasn't only because she was Oliver Queen's E.A. It was because they, at least, hadn't forgotten who Isabel Rochev was and why she was really there.

It might also be because the head of her former department—the actual head, not any of the superfluous supervisors that'd all seemed to believe there was no way she could be smarter than them—had given her time off to go and find Oliver Queen. Because getting extended, paid leave on short-notice wasn't something that frequently happened, so she'd needed to admit to what she was really leaving to do, and then the older tech had been more than happy to give her that week off so she could fly to the other side of the world and bring their boss-to-be back. So her former boss, at least, could see her returning with said boss and him making her his Executive Assistant right away in a different light than most of the company. Then again, he was also the one that'd told her about the 'promotion' and heard her initial reaction. And the reaction Oliver had gotten to see when he finally showed up that morning was much more mild.

But the coworkers that *didn't* gossip and glance suggestively and/or scornfully about her sometimes seemed to be very few and far between...
Simon Masrani only knew Felicity at all because of the beyond traumatic childhood experience she still sometime had nightmares about. But that didn't change the fact that he was at least one very influential person that the Stellmoor V.P wouldn't be able to turn against her.

Felicity refused to believe that that meant she owed him anything though. She didn't.

"Miss Smoak?"

When Felicity blinked out of her thoughts, she was a little surprised to see the billionaire watching her worriedly. It was an emotion she didn't think she'd ever really seen on his face, so having it directed at her was weird. In the way that his easy assumption of ownership of her couch wasn't weird. That was just the way he was.

"Are you alright?"

Before she could even try to force a smile or any other kind of answer, there was another knock on her door.

*Knock-Knock. Knock-Knock.*

That knock wasn't familiar, but the female voice that followed it would've been even if she hadn't immediately identified herself.

"Felicity, it's Sara. Can I come in?"

"Yes, please," Felicity called back automatically, glad for the distraction because she wasn't sure she should tell this not-quite stranger she'd been shot last night when she didn't plan on ever filing a police report about it.

Her front door opened before either of Masrani's bodyguards could either open it or stop it from doing so. The former League of Assassin's member gave each man a quick glance, then her eyes flicked over their employer, before completely ignoring them as her concerned gaze came to the vigilantes' I.T girl. "Everything okay?"
"Not really," Felicity couldn't help her grumbling. Then she frowned. "But why—"

"Thought if someone needed to check in, you'd prefer me to Ollie or Diggle," the much more dangerous blonde interrupted with that friendly smile that somehow always surprised her. "How are you feeling?"

"Like crap," Felicity answered honestly again, not about to deny it when her whole body still seemed to ache around the agony of her poor shoulder.

Sara's smile now was understanding, even as her gaze darted to Felicity's even more unexpected morning visitors. "I'm sorry, I didn't realize you have company."

Code for: *Who the Hell is this and do you want to talk about your gunshot wound in front of them?*

"I don't," Felicity replied dryly. "He'll be leaving. Soon."

Masrani stood up again then, offering his hand to the most dangerous person in the room with his C.E.O smile, which wasn't quite as friendly as the one she'd been getting for years now but had obviously been practiced many, many times. "Yes, I have a business offer to discuss with your friend, Miss..."

"Lance," Sara accepted the handshake. "Sara Lance."

"Simon Masrani," he replied, smile still in place as he released her hand and retook his seat. Though it fell when he looked back at the younger blonde, a shadow of that unexpected concern returning in its place. "I did not realize you have been unwell, Miss Smoak?"

"I'm not sick," Felicity started to shake her head, but stopped when a sharp pain shot through her neck with the first too sharp turn. "Ow! I-I hurt my shoulder yesterday."

"And I see you already figured out sleeves are a problem," Sara nodded to the empty sleeve hanging on her hurt side. "Digg said he left some pain-meds for you. Did you take any yet?"

"No, I-I didn't see any." Felicity blinked, then grimaced. "Sorry, I'm still waking up."
Sara shook her head, "What are you apologizing for? It's not even nine and it's Saturday."

Which begged the question why the mask-less Canary was awake, too. Rather than still in bed. With Oliver or not. But that really wasn't something Felicity could ask even if a non-team member wasn't there.

"He probably left them by your bed," Sara reasoned, pointing down the hall, "That way, right?"

"Yeah," Felicity made the mistake of nodding, and immediately winced again. Nodding was bad. "Thank you."

"No problem," the other blonde returned, flashing that same smile that seemed to say they were friends even though Felicity wasn't sure being members of Team Arrow qualified them for that. Then again, the I.T girl turned reluctant E.A was one of the few women in the world that knew enough about Sara Lance for them to really even be friends, so it wasn't surprising the Canary might already think they were. Hope they were.

Felicity tried to not hate herself as she watched Sara head to the bedroom, but it was hard. Because she'd never wanted to be the girl who was crushing after someone else's man and didn't know how to handle how unbothered the ex-assassin was by it. So unbothered that she wanted to act like they were best friends anyway.

Maybe after everything the younger Lance sister had been through the relationship just didn't mean to her what Felicity would feel like it should? Maybe Sara just remembered Oliver's real playboy days and, by comparison, a 'cute,' doe-eyed, babbling I.T girl just didn't register? Or maybe Sara hadn't forgotten that she had gotten on that doomed boat with her own sister's cheating boyfriend?

Felicity really didn't know. But she liked Sara, so she kind of had to hate herself a little when she caught herself gazing at that amazing man that was never near her league in the first place. Especially since she was the one that told Oliver he deserved better than a vicious backstabbing viper like Isabel Rochev. And Sara Lance was definitely better in every possible way. And, maybe, her friend.

"I do apologize for just dropping by like this," Mister Masrani spoke up, some of his irritating good-humor subdued by the revelation of her injury, but that ever practiced poise was still very much in place as he sat down again. "I did ask my assistant to notify you, of course, but it would seem her messages were never forwarded from Queen Consolidated. Perhaps meeting the same fate as my similarly lost emails, hmm?"
Felicity found herself focusing on how much her shoulder hurt, hoping that that would keep her cheeks from going red even as she bit her tongue to keep it from telling him that the first thing she'd done as Oliver's unwilling E.A—even before he'd arrived almost two hours after her and sort of explained why she couldn't just quit the position—was make sure that the programs she had embedded in Q.C's systems blocking all calls and emails from this man covered her new desk too. Because she already knew why he was here; with some variation of the arguments she'd heard over a dozen times already. So she wasn't going to let herself feel embarrassed when she'd be angry if she had enough energy.

And it really wasn't fair that she was already tired—she'd just gotten up. Being shot sucked.

"But I should let your friend help you put yourself together," the billionaire decided graciously, clapping his hands together. "If you would be so good to agree to join me for breakfast afterwards?"

Felicity gave him the best sour look she could, too tired to really glare, "I thought you just needed 'a moment'"

"Just one meal, Miss Smoak. And most assuredly one you want to have."

"I don't—"

"Judging by whatever prompted your peculiar career change, you wish to save Queen Consolidated, do you not?"

Felicity blinked, then finally made herself look at the businessman in her living room again. "If this is about Q.C you should be meeting with Ol—with Mister Queen," she said carefully, not letting herself wince at her near slip up.

But the Masrani Corporation didn't have any more connections to Q.C than In-Gen did, so it wasn't surprising that the primary owner of both shook his head. "I have no business with Oliver Queen, Miss Smoak. Nor do I need it. And, having never met the man, the only possible reason I might have to help him is you."

Felicity shook her head, anger carrying her through the ache accompanying the motion. "I already told you I don't know how many times—"
"Oliver Queen is as under-qualified for his current position as you are overqualified for yours, Miss Smoak. He did not wash up on that island with enough books on business to spend a half-decade studying in uncomfortable solitude. He made a rather public point of refusing to gain on-the-job experience under Walter Steele's guidance, and the Starling City District Attorney was duly convinced that he spent no time under his mother's tutelage as well." Masrani shook his head, his dark eyes undoubtedly not missing her desire to defend her friend as he scrutinized her.

"Nonetheless, Robert Queen fashioned a masterful company. It survived his murder. It survived the fallout of Merlyn's conspiracy and Missus Queen's involvement. It could survive an inexperienced C.E.O in better times. But it will not survive Isabel Rochev."

That finally forced Felicity to pause.

It rang too true to her own beliefs not to. Every defensive, denying thought she'd come up with as he stated the obvious dying in the face of a truth that she didn't think Oliver wanted to recognize but she couldn't help but see plain as day.

"What do you mean?" she made herself ask, glancing towards her bedroom because she was kind of wondering why Sara was listening from in there instead of coming out. (Felicity's whole apartment wasn't that big, Sara had to have found the not-aspirin by now.) Then again, Masrani was talking about Oliver.

The billionaire businessman shook his head again, holding her gaze this time as he did it. "Isabel Rochev is very good at her job, Miss Smoak. And that job is not to help Queen Consolidated recover from its recent troubles." His smile turned self-deprecating. "I know what it takes to save a failing company. I've done it before. More than once. You know that."

It was terrible to think that there were similarities between the Undertaking and Jurassic Park, but that didn't make it any less true. Both were man-made catastrophes, even if one was now considered a successful business while the other was an infamous tragedy that one arms dealer had already attempted to sell for reuse to the highest bidder. In-Gen wouldn't have survived the catastrophe that was the first Jurassic Park and it's off-shoots, not after the death of its founder, if not for the man that was sitting in her living room right now (again looking like he owned her couch more than she did).

But it didn't seem fair that Queen Consolidated was suffering the same paintbrush. Not when Robert Queen was assassinated for going against The Undertaking. When Moira Queen was coerced into going along with it till the last minute. And Oliver had done everything he could to try to stop it but was the one really paying the price. Sure, Merlyn Global wasn't doing good either, but they weren't suffering a hostile takeover by Stellmoor International... something that still didn't quite make sense to Felicity.
"Isabel Rochev's job, Miss Smoak," Masrani continued after letting her think for a long moment, his voice still steadily calm and mild. "Is to take over Queen Consolidated, and break it down to her own company's benefit. That did not change merely because Mister Queen put up a fight." He spread his hands, "If it had, Rochev would've been recalled, and another executive, one who was suited for the new task, would have replaced her."

"She told Oliv—She told Mister Queen that she had to help him now," Felicity told him, hardly believing her tongue was trying to defend that witch.

"Of course she did," Masrani laughed shortly, the sardonic edge sounding strange in his laugh but not at all out of place. "She recognized his inexperience. Planned to use it against him." He snapped his fingers pointedly. "Has used it against him; quite extensively."

"What do you mean?" Felicity found herself asking again, her heart sinking at the thought that she might've missed something so important. Something that could really hurt Oliver, and maybe everyone in Queen Consolidated, because she didn't catch it.

The eighth richest man in the world shook his head yet again. "I have followed the company with some interest since last May's catastrophe. Purely personal interest, of course, my advisors might have mutinied back then if I'd suggested anything more than a bit of dabbling."

That, Felicity knew, wasn't entirely the truth. She knew him well enough to know that his only real interest in whether or not Queen Consolidated fell was if it could work to his benefit. Specifically if losing her job might make her more amenable to any of the offers he'd been sending her since she turned eighteen years old.

Graduating from M.I.T with her Masters and a perfect G.P.A hadn't helped her avoid that attention, especially since her career advisor had thought she was insane for not jumping at even one of the offers the C.E.O had sent her way even before he started attempting them in person. What Felicity had never cared to tell that advisor was that her intellect and abilities were only bonuses to Masrani, they weren't at all what'd brought his attention to her in the first place. And most of his job offers were really just follow ups, or side-alongs, to his attempts to get her to go see his dinosaur theme park just so he could say all of the still living survivors of the first disaster had, in fact, done so.

Though how he'd convinced Doctor Grant to go back Felicity would never understand. Doctor Malcolm needed the money and the damage to his career repaired. The Hammond siblings, she knew, would've made themselves go just to honor their grandfather. Well, that's why Lex would've gone: Timmy would've wanted to prove he wasn't afraid anymore. Doctor Sattler, unlike Malcolm or Grant, hadn't been back around dinosaurs after that first time; sixteen years ago now.
Maybe, for them at least, the twelve year reprieve made it easier to take the risk. But Felicity couldn't forget being in the S.U.V that that damn T-Rex had gone after twice. Or the gigantic tropical tree she and Timmy had gotten stuck in, and then forced to race against gravity to avoid being crushed by the same damn vehicle. Hadn't forgotten the seemingly futile efforts to escape the smaller but no less frightening Velociraptors that could open damn doors and leap both farther and higher than kangaroos. And, thought she'd been an impressionable preteen at the time, Felicity wasn't sure if being older would've made much of a difference for her.

Of course, the renamed 'Jurassic World' had been an operation and extremely successful 'destination theme park' for going on four years now, the media having swallowed the 'yes, most of the survivors chose to return to the new park' whole and unquestioned. So she really didn't understand why the billionaire kept trying on her.

"To be quite frank, Miss Smoak, other than the early intervention by Starling National Bank on Queen's behalf, at Walter Steele's behest, the only improvements Queen Consolidated has yet shown correlated to the technical sector. And therefore, I believe I can safely hazard; at your excellent advice. But you're still losing. Because you're fighting skirmishes, very few battles, and completely forgetting the war."

"I..." Felicity started, then trailed off, not really sure what to say to that. Not when she didn't think the man in front of her was lying, and as a man that'd been considered one of the world's top businessmen before his not-yet-deadly deathtrap opened, he did know what he was talking about.

"Found them!" Sara chose that moment to come back out, the wide smile stretching across her face completely fake but bright enough for no one to notice. And Felicity couldn't be more relieved at the interruption. "I guess Digg wasn't really paying attention. That, or these work better on you than most people and you didn't wake up in agony flailing around like you must've been to knock them off the table and under your bed. Glasses in here, right?" she asked even as she headed straight for the right cupboard.

Making Felicity wonder when the former assassin had been in her apartment without her knowing about it even as she filled a medium size glass from her filtered tap.

"So, you hungry? Ollie wanted to do brunch soon if you're up to it."

Translation: Everything I've just heard while eavesdropping sounds like something you shouldn't be keeping from Oliver.

Felicity grimaced. "I thought I got to take today off?"
Sara raised an eyebrow at her as she brought the glass over, one pill in her palm that Felicity knew wasn't aspirin but at this point she couldn't care. "You know, most people don't hear 'brunch' and think: one of those meals I usually work through."

"Wouldn't know. Haven't tried it in... I don't know how long," Felicity admitted as she accepted the not-aspirin and tossed it in her mouth, chasing it with several sips of water as fast as she could before the taste could coat her tongue. Followed by the rest of the glass because she hadn't realized how thirsty she was still the water had hit her dehydrated throat.

"Perhaps that would be for the best," Masrani spoke up again, looking between the two blonde women for a moment, before he directed a smile at the bedraggled Felicity again. "If you feel the need to discuss this with your friends, I certainly won't stop you." Then he reached into his pocket and pulled out a flashdrive, which he set on her coffee table. "I would suggest you consider this, as well, Miss Smoak. Then join me for supper this evening at... what was that sushi place you like, my dear?"

Felicity frowned at him, not wanting to give into the trick to get her to agree, even though it'd been a long time since she'd had the time to even think about dinner at Starling City's best sushi restaurant. Sad, since with the inflated salary Oliver had setup for her as his E.A—all but guaranteeing at least half of the accounting department thought she was his mistress—she could actually afford it much more so than she ever could before. Well, than she ever could without dipping into the repentance gift John Hammond had left her in her will, but the only thing she'd been able to convince herself to use that for were paying off her school loans and her rent once or twice.

"Toro's?" Sara volunteered the restaurant's name with a smile as she somehow dropped gracefully onto the arm of the sofa Felicity was sitting on.

When had she sat down? She didn't remember wrestling the billionaire for ownership of her couch... or winning.

Masrani snapped his fingers again. "Yes, that's it." He nodded, re-buttoning his jacket as he stood up with a small bow that made her feel a little uncouth. "I shall make the reservation for seven o'clock. Perhaps your friend might join you," he nodded to Sara, who returned the nod with a very small one of your own, then looked back at Felicity. "Please, bring as many friends as you like. My treat." Then he indicated the flashdrive. "And do consider that information quite carefully before you say 'no' again, Miss Smoak. I would prefer not needing to approach you again; when Queen Consolidated no longer exists and your options are far more limited."

Felicity swallowed, then made herself nod. "Thank you for stopping by, Mister Masrani."
Sara stood up with all the predatory grace of a cat; or an ex-assassin. "I'll show you out."

And Felicity tried not to feel, again, like she was the weak link in the team that everyone had to protect. What was so hard about it though, was that it was true.

Masrani bowed again, his smile a little closer to that genial one that'd always irritated her before, but since the concern hadn't left his eyes since he'd realized she was hurt and still in pain it was a lot easier to take. "Have a good day, Miss Smoak. Miss Lance."

Felicity watched her new friend follow the billionaire to the door, his two burly bodyguards—both of them built about like Digg—leading the way out, completely ignorant of the fact that they and their client would be dead now if the petite blonde woman they'd discounted right away wanted them dead. She looked down at the flashdrive, reaching to pick it up as she heard the door shut behind her unwanted guest and his bodyguards.

"Who was that, Felicity?"

The vigilante team's I.T girl sighed.

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End Chapter 1.

Chapter End Notes

Author's Note: Mostly more stage-setting, but I've rather enjoyed Simon Masrani so far myself. What'd you think? Should his fate be changed from the Jurassic World canon or not?
And no, before you get your hopes up the NEXT chapter isn't ready yet, too. Almost. But not quite. More to come soon!
Comments are always appreciated! :-D
~ Jess S
Chapter Notes

Thanks to everyone who's commented & kudos'd so far! You guys are great! Hope you like the new scene! :-) 

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

John Diggle's P.O.V.

Swing... THUD!

Swing... THUD!

John wasn't at all surprised to hear the clanging of Oliver on the salmon ladder as soon as he stepped inside the semi-secret base.

Swing... THUD!

Swing... THUD!

It really wouldn't surprise him if the billionaire had come straight back here after tailing him while he drove the loopy Felicity home last night. In fact, since Oliver had hidden out down here for more than a few nights since the revelation of his mother's annual deep dark secret, it was more than a little likely. The only potential hindrance last night being if he hadn't wanted to leave Felicity alone: since Sara said they had that covered, but that could've meant either one or both of them would be keeping an eye on their girl.

Swing... THUD!

Swing... THUD!

Not that John didn't understand.

Swing... THUD!
Felicity had been shot.

Protecting Sara, which was commendable, but it didn't change the fact that she'd delegated herself to human shield to do so.

Or that the bullet Sara had dug out of their tech genius's shoulder would have killed her if the Clock-King had hit just a bit closer to center mass.

For all her boldness and brilliance, Felicity really was so tiny...

_Swing... THUD!_

_Swing... THUD!_

_Swing... THUD!_

Really, John was having a hard time accepting that Felicity had actually decided to go into the field again without back-up. Again. This time into a situation she knew would definitely become dangerous.

Guarding bait you were never much safer than the bait if you couldn't safeguard yourself—something she didn't even seem to consider until after she was already potentially in danger. And to go without telling him; without even checking in till it could've been too late...

_Swing... THUD!_

_Swing... THUD!_

_Swing... THUD!_

Well, clearly John's assurance that she was irreplaceable had gone in one in ear and out the other.

Because why else would Felicity have gone out on her own like that if she didn't feel she had something to prove? A discussion that'd had to be postponed when Oliver was carrying her back here with a bullet in her shoulder wasn't the time to yell at her.
The bodyguard almost wanted to ask his employer if this was what having a little sister felt like: protectiveness and exasperation all wrapped up in unconditional fondness. But Oliver Queen wasn't the one to ask about brotherly feelings towards Felicity Smoak. Even though he was sleeping with Sara Lance these days. Better her than the Rochev bitch.

John could only hope that Oliver's reassurance, and Sara's thanks, on top of getting shot, might have actually gotten through to their resident genius.

Swing... THUD!
Swing... THUD!
Swing... THUD!

And hopefully Sara would get here soon, after checking on the other blonde, to say all was as well as could be expected. Because Oliver's already normally exhaustive to watch workout was starting to look particularly painful this morning.

Swing... THUD!
Swing... THUD!

Thud!

The sound of the alley door opening and closing just a few minutes later was a relief. And so were the familiar sounds of Felicity's footsteps—minus the heels, but still recognizable—on the concrete. Surprising, since she really should be taking advantage of today being Saturday to recuperate. But if there was one thing everyone should've learned last night—if not before that—it was not to underestimate Felicity Smoak.

The archer heard her, too. He dropped down from his torturous ceiling calisthenics right away. By the time their tech girl appeared—looking a little less put-together this morning than usual and too pale, with near-soundless Sara pretending she wasn't hovering behind her—Oliver was already halfway to them. "How is she?" he directed the question a Sara, whose lips only quirked into as smirk as the other woman answered directly.

"Right here," Felicity's response sounded a lot more like a grumble than she ever did. Usually even her sharpest sarcasm was almost hidden by a smile, but it seemed to be missing this morning. "Instead of sleeping. Like most people do on Saturday mornings if they don't have to work."
Oliver's eyebrows shot up at her ill-tempered tone, but he didn't have a comeback for her.

"Forget to take your aspirin?" John asked her with a concerned frown for her tightly controlled expression.

"No," Felicity answered as she sat in her chair and plugged something in, already going to work on her partially repaired computer system. "Sara found the not-aspirins for me. Thanks. I'm sure I'll be a lot looperier soon enough. Why can't I have coffee again?" the last was directed at the other blonde.

"Won't help with the pain, or the nausea." Sara answered, her tone matter-of-fact and much more mild. Then she told the men, "She was pretty popular this morning. Had some visitors before me." She shrugged as she finished. "Well, one visitor, with two bodyguards."

"What?" Oliver looked at her for just a second before his frown turned towards the typing blonde instead. "Felicity?"

"Uh-huh?" she answered distractedly, eyes fixed on one of her monitors, which she was clearly paying more attention to than what they were talking about.

John smirked slightly as he moved closer to look over their tech girl's injured shoulder, wondering what could be so important. She was clearly working off of whatever had been on that flashdrive; not trying to resurrect her computer system at the moment. So said flashdrive's contents were why she was here without coffee instead of at home in bed.

Oliver, meanwhile, rolled his eyes at her ignoring him and looked at the ex-assassin again instead. "Who was it?"

"Simon Masrani?" Sara shrugged, crossing her arms as she leaned against one of the tables. "Didn't know he had anything in Starling, but he seemed pretty interested in Q.C. And Felicity."

Oliver's frown deepened as he thought about that.

John blinked at her as he recognized the name after a little thought, "Wait, the dinosaur park guy?"

As far as the former soldier knew, Sara was right. The wealthy businessman didn't have any
businesses here in Starling, and he didn't work with the army while the Diggles were serving. So there was no professional reason for his name to be familiar. But everyone in the world had heard about the theme park he resurrected a few years back.

"What?" Oliver, however, was frowning as he shook his head. "I thought Masrani was in energy?"

Everyone except Oliver. Though the park had opened after he was shipwrecked. Apparently the opening of a dinosaur theme park—real dinosaurs included—hadn't made it into the summary of what'd happened while he was 'away.' Maybe they should start another 'list' for everything that the billionaire had missed?

"He is in energy," Felicity finally spoke up, an uncharacteristic frown in her own voice. "But he took over John Hammond's park, too. Kept it real hush-hush till just before the grand opening to avoid anyone stopping him from getting that far."

John nodded in realization, remembering how shocked most people were by the news that such a thing could've been kept secret for the years it took the Masrani Corporation and In-Gen to regain control of the island chain and build the theme park that was now considered the most impressive destination vacation in the world. "That's right," he nodded, then told Oliver, "It opened in 2010. In May, I think."

"I heard about that," Sara commented, shaking her head. "Nyssa was curious about it. Apparently most of the League wasn't too sure what to make of it at first, but Ra's decided to just ignore it." She shrugged. "Not like they were bringing dinosaurs off the island, so as long as they're just there it's not a problem."

"Yeah, long as they're there," John snorted, remembering many of his war buddies wondering whether anyone would be stupid enough to think training dinosaurs for warfare might ever become a thing. Personally, he really hoped not.

"What's his interest in Q.C?" Oliver asked in understandable confusion, his frown going back to Felicity as he moved closer to get her attention. "What's his interest in you?" His frown deepened when her eyes stayed fixed on the screen. "Felicity!"

She jumped, startled out of her studies, and they all winced when visible agony washed over her face as the motion jarred her shoulder. "Ah!"
Oliver caught her, carefully avoiding her injury and gently holding her in place before she could inadvertently cause herself more pain by trying to jerk away from it. "Hey, hey, sorry," he said quickly, voice forcibly calm as John and Sara both scowled at him. "Take it easy. Slow, steady breaths. In... and out. In... and out."

John went over to their medical supply station, quickly opening the drawer with the cooling packs and snap-activated one, before wrapping it and moving to place it gently over her shoulder. "Just keep breathing, Felicity," he reassured her calmly. "That'll help."

Watching her suffer wasn't easy for any of the fighters.

It wasn't too long ago that they were comparing scars as badges of honor and being amused by her trying to stay involved in the group conversation via the surgical removal of her wisdom teeth. Amused and relieved, because she was the one among them that wasn't supposed to be hurt. Wasn't supposed to be directly touched by any of the violence; in many ways their constant reminder of what they were fighting for here. All of the good people of Starling City.

Then she'd gotten herself shot. Saving Sara, yes. And catching their criminal of the week, too. But that didn't change the fact that she shouldn't have been there, anywhere near danger, in the first place.

Not something that bothered John as much as it did Oliver, of course, because he'd had to learn to accept that she was a member of the team and wasn't going to be left behind when they went to find the hiding hero after he'd run back to Lian Yu. John'd had to let her come, really, because he wasn't entirely sure he'd be able to get through to Oliver without her.

Then she'd been terrified on the airplane, but still made herself put on the harness for their joint parachute so he could jump off with her strapped to his chest until they hit the beach. Where she'd promptly thrown up, but she'd followed him into the jungle anyway. And then she'd stepped on a landmine.

Not a trip the ex-soldier remembered all that fondly, truth be told, but it was his real first introduction to the 'her life, her choice' argument that she'd supposedly used on Oliver at one point to make him let her go undercover at a mob casino. Something else he still kind of hated himself for letting happen.

What could be so important that she hadn't even thought of taking the day, even the morning, off? And Sara—quickly caught under the same spell that made both men so protective of Felicity—hadn't tried to make her rest either.
"So, what'd Simon say?" Sara spoke up, drawing incredulous looks from both men, but her eyes stayed on Felicity, who forced herself to relax in Oliver's hold.

The other blonde swallowed, then tried to move forward, before frowning up at Oliver—carefully not moving her neck to do it, just her mouth turning down and her eyes looking up—when he didn't let her go. "Oliver..."

The archer visibly made himself release her. Then he only stood straight again, standing over her without moving back even a little from her personal space, one hand on the back of her chair as if to still hold her in place. "What did he want?" he echoed the Canary's query.

"Same thing he's always wanted," Felicity grumbled, then sighed, nodding towards her computer screen. "But he gave me a lot of proof that Isabel's working very hard to destroy your company."

Oliver blinked again, "What?"

John didn't really think any part of that statement should be a big shock, all things considered. But he wasn't the one that thought sleeping with the bitch that was always treating you and your friends like dirt, at best, was a good idea either. Then again, he'd never really agreed with the 'keep your enemies closer' thing in principle either. He preferred things much more clean cut than that.

Though with all the duplicities in Oliver's life, he could understand his difference of opinion. Somewhat. Well, not really when it came to Isabel Rochev. But John didn't like bullies. He really didn't like bullies who went after his friends. And he hated not being able to retaliate.

"And you're not really helping, either," Felicity told him, attention back on the computer screen as she kept looking through the information. "You know, if Stellmoor hadn't already sold off some of its stock in Q.C after you and Isabel started supposedly working together, all the sales you've made could've handed the company over to her on a platinum platter."

What was displayed in most of the windows John couldn't make heads or tails of. There were numbers and dollars signs and dates all over the place, and some stuff that looked a little like that non-English--all math-based--language of statistics that he remembered from the intro class he'd barely passed way back when. At least Felicity could probably actually read most of it. What the rest them could read though was each windows' title.

*Queen Consolidated Continued Decline Projections.*
Actually, the last one John would like to see put into English: because they'd probably be words Oliver should to hear.

Oliver shook his head. "Those sales were to Walter."

"No, they were to Starling National Bank," Felicity corrected him, sounding almost normal as she simplified what really wasn't all that simple for the rest of them. "Which, yes, Walter controls as the C.F.O unless their C.E.O steps on him. And yes, he's kept them mostly pro-Q.C, but he can't do that forever unless the company starts to do better. And Isabel," she gestured to the graphics on the computer monitor, with a wince that looked painful enough to be mostly from moving her shoulder again, but maybe not. "Is doing everything she can to make sure that keeps not happening."

John couldn't really see that from what she was looking at. Spreadsheets and graphs were never anywhere near his areas of expertise. But he could see that a lot of those graphs told of downward trends, which in the business world weren't good if they weren't about managing to cut expenses, taxes, or something similar. And he trusted Felicity Smoak more than enough to know her reading of the data, however brief, probably wasn't wrong.

Oliver clearly did, too. He barely gave the screens a glance before he turned his frown back to the blonde. "What's Masrani's interest in Q.C?" he finally demanded again.

"Eight percent, just like the bank," Felicity answered matter-of-factly, pointing to one of the smaller charts. "Since you took over in the fall, you've sold three percent of the stock to the bank, but Stellmoor's sold eight. The Masrani Corporation bought that. Probably would've bought yours, too, if Walter was willing to sell it," She sighed. "So you hold the majority with the eight percent Starling National's holding for you, but that's technically with you holding forty-two percent, Stellmoor holding forty-two, Masrani has eight, and the bank has eight."

"That's why Walter hasn't said anything, then," Oliver frowned as he did the easy but not good math. "We're still even, and if Masrani throws in with Isabel, they're still even with me and the bank."

"Yeah," Felicity's sigh sounded more tired and pained than emotional. "But Masrani won't do that."
Oliver growled, "You can't know that," he trailed off with a puzzled frown, then asked, "Wait, why'd he give all this to you?"

Felicity sighed again, carefully leaning back in her chair to try to gently rest her hurt shoulder against the pack that should already feel pretty cold. "Because Masrani's not interested in Q.C, Oliver. Or you. Or Isabel—um, I mean, Isabel. He's just using you, and all this," she gestured at the window filled screens again. "To get to me."

"Why?" John asked before Oliver could growl or yell it. "You said he wants something from you?" He clarified before she could try to dodge the question again. It might not be fair to be interrogating her when she was tired, in pain and somewhat under the influence of a powerful painkiller that was hopefully starting to kick in, but knowing whatever this answer was had to come out before any progress could be made. "That he's wanted something for a while?"

She'd said 'always,' but that'd sounded like an gloomy oversimplification.

Felicity closed her eyes, looking exhausted even though she'd only just woken up a little while ago. Clearly she hadn't slept well, and the pain was wearing on her. "It's a long story."

"We've got time," Sara answered, her voice much softer than normal. None of them liked seeing their exuberant tech girl exhausted and in pain.

Strictly speaking they probably didn't have much time. Given how 'loopy' she'd gotten last night on the oxycodone, they really only had until it kicked in. John was a little surprised it hadn't hit her more yet, but then maybe she'd only just taken it since she said Sara had to find it for her. He hadn't thought the bedside table was much of a hiding place...

"He wants me to visit his damn island," Felicity grumbled, going on when all three of them stared at her. "The new park. He's been trying to get me to agree to go since... well, before it opened."

"You mean the 'world's most unique destination resort'" Sara asked, blinking at her.

"The one with the dinosaurs?" John clarified.

Earning both of them a disgusted sigh. "Yes." Felicity confirmed. "The one with the damn dinosaurs."
"Why?" Oliver asked the obvious question, sounding as bewildered by her answer—and her clearly negative emotions towards the idea—as the ex-soldier was.

From the glances Sara gave each of them, she was equally perplexed, but then she hadn't known Felicity as long. Still, even she clearly thought it strange that their most intelligent team member wasn't at all interested in seeing what most people considered to be the world's most exciting scientific marvel.

When Felicity didn't answer him right away, Oliver kept pressing. "Why does Masrani want you specifically to go there? Why would he bother getting involved with Q.C?"

Then there was that. Why was getting her to go there was on the dinosaur park owner's to-do list?

This time Felicity's sigh was even more painfully weary, before it too made her wince from the tug on her hurt shoulder. "Because," she closed her eyes as she went on like she was reliving the very worst of memories. "I'm the only one that hasn't gone back yet."

"Gone back?" Sara gently prodded this time.

Though from the wary, worried look on her face—and on Oliver's, probably John's, too—they might all both be having the same gut sinking suspicions he was right now. When Felicity didn't answer right away, everyone waited this time.

And waited.

Then Oliver was forcing Felicity's chair to turn and gently gripping her forearms, the worry intent on his face as he looked at her closed eyes, making the ex-soldier realize she was trembling as the archer tried to calm her down. "Hey, hey," his words were as soothing as he could make them. "I'm right here. We're all here. You're safe. No one's gonna hurt you, Felicity," he finished adamantly, gently rubbing a big circles in her back—a circle that carefully avoided going too close to her injury. "Take a breath..."

She obediently drew in what sounded like a choked gasp.
"Good," Oliver gently approved it anyway. "And now another."

Her next gasp sounded a little less choked, but was still more like a sob than a breath as it escaped her mouth, which like the rest of her face was twisted up in clear pain.

"Yeah, good. Good. Again."

By the sixth or seventh breath it'd started to sound like she was actually breathing as she inhaled and exhaled. Rather than drowning in panicked gasps of air. Finally her eyes fluttered open, though that looked like a battle, too.

"Better?" Oliver asked carefully, not letting any of the worry that had him bending over her small form show. He was still holding her in place, with one hand carefully holding her injured shoulder still as the other one kept making those careful, deliberate circles between her shoulder blades to help her relax.

"Sorry," Felicity still gasped the word out, the embarrassment pinking her cheeks not strong enough to give her still panic pale face any more color than that. "I'm—"

"No," Oliver immediately shot that down, still struggling to embody calm when faced with her suffering. "Don't apologize."

"Ollie's right, Felicity," Sara spoke up. Not sounding even a little jealous as she watched her sort-of-boyfriend fret over the woman he still somehow hadn't realized he was in love with. "Keep taking steady breaths," she encouraged gently, real affection in her voice. "Take your time. You've more than earned it."

That easy affection the former assassin showed their I.T girl almost from first meeting had had a lot to do with why it was so easy for John to accept her in the first place. Of course, it also helped that the people the Canary had been hospitalizing when she first showed up deserved it. That she happened to be the same Sara Lance that supposedly died when The Gambit went down had barely been a factor for thought.

Then again, the archer and ex-assassin really were more friends-with-benefits than lovers as far as John could tell. Sara, from the sounds of it, was in love with the daughter of Ra's al Ghul; who also loved her enough to let her go when she wanted to escape the League of Assassins. And Oliver was in love with Felicity, even if he couldn't admit it to himself. Sara and Oliver was really more the pair
seeking comfort with each other in their shared histories and similarities than love—and it wouldn't surprise John to learn that Sara was just waiting to step aside for the other blonde on their team, once Oliver finally got his head on straight.

And Felicity really had earned her place on the team many times over. For all that John—and Oliver—really wanted to yell at her for getting herself shot, that couldn't be denied.

But he really wanted to know what she was talking about—and why dinosaur island triggered a full-blown panic attack from her.

"Thank you," their genius answered softly, still visibly working on her breathing in and out for at least a solid minute before she paused, pulled in a slower, deeper breath, let it slowly out. Then started talking again. "One of the best tech programs for kids—a summer computer camp, sort of—takes place in Vegas every summer. I first got a scholarship to go there the summer after... well, when I was seven. I went every summer after that." She smiled slightly, clearly fond of this place she'd spent her summers as a child, so it wasn't where her past contained the panic-inducing trauma. "When I was nine, I met Lex Murphy there. We kept in touch online through the school years. Saw each other at the camp every summer after that..."

"Lex Murphy?" Sara repeated the name with a frown. "As in John Hammond's granddaughter?"

John wasn't sure he wanted to see where this was going as well as he was, but she was already nodding.

"John Hammond was her grandfather," Felicity confirmed.

John really didn't like the suspicions that were starting to form in his mind, but he didn't say anything as she went on.

"When I was twelve, Lex invited me to go see her grandfather's latest theme park."

"Jurassic Park," Oliver was the one to finally say it, looking as unhappy about it as John felt. "You were there."

Felicity nodded, swallowed, then went on. "It wasn't open. Obviously. It never opened as..." she shook her head cautiously. "We were going on the very first tour. Lex, Tim, and I. Tim invited a
friend, too, but he got the flu so... so it was just us. And a few scientists that were supposed to sign-off on the park being safe after... well, after one of the handlers was eaten."

"On the tour that went wrong," Sara said softly, shaking her head slowly. "What happened there? In-Gen did a pretty good job hushing it up, even with Doctor Malcolm's book breaking their N.D.A. I think there were always more rumors than facts. Except for that T-Rex that they let loose in San Diego, that was pretty hard to cover up."

The other blonde shuddered violently, flinching again as her own shaking hurt her shoulder.

Oliver started rubbing her back again, neither of them seeming to notice that he'd never stopped touching her.

Felicity visibly forced herself to go on, "The man that Hammond hired to animate the park—the tour, the cameras, the fences, everything that was run on the electronic setup—he agreed to steal some of the genetic samples from the lab." She shook her head. "It was years later that they figured that out; once they finally got the island under control again and found them missing but not signed out. Who knows who he was stealing them for, though, because he was never seen after that and no one else started producing dinosaurs, thank God," she finished with feeling, then sighed and went on sadly. "It's terrible to say that, since he probably never made it off the island. But he'd designed a program that'd shut the cameras down, and then the fences."

In John's mind, and undoubtedly their other two teammates, too, that meant the man deserved whatever he'd gotten, but they all knew Felicity would never see it that way. She'd probably stick her neck out even for Isabel Rochev, whom she had every reason to hate. Probably cry at her funeral, too. "The fences?" he asked instead. "For the dinosaurs?"

"During the tour?" Sara added, understandably outraged.

Oliver looked ready to Hood up.

So pretty much all of them—save for Felicity—were probably in agreement that if that was the case the bastard had completely deserved to get eaten. Not that they were biased.

"Yeah," Felicity sighed again, her eyes dropping closed for the bad memories again. "Yeah, during the tour."
Oliver then surprised all of them by leaning down and scooping her out of the chair into his arms, before sitting back down in the chair with her blinking at him from his lap, his arms wrapped protectively around the blinking girl. "What happened next?" he asked gently.

John and Sara both didn't try to fight their smiles while they each grabbed nearby chairs and brought them over to sit down on either side of the pair.

Felicity looked between them all in clear bewilderment, her pupils a bit too dilated—so the powerful painkiller was definitely working—then she sighed, apparently deciding to just go with it. That, and the fact that no innuendo about a lap dance or something was said, was also proof that the painkillers were in gear by now. "There was a tropical storm... Bret. Tropical Storm Bret," she told them. "They don't hit the island—Isla Nublar—often, usually they swing south, but that one hit dead on."

Oliver cradled her closer as she shuddered again, letting her tuck her head under his chin without seeming to give any thought to the fact that the blonde in his arms wasn't the one he was sleeping with—that Sara was right next to them, smiling slightly even as she watched the more fragile blonde in his arms.

"They had to cut the tour short for that. Well," Felicity surprised all of them by chuckling slightly. "That, and we'd all run out of the cars anyway. The doors didn't lock."

John snorted, amazed at just how inept the security of this place had been, even for more than a dozen years ago. In retrospect, the disaster that'd kept it from ever opening in its initial form might've been a blessing in disguise. Otherwise the dinosaurs could've gotten loose when there were a lot more people for them to eat there. Then again, with its treacherous (and undoubtedly dimmer) version of Felicity working against it, it was doomed from the start, with or without real security experts involved at any point in time.

Felicity went on without prompting now, her tone turning contemplative. "We hadn't seen any dinosaurs on the actual tour. There'd been a bunch of herbivores by the main center, but on the tour itself none of them had been near the fences when we first passed by. Or we just couldn't see the smaller ones through all the tropical trees, I guess." She shook her head. "But Doctor Grant spotted something and jumped out of the second car, and Doctor Sattler followed him, so they stopped the cars and we all got out." Felicity went on, sounding a little more like herself with a small smile on her face. "There was a triceratops there," she grinned at Sara. "She was always my favorite, from Land Before Time, as a kid."

"Mine too," Sara grinned back, then shrugged. "Even though they spelled her name wrong."
Oliver looked about as clueless to what they were talking as he tended to be about any other pop culture.

But John had long suspected that the younger man had never really had a strong interest in such things even before he came home to start his crusade. So it wasn't really that surprising that he wouldn't have watched cartoons about dinosaurs growing up, and *The Land Before Time* was probably before Thea Queen's time. Then again, it'd seemed to keep going in a lot of sequels a long time after the first movie. Might've been a T.V show, too.

Felicity went on before the billionaire could decide if he wanted to admit his ignorance. "Dino-Sara was sick. Doctor Sattler thought she'd probably eaten something poisonous that they shouldn't grow near the dinosaurs. She even went through the dino droppings to try and figure out what," she shook her head, her nose wrinkling even as she smiled slightly.

All of them were grinning a little then, relieved to see some sign of happiness hidden in what were obviously very harrowing memories.

But Felicity's smile faded as she went on. "Then the storm started to hit, so they made us go back to the cars. Doctor Sattler stayed with Dino-Sara." She cringed into Oliver a little more. "We all should've stayed with Dino-Sara."

Once more, the archer's hold around her tightened protectively. And all of them were frowning worriedly at their genius, making themselves wait for her to go on in her own time.

After several long seconds of careful breathing, she did. "We were heading back to the Welcome Center just as the rain started. Then Nerdy's program cut the power for the tour along with everything else, and the cars stopped..." Felicity swallowed. "At the T-Rex paddock."

All of them stiffened at that—though Felicity was so tense already that it was surprising she could freeze anymore.

After half a second, Oliver forced himself to relax, his hold around her still protective as he made soothing noises into her hair. "Shh... You're here with us, Felicity... We're all here... You're safe..."

It took a few tense minutes again, minutes where watching her try to calm down hurt almost as much as each time she'd flinched from her injury. Once the archer had managed to calm the other blonde down, at least a little, though, Sara prompted softly, "And the power was off?"
Felicity flinched, but visibly made herself nod. "The power was off. An-And it wasn't just the tour," she swallowed. "We didn't really realize it till... till the T-Rex was tearing the fence down." She snorted. "It almost grabbed the warning sign about the fence being 10,000 volts as it was pulling the cables down."

John swore under his breath, and neither of the others looked any happier.

Felicity didn't see that, or seem to hear the ex-soldier swearing either. She'd tucked herself back under Oliver's chin, her eyes squeezed shut as she made herself relive what'd obviously been a terrifying time in her childhood for them. Her voice was small as she sped on, sounding even younger than the terrified pre-teen she'd been at the time. "Lex was scared. We-We all were, it was right between the cars and it was so big and loud. When-When it roared the cars shook. Or maybe that was me. Maybe both," she shuddered, not seeming to notice how tight Oliver was holding her. "Gennaro—he-he the lawyer sent by the board. Like the scientists. To-To say if the park was safe.... He... He was scared, too. When the T-Rex first showed up," she swallowed, her eyes closing again. "It was-was eating the goat they put there when-when we first went by. He ran."

"Ran?" John repeated disbelievingly, scowling at the thought of any adult just abandoning a bunch of kids in such a situation. No matter how insane and understandably frightening said situation had been. He'd never had a very high opinion of lawyers, so Felicity's even lower opinion of them never phased him—even less so now that he knew why she didn't like them very much.

"He-He was scared," Felicity softly defended the man, sounding more like herself except for the tremor.

" Doesn't make it right," Sara shot that down, also scowling as she shook her head. "And here I thought you didn't like lawyers 'cause Laurel had been too much of a bitch to you at some point."

"What?" the frown Oliver turned on the younger Lance sister was full of confusion.

"I love my sister, Ollie," Sara shrugged. "But she can be a stuck-up bitch sometimes."

The archer couldn't muster a reply right away to defend his ex-girlfriend, clearly wondering if he was better off saying nothing when he was talking to said ex-girlfriend's sister, who he'd cheated on her with when they were dating and was currently sleeping with now. That Laurel was now with Tommy Merlyn and a Starling City A.D.A rather than just a lawyer fighting for the downtrodden was really neither here nor there.
Kind of like Felicity being the one in his lap right now was something they were all taking in stride. But then again Diggle really did think Sara was waiting for them to finally get together, too.

"No," Felicity shook her head rapidly before the archer could decide on any ill-advised response. "Gorgeous Laurel doesn't have any idea who I am. Well, she knows I'm the weird E.A that works for Oliver at Q.C. An-And she met me last year. Here. Sort of. So I kind of think she believes some of the rumors that Isabitch keeps encouraging, but..." she trailed off, her over-dilated eyes going wide as she finally realized what her mouth was being too honest about. "I mean—"

"Isabitch?" John cut her off with an amused smirk. "That fits."

Sara snorted, "Not sure Laurel deserves the praise though if she's stupid enough to believe that bitch."

"What rumors?" Oliver demanded, and all of them had to blink at his confused scowl.

After a long second, Sara said, "You're kidding, right?" her tone was completely incredulous, like she really didn't want to believe their team leader could actually be that dense.

John could believe Oliver Queen was that oblivious though, especially with Felicity constantly stopping him from saying anything and undoubtedly going out of her way to make sure such things never got to Oliver in any other way. What Rochev occasionally said about Felicity around Oliver, after all, were generally much more mild than the nasty comments she made towards the E.A herself. Though John thought it was actually the other gossiping colleagues that hurt Felicity a lot more. "You should tell him, Felicity," he told her with a sigh, shrugging when Oliver frowned at him and the blonde in the other man's lap tried to scowl. "You should." He shook his head. "Or I will."

"Felicity?" Oliver leaned back in the chair and tilted her forward in his arms a bit to look down at her face, but she had her gaze directed down. "Fel-liss-ity..."

She sighed when he drew her name out like that. "There's just been... talk since you, um, promoted me. It's not impor—"

"What kind of talk?" the C.E.O demanded, thankfully not willing to let it go now that it'd finally been brought to his attention.
Though how he'd missed any of it before had really gone to show his pseudo-bodyguard just how much of the broad picture the other man didn't tend to see. It went back to the way he'd handled his father's List last year. Before he found out it was really Malcolm Merlyn's List. One name at a time, usually picking them by whoever had been stupid enough to come up in the news or on Laurel Lance's caseload unless he was otherwise forced to deviate. He was capable of thinking through elaborate plans when he wanted to, but that narrow, sniper-like—or, more aptly, archer-like—focus was a weakness they had to watch out for.

Felicity sighed, "I'm-I'm not..." she bit her lip, then shook her head slowly as she made herself go on. "I'm an I.T girl, Oliver. I wasn't in H.R, it's a completely different department. But you made me be your secretary."

"Executive Assistant," Oliver corrected her gently with a frown, his unhappy eyes still locked on hers, which she squeezed shut.

"It doesn't matter what you call me, Oliver." Felicity sighed, "What everyone sees is a secretary."

"But you're not—"

"A secretary? No, I'm not. And I'm not an Executive Assistant, really. I was never trained to be either one!" Felicity finally burst out, her eyes opening to glare at him just like she had that first day back at the company, when she’d tried to quit. "I went to M.I.T, where they don't teach you how to be a secretary. And everyone knew it by the end of my first week as your secretary. Hell, by the end of that first day. The people in H.R really didn't like being skipped over for someone without their qualifications or seniority there, so my M.I.T Masters meant next to nothing to them," by the time she sighed softly, most of her righteous anger had started to wind back behind her selflessness again. "And I guess Isabit—I mean, Isabel—"

"The other one fits better," John interjected.

Felicity ignored him, her glare dropping from the eyes of man who's lap she was still sitting in as she went on, more and more subdued with each word. "I guess she thought she could use me to prove that you weren't qualified to be C.E.O, I guess. So she encouraged the rumors," she winced with the word. "And it doesn't help that I haven't really been doing a good job. I mean—"

"Yes you have," Oliver insisted, his scowl even deeper. "You've been great."
"No, I haven't," she replied, swallowing before she went on. "I mean, I'm supposed to be interacting a lot more with the rest of Q.C for you. Not just monitoring everything through the computer and occasionally calling to question stuff. Not just trying to keep track of your schedule as best I can to keep rescheduling everything you can't make it to every time something more important happens. Not that I can tell anyone that Queen Consolidated isn't important, or is less important, 'cause both of those sound bad—"

"Felicity," Oliver stopped her gently this time, finally saying something after the third time Sara had kicked his shin trying to make him interrupt. "Whatever's happening with Q.C, it's not on you. It's not," he insisted firmly when she tried to object, "It's on me. " He shook his head. "Obviously it's not news that the four-time college dropout isn't great C.E.O material. Isabel's made that clear more than once," he frowned then. "But I thought she was only giving you trouble about me."

Felicity sighed. "Oliver, what did you think she meant when she said I could take the night off in Moscow?" she asked, sitting much more stiffly in his lap.

But not even trying to get up—whether that had more to do with the powerful painkiller, the painful memories, or the far from painless conversation they were currently having was anyone's guess.

Oliver winced, "What happened in Russia—"

"Stayed there. Right, I'm sorry. But you asked." Felicity looked away, sighing as she shook her head again. "I still don't get it, from your side, I mean. Her side's easy to get, I mean, not the part that she really was doing that with your dad, and then with you, too, which is——"

"Wait, what?" Oliver interrupted again, wide-eyed himself this time. "What do you mean?"

And Felicity's over-dilated eyes went wide, too. "You probably didn't want to know that," she winced.

John and Sara both tried to hide their amusement with coughs covering snorts of laughter. They weren't all that successful, but neither of the two blondes in the computer chair seemed to notice.

At first, anyway. After a moment Felicity's wide eyes went to them. Specifically to Sara.
"I shouldn't be here," Felicity frowned, looking between the other blonde and Oliver in clearly confused concern. But, as Sara smiled at her, she still didn't try to move.

The first vigilante, meanwhile, looked like he might be sick soon. "No, Felicity, what did you mean about Isabel and... and my dad?"

From all the jibes the sadistic woman had thrown their girl's way, likely plenty more times than John himself had seen, he had to wonder why she'd never brought this up as soon as she figured it out. The bodyguard had made a point of trying to act as the genius's bodyguard, too, around that woman, at least—a silent show of support for Felicity and a looming deterrent for Rochev—but he wasn't the one that could really shut the vindictive woman down.

Felicity sighed. "She-uh... She used to work at Q.C before... years ago. She was an intern. And..." she winced, shaking her head. "I mean, there's no real reason for an H.R intern to go on business trips with the C.E.O. An-And your dad was kind of known for that?"

"Isabel... and my dad," Oliver swallowed.

Now the current Q.C C.E.O really looked like he was turning green, and it had nothing to do with his usual outfit for vigilantism.

John thought he'd earned every second of it for thinking sleeping with that woman was ever anything resembling a good idea.

From Sara's barely cough-covered snort of amusement, she agreed.

"Yeah, um," Felicity swallowed, "Can-Can we wait till I'm not high to keep talking about this?"

"No," all of them answered at once.

"But we can come back to all of that," Sara tacked on, "You were—"

"No, we—"
"Yeah, we can," Sara locked eyes with Oliver for a very long second, before he finally folded with a
tight frown that was still a bit green around the edges. "You were saying the lawyer ran away while
Chomper was escaping?"

"Not Chomper," Felicity snorted, surprised into mirth, her qualms easily distracted while she was
drugged. "Definitely the first Sharptooth." Then she frowned. "Even though she saved us later. So
maybe Chomper's mom."

"What are you two talking about?" Oliver finally just asked, looking between the two blondes in
clear bewilderment.

"Land Before Time," John told him, one eyebrow raised in amusement. "You know, the cartoon?
Started before you were born, but I think they were still coming out with movies, and maybe a T.V
series when your sister was a kid." He had no idea how popular said sequels and series were, he only
saw the first two movies himself. But the others appeared at the video store, back when there were
stores for renting videos.

"Ollie didn't watch cartoons as a kid," Sara answered for him, earning a frown from the billionaire.

"You didn't?" Felicity blinked up at him, sounding aghast. "Why not?"

Oliver shrugged, still looking a little green at the conversation they'd turned away from, but
answering anyway, "My mom didn't like them, and I didn't really care. Watched some stuff with
Thea, but not... this," he shook his head. "So this is some cartoon about dinosaurs?"

"Some cartoon about dinosaurs?" Felicity kept blinking at him, sounding so sincerely offended that
John really wasn't sure if the oxycodone making her 'a little loopy' had anything to do with how wide
her eyes were between each blink.

Sara chuckled, "We're getting a little off topic again, Felicity." She raised an eyebrow when the other
blonde blinked at her instead. "The lawyer ran away?"

"But he said—"

"Tell you what, once you get through telling all of this, we can all make Ollie spend the rest of
Saturday afternoon watching the Land Before Time, alright?"
"Okay," Felicity agreed right away, looking like the idea made complete sense to her.

Definitely a high, by now, not just pretending to get away from talking about her career's character assassination and workplace harassment. Amusing as she was like this, it'd probably be a good idea to cut the dose for her painkiller in the future... provided she'd even be willing to take it if her injury wasn't completely killing her after this.

Oliver shook his head, "That's not happening."

The blonde in his arms pouted up at him. "Why not?" she demanded, with wide-eyed indignation.

And for a long moment the archer could only stare at her again, but Diggle and Sara's amused snorts finally made him shake his head. "Maybe," Oliver reluctantly relented, clearly realizing that arguing with her when she was like this wouldn't get him anywhere. "What happened after Chomper's mom got out?" he asked, making both of the listening pair try to hide their amusement again.

"She went after Gennaro--but I didn't see that, thank god," Felicity shuddered.

She barely flinched from the motion, and even her storytelling seemed less distressing, despite her words. So the powerful painkiller was definitely doing a number on more than just her gunshot wound—though if it helped her get all of this out easier, that had to be a considered a good thing. And at least she wasn't complaining about the room spinning yet, or unable to stomach the drug.

"But I don't think it saw him then," Felicity went on. "Doctor Grant said they couldn't see—well, no that they only saw movement." She frowned. "Not sure how he could've ever known that, I mean he was one of the leading paleontologists of the time, still is, but—"

"The dinosaur didn't see the lawyer run away," John interrupted this time. "So what it'd do?"

"Roared..." Felicity trailed off, her too-dilated eyes staring at nothing, and when Oliver's arms tightened carefully around her again John realized she'd started trembling again. "It was so loud. The S.U.V was shaking. Or maybe that was me. That is me, isn't it?" she asked, frowning at her hands as she held them up.
They were shaking, because she was: tiny tremors trembling through her slight form again. Damn it.

"Shh," Oliver shushed into her hair again, rubbing her back just as carefully as before. "I'm here. You're here in the Foundry with us. We're not going to let anything happen to you."

"Here in the Arrow Cave," Felicity nodded decisively, like that made all the difference, calming down much more easily than before. "No roaring Missus Rexy."

John didn't even try to hide his grin, while Sara just barely managed to stifle a giggle in her fist.

"Whoa..." Roy's voice had all four of them blinking over towards the stairs had led up to the club, though Oliver had to spin Felicity's chair around so the pair of them could see the newcomer. "What'd I miss?" he asked with a frown, looking between the archer and the blonde in his lap.

"She took a bullet for me," Sara explained simply. "Now she's explaining her most traumatic childhood memories while high on pain meds."

That made Roy's eyes fly back to the other blonde. "What?"

"Roy's really strong now, right?" Felicity asked, looking between Thea's boyfriend and Thea's brother. "Do you think he'd be stronger than the Missus Rexy?"

"What?" Roy repeated, looking dumbfounded.

Oliver actually fought to not grin at the completely serious I.T girl. "I don't know, maybe. But he has to get back to work right now," he told her, the last part obviously meant more for the younger man.

Who immediately objected, still visibly trying to figure the strange scene out from the bottom of the staircase. "No I don't."

"Yes you—"

"No. Roy should stay," Felicity decided adamantly, the decisively sharp nod she gave making her
wince a little even through the heavy-duty painkiller that was in full affect at the moment. "Just in case they let another dinosaur go. Here. Like in... Like in..." she frowned. "Somewhere?"

"San Diego," Sara supplied helpfully.

"Right, there," Felicity nodded again. The she looked around, and frowned. "But there's no chair. Why doesn't Roy have a chair?"

"I can get a chair," Roy reassured her, noticeably struggling not to smile at just how adorable their teammate was at the moment.

Oliver looked like he really wanted to forbid that, but one look at Felicity's happy smile stopped him.

"So Missus Rex was roaring?" John asked, not really sure how he managed to keep his face straight as he said it.

But it turned Felicity's smile towards him. "Um-hum," the blonde nodded, her smile falling into a small frown as she glanced at Roy, who was halfway up the stairs. "Aren't we going to wait for Roy? He's part of Team Arrow, too."

"We don't call—"

"I'll catch him up," Sara cut Oliver off with a look that surprisingly managed to subdue the archer, then again the extra bubbly blonde in his lap was probably more responsible for that. "What happened next?"

"She walked away, and her steps made the ground shake, too," Felicity went on enthusiastically, raising both of her hands into curled little fists to bring them down with emphasis for the steps, "Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!"

That made all of them relax enough to really smile in enjoyment at her over the top exuberance. Though John was really starting to wonder how they were going to help her through her mortification later... *Big Belly Burger* for lunch, chocolate shake included, might not be the best bribe if her stomach couldn't handle it with the medication for physical pain.
"You must be a lotta fun to drink with, cutie," Sara smiled at her.

"I don't drink really. Not since college." Felicity shook her head. "Except for special occasions. And red wine. I love red wine." Then she frowned and leaned back to look up at Oliver again. "You never gave me my red wine?"

The archer blinked at her. "What?"

Their I.T girl nodded, "You said I'd get a bottle of the really, really nice red wine if I hacked into... into..." she frowned as she trailed off, clearly confused by her inability to follow her own stream of thought again.

"Into Blackhawk for the armored car heists," Oliver supplied her with a sigh.

"That's it!" Felicity agreed, grinning widely.

And John remembered then what Knox had said. *Right after Gaynor got you hired, someone hacked our system. First person to ever make it through our firewall. You wanna tell me how you did it?* He'd known then that she was likely the 'how' it'd been done, but hadn't been able to say anything at the time. Now, smirking slightly, he told her, "They said you were the first person to get through their firewall. Good job."

"'Cause I'm that good," their tech girl nodded proudly, "and thank you." She looked at Oliver again. "But I wasn't a member of Team Arrow—or Team Hood—"

"Arrow," the archer cut her off with a groan. "If you have to say that, say Team Arrow."

"Right, cause you're not Robin Hood. Okay." Felicity agreed easily. "I wasn't a member of Team Arrow then, so I think I should've gotten my bottle of wine. I mean, it wasn't easy, you know. And you promised me red wine," she ended with a pout.

"Yeah, Ollie, you promised," Sara encouraged, grinning hugely.

"Alright," Oliver allowed, also fighting a grin now. "That was one bottle of Lafite Rothschild 1982,
John, too, was fighting a grin while his eyes went back to the stairs at the sound of someone coming down them. Two some ones this time: Roy Harper was just as light footed as before, but Tommy Merlyn didn't seem to see any reason not to stomp on down.

"Right!" Felicity agreed, smiling widely as she nodded and said again, "I love red wine."

"You said that," Sara told her with a smile.

"It deserves to be said," Tommy interjected with a grin as he put a chair down across from his scowling childhood friend with the I.T girl in his lap. He smiled at the blonde that looked much happier to see him as Roy put a seat down next to him.

"Hi Tommy!" Felicity smiled at him. "Roy! You're back!" she threw her arms wide in welcome, making Oliver shift to hold onto her so she didn't fall from his lap.

"Hi," Tommy returned, while the younger man couldn't help but chuckle as he returned her smile. "So, Roy said we were missing some big story?" he looked Felicity over then, his smile dimming a little. "And you were hurt, Smoaky?"

Felicity nodded, not complaining about the nickname like she usually—almost always—would. "I was shot," she told him. "I have my own scar now."

"That's, uh... good?" Tommy finished uncertainly.

"Thought you were talking about dinosaurs?" Roy asked, still smiling slightly at how pleased the blonde looked with the idea of having her own scar. The rest of them didn't like that she'd been hurt at all, so the change of topic was appreciated.

"You were saying the lawyer ran off?" Sara prompted. "And the dinosaur ate him?"

"He was scared," Felicity defended the coward again, sounding sure of that even as her smile fell. "It was scary."
Oliver growled, "He'd be a lot more scared if I ever met him."

Felicity leaned back to hit his shoulder lightly with her hand. "No!" she reprimanded him while the rest of them really tried not to laugh as the vigilante blinked at her. "You're not allowed to meet him."

"He'd deserve intimidation, at least." Oliver retorted, not quite able to growl the words at her when she was like this.

"Maybe," the tech girl allowed. "But he's dead. He was eaten," she poked his shoulder with each of her next words. "And you are not allowed to be eaten by Missus Rexy." She stopped poking him to frown. "Or Miss Rexy? ...There was no Mister Rexy, so Miss Rexy, I guess."

Right. The dinosaur ate the cowardly lawyer first. Maybe there was some karma in the world, John thought. But then a look at their most fragile team member's trembling form soured his impolitic humor considerably. Nothing any kid could've ever done could have merited the experience she was clearly still recovering from half a lifetime later. At least she hadn't seen that—she had already said that earlier.

"I thought he ran away?" Sara asked lightly, obviously hoping the monster had gone straight after him and thus left the kids alone in an inadvertent act of sacrificial heroism.

"He did," Felicity confirmed. "He left us." She shuddered as she said that, and her face fell, her entire form seemed to sink as all the exuberant happiness faded away. "Lex kept saying that... She was scared." Felicity nodded. "It was scary."

"So he was eaten first?" Digg asked, also trying to gently lead her along. Might as well draw the whole story out while it wasn't bothering her that much. He did feel a little bad, knowing this wasn't something she'd ever chosen to talk about with any of them. The closest she'd come to mentioning it with him was when they were planning the trip to Lian Yu and she'd said she didn't particularly like islands. He'd thought it was a strange comment, but when he'd asked she'd shrugged the topic off.

"I guess." Felicity responded frowning, her bubbly happiness seeming to die down more with each passing moment. But she didn't seem to be in pain or extremely embarrassed, so it was safe to say the oxycodone were still hanging in there. "We didn't see that... but Doctor Sattler said they found him. Later... what was left, anyway." Her whole face suddenly twisted up. "I-I think I'm gonna be sick."
Oliver was immediately on his feet, rushing the girl in his arms to the nearby washroom that she'd insisted on significantly upgrading over the summer.

John almost got up to follow them, but Sara was already grabbing a towel and water bottle as she ran in and upgraded or not the bathroom wasn't that big.

"So what happened?" Tommy finally demanded, all earlier humor at their I.T girl's loopy exuberance gone and his face suitably serious as he turned to the former soldier.

Roy's face nearly matched.

And all three men winced as the struggling sounds of retching started coming from the bathroom.

John sighed, "Felicity went into the field by herself last night, trying to catch the latest guy."

"Yeah, the Clock King, saw that on the news," Roy nodded, then frowned. "Wait, Blondie caught him?"

"Yeah," John sighed. "We got to her before anything happened, but Tockman—"

"The Clock King?" Tommy clarified, both eyebrows raised. "That's actually his name? Like tick-tock?"

"Yes." John sighed. In some other time or place he might've been amused, but with the sounds of his friend throwing up still in the background he just didn't have it in him. So he soldiered on, "Tockman's team was already at the bank, so we couldn't get her out first. He tried to distract us by setting the gas to blow, would've taken out the bank and everything around it, us included. I had to turn it off manually. Oliver took down Tockman's men." He grimaced. "While we were doing that, Felicity managed to track Tockman down somehow. Canary went to take him down and Felicity followed. That somehow led to Felicity taking a bullet and blowing up Tockman's phone," He shook his head. "Not sure of the specifics there. Canary told us Felicity was shot taking Tockman down."

"Wait, so Felicity really did take him down?" Tommy blinked, sounding so shocked it grated.
Then again, that could be more the memories of the brilliant blonde castigating herself while she worked through the smoldering remains of her computer system. Or the shocked horror all of the scarred team members had shared when they'd realized she'd gone into the field on her own, foolishly trying to prove herself. That she'd needed that proof more for herself than she did for the rest of them didn't make it less painful to her friends after she'd been shot. If anything it made it worse that they'd unintentionally let her feel so left out. That it made it to the point that the words John had tried to offer, about her being irreplaceable, had obviously had no impact at all.

"Yeah, she did," Sara answered the question, coming back to her seat minus the towel and water bottle. "She'll be fine. Ollie's got her," she reassured when John frowned at her. Then her gaze switched back to the recent arrivals. "She'd copied the virus he did this with," she gestured to the still over-cooked walls of computers. "Used it against him. Blew up his phone." The former League of Assassins member shrugged. "The blast knocked him off his feet, hard—knocked him out."

And that right there was where Felicity Smoak couldn't be matched. Intelligence and, to some extent, technology. When she wasn't distracted by one emotional upset after another piling on top of each other. Oliver and Sara getting together, whether it stayed as friends-with-benefits arrangement or turned into something more, was just one more blow. Everything at Queen Consolidated would have been hard on her even if Rochev didn't go out of her way to make their lives difficult. Still, Felicity had suffered it all in silence for so long, even taking the mess Oliver made in Moscow in stride. Having Sara come back to unintentionally show her up as a vigilante would've hit her without the latest criminal mastermind's skill set falling into her realm of expertise. Felicity had admired the other woman from the start and hadn't tried to hide it when they'd met, but with every blow her self confidence and self esteem had had to take, she'd had to give at some point. John just wished it all could have happened without her getting hurt.

"Then how'd she get shot?" Roy wanted to know, his frown deepening as the sounds from the bathroom continued.

"I didn't know she was following me. She surprised me—I barely stopped myself from striking her. " Sara grimaced, then sighed. "She saw Tockman come out behind me with a gun, pushed me out of the way just as he got a shot off." The blonde grimaced. "I need to work more on non-lethal assaults at a distance." She shook her head. "I didn't want to kill him in front of her, so I froze. Could of gotten both of us killed."

Worse, she could have gotten Felicity killed. The former assassin didn't say it, but it was plain to see on her face as she listened to the other woman's suffering now. Tockman wouldn't have survived the encounter if his bullet had killed Felicity—even if Sara had mustered more restraint than was her norm and Oliver had held onto his promise to Tommy when killing wouldn't save her, John wouldn't have hesitated before putting a bullet in the bastard. But he could also see that Sara would rather have taken another G.S.W herself, no matter how proud the other blonde was her first scar. Another point towards why he found it so easy to accept Detective Lance's second daughter on the team.
"We can work on that," John nodded as she looked at him, then he shrugged. "Oliver might be the better one to ask though."

"Maybe," Sara allowed, glancing towards the bathroom, where the painful sounds from their wounded teammate were finally slowing down. "Think he'll have his hands full."

"Yeah, about that," Tommy spoke up with another frown. "Weren't you and he..." he gestured between the blonde and the bathroom.

"Sleeping together, yes," Sara rolled her eyes. "So good to see you've grown past being comfortable with talking about sex with anyone other than my sister."

"Hey—" Tommy tried to object, but she went on right over him.

"We're not lovers," Sara shook her head. "Our hearts aren't free, so..." she shrugged.

Tommy and Roy both looked like they weren't following, clearly having not spent nearly enough time in the vicinity of Oliver Queen and Felicity Smoak when they were together to get it. But the bathroom door was pulled open again before they could say anything.

John got up, grabbing a blanket from the medical supplies as a hovering Oliver followed Felicity out of the bathroom.

"I'm fine, Oliver," she told him for what sounded like it wasn't the first time, her voice tired. "I can walk on my own." She was swaying a little even as she said it, so not surprisingly the man barely gave her an inch in space, if that.

"Here, Felicity," John told her with a nod, draping the blanket for her when he saw she was shivering.

"Thanks," Felicity said softly, clutching the blanket to her once it was wrapped around her. She froze when she saw the two men still seated. "Tommy... Roy."
All her loopy glee was gone in the wave of weariness that followed what hopefully wasn't any of the powerful pain-meds leaving her system, even if that was probably what'd upset her stomach so much. From her tightly controlled expression, the expected embarrassment was definitely hitting home, but it was harder to tell if she was in pain again already.

"Hey, Smoaky," Tommy greeted her again, more quietly than the teasing tone he tended to take with her. "How do you feel?"

"Like crap," the blonde answered bluntly, then frowned. "And don't call me that."

The subdued version of their normal byplay was almost a relief to watch, though it meant that getting the rest of the story out of her wasn't going to get any easier. Though if she was thinking straight again they could hope it might go a bit faster.

Felicity yawned suddenly, and it was clearly a struggle for her to both stand and cover her mouth at the same time.

"You should sit down," Oliver told her, gently steering her towards her chair.

"I'm fine," she tried to tell him.

"No you're not," he shot back just as stubbornly, then he deliberately turned his eyes towards the two men that'd invited themselves down. "You should go."

"No," Felicity surprised all of them by shooting that down, wincing as she shook her head. "They can stay."

Damn. So either the oxycodone hadn't completely dissolved into her system before she became sick or the physical exertion of throwing up had just been too much for her wounded body to take without complaint. And given the embarrassment she was trying to brush aside like it was nothing, it was probably going to take some convincing to get her to take another 'not-aspirin' when enough time had passed since the last dose.

"Felicity," Oliver started softly, but she insisted right over him.
"Really, it's fine," Felicity said, then she yawned again, her face twisting up in pain as the motion hurt.

Their fearless leader, all the while, was still standing right next to her, hovering right over her chair, clearly frustrated by being unable to help her more. A feeling John could commiserate with even more easily than Sara's sense of guilt.

When the tech girl's expression turned sour right after she'd managed to stifle her initial response to the pain, Sara stood up again. "Let me get you something to drink. It'll help with the taste."

"Something to eat would be a good idea, too," John pointed out mildly, going on when the wounded woman's face only turned more sour. "Empty stomach's not gonna do you any favors, Felicity."

"We could order something," Tommy jumped in, then his face lit up with an idea and he rushed on. "Hey, Ollie, what about asking Raisa about whipping up some of her chicken soup for lunch?"

That made Oliver's expression lighten a moment, too. But Felicity spoke up before he could agree.

"Just some more water would be good, Sara," she said, then looked at the archer to insist, "Don't bother Raisa for me."

"Raisa won't mind, Felicity," Oliver replied calmly. "She loves cooking for the family, and none of us have been home much lately."

"I'm not—"

"And there's nothing better for the sickly soul than a nice hot pot of homemade soup," Tommy piped in again. "And, you know, it's good for those of us that just like it a lot, too. Like me." He shook his head, looking thoughtful. "Can't remember the last time I had her soup. Mighta been before... you know," he winced as he finished, gesturing lamely.

"Before The Gambit," Oliver nodded, then shook his head. "Not that long more me. She made it for my first lunch home."
"And I wasn't invited why?" Tommy whined.

"You'd already invited yourself to dinner."

"Thea really likes it, too, Blondie," Roy put in, shrugging when his girlfriend's older brother and Tommy both frowned at him. "She asked for it a while back."

"Here's some ginger ale," Sara said as she appeared back down the stairs and set the soda down by the frowning I.T girl. "It'll settle your stomach better, and wash the taste away, too."

Felicity made a face again, but obedient started sipping at the soda.

After a long moment of silence, Tommy hazarded, "So's that a yes to the soup, too? Cause I really haven't had it in over six years now, and now that I've remembered that fact I really want it." He gave her his best puppy-dog look. "Please? For me?"

The blonde rolled her eyes, but nodded carefully, clearly minding her shoulder. "Fine. As long as it's not a problem for her." She looked at Oliver as she finished saying that.

When John followed her gaze he wasn't too surprised to see the billionaire's thumb was already moving over the screen of his Smartphone, firing off a text a heck of a lot faster than he could just a few months ago. However, his phone dinged with a response almost as soon as he'd sent his own text, so clearly Raisa was even faster.

"Okay," Oliver's grin was small but sincere as he looked up again, "Raisa looks forward to seeing us for lunch at noon."

The smiles fell though as they noticed how hard it was for Felicity to return it. She was sagging in her seat, visibly struggling to not rest her injured shoulder against the backrest, and thereby probably straining the muscles of her back even more by that tired tension alone.

"You should lie down," Oliver decided, looking around with the frown his small smile had turned into. "We can head to the mansion early, set you up in one of the guest rooms."
"What?" Felicity blinked at him, surprise suddenly straightening her spine and only making her hurt yet again. Still, she winced through her weak objection. "No. I can't—"

"Yes, you can, Felicity," the billionaire cut her off, holding her gaze. "We shouldn't have left you alone last night anyway."

Sara snorted softly as he said that, but the other blonde was busy trying to scowl at Oliver so she didn't notice.

John did, though, and it told him that—as he'd suspected—their girl hadn't been left alone with her injury, even if she didn't know it. Really it probably would've been a better idea just to tell her one of them needed to stay with her, but with how tired and outright worn down she'd been last night it didn't really surprise him that Oliver—and maybe Sara, too—didn't want to give her the chance to waste her energy arguing about it.

"I was fine," Felicity sighed, sounding so tired that each word was basically declaring itself a lie. More so than that phrase typically did by itself.

"Till your early morning visitors," Sara interjected, shaking her head gently when the other blonde blinked at her. "You shouldn't have even answered the door, you know. If you'd called any of us we would've gotten rid of them."

Huh. So Sara had been there, too. Or maybe she was the one 'on duty' as it were after sunrise? That seemed more likely: Oliver probably wouldn't have stuck to the shadows when someone dared to keep their wounded tech genius from her more than deserved rest. While Sara, he guessed had decided to err on the side of caution, sticking around to keep her safe but not interfering right away. Then again, Sara wasn't the one in love with the girl, but she was the other woman who's return had made Felicity doubt herself in the first place. Sort of...

Felicity sighed. "They weren't going to hurt me."

"Doesn't matter," Oliver interjected. "They could've come back later."

That made the genius snort. "You've clearly never met Simon Masrani," she met his frown with a raised eyebrow. "He might be more stubborn than you." She sighed again. "And he's right, this time. The stuff he gave us on Isabel is a problem. A big, big problem."
One they'd already known about to some extent. While Oliver would probably prefer to think that his sleeping with the woman put her more firmly in his corner, John Diggle knew better than to think that was case.

"It is," Oliver sighed, shaking his head as he looked down at her: clearly still much more worried about her than what Isabel Rochev had planned for his family's company. "But we can deal with that after you've had time to recover."

"Don't worry, I'm not going to attempt the salmon ladder anytime soon." Felicity rolled her eyes, "Or, you know, ever. I'm good with just watching you."

A not misplaced dig at just how quickly the vigilante threw himself back into his exhaustive workouts after his mother had shot him. Which the man didn't miss, but ignored.

"Felicity—"

"We've still got some time till lunch will be ready," John interrupted, not seeing anywhere good this argument could go. Actually, knowing the sheer stubbornness of these two, it was likely to just keep going in circles. So he focused on Felicity. "You think you're up for telling us the rest of the story?" he went on calmly when her lower lip started to tremble, watching all the while as she reined herself under control. "We're not gonna let you face this guy alone, Felicity, but we need to know what this is all about going in."

"And it can help," Sara added softly. "To talk about it."

Felicity scoffed, "Everyone's always said that, when they first found out." She shook head, careful of her shoulder again. "Didn't stop In-Gen from trying to scare me with their lawyers talking about non-disclosure."

"What?" Oliver's question wasn't quite a growl, he was very rarely able to growl at Felicity when she wasn't hurt, but he shifted closer so that he was protectively hovering over her again. Not that he'd moved away much to start with.

"That was way before the new park," Felicity explained softly, not seeming to notice his further encroachment into what anyone else would consider her personal space. "And it didn't stick, anyway. They had all the scientists sign the N.D.A agreements before coming to the island, but I was just Lex's friend. And Mister Hammond put a stop to it pretty fast." She shook her head again.
"Made going to a psychiatrist next to impossible, though."

"They never let you see a shrink?" Roy interjected, frowning like all the rest of them.

Felicity started to shrug with her injured shoulder, but caught herself just in time, stopping the unwise motion with a wince that said maybe she'd caught herself a bit late. "Mister Hammond offered to send someone who'd know I wasn't whacko, he was always good to me," she swallowed back her sadness, maybe at remembering the man was long dead. "I mean, it'd have to be someone In-Gen provided and clued into the dinosaurs not being extinct thing. Otherwise, any reasonable doctor would probably have had me committed." She winced. "Which I was kind of worried about In-Gen maybe wanting. I mean, I didn't think Mister Hammond would do that, but after he died... it seemed safer to just try and forget."

And to think John had thought it'd be hard to find some corporate executive type he'd like less than Isabel Rochev. Ruining careers was obviously in her repertoire, too, but at least the targets of her skill set weren't kids. Then again from what he'd seen of that woman that might just be a matter of no kids being unlucky enough to get in her way...

"You have to think about it to make yourself forget," Sara spoke up again, voice softly sympathetic. "That's why it never really works. But talking can."

"And I'm pretty sure you've got more than enough blackmail material on everyone here to make sure we can't turn you in," Tommy piped up, his face a mixture of gentle teasing and clear concern. "Not that we would. And no one would ever take my word over yours anyway with me being a mass murderer's son."

Felicity frowned, "Tommy—"

"Nope, no focusing on me, Smoaky," he cut her off, holding her gaze with a small grin. "We're all here about you, okay?" Tommy tilted his head to the side. "So what happened next?"

Felicity blinked, "Next?"

"After the dino-king went away?"

"How'd the T-Rex even get out, anyway?" Roy interjected, looking confused. "Were they actually
stupid enough to build the zoo with cages that they dinosaurs could break out of?"

"No," John took over when it looked like summarizing again would be even more of a struggle for their genius. "Their system programmer crashed the system so that he could steal some of the—what was it, D.N.A for the dinosaurs?"

"Dino D.N.A," Felicity confirmed with a nod. "That's what Mister Hammond called it."

"Cause this is all from cloning, right?" Roy asked.

"Yeah," their genius agreed softly, looking more sad than troubled now. "The In-Gen scientists reconstructed it from fossilized blood samples. It must've taken years—decades maybe. This was all way before the completion of the human genome project. They had D.N.A sequencers, obviously—I think that's mostly where In-Gen first made its name, back before all the dinosaurs."

"Sounds about right," John agreed, then clarified for the two that hadn't been there to start with. "He stole the samples, but hasn't been seen since. So he probably never made it off the island."

"Least karma has some sense of justice," Tommy opined, then looked thoughtful. "And I never heard about any of In-Gen's competitors coming even close to creating the actual dinosaurs, so it makes sense." He thought a moment, then nodded. "My money would've been on Biosyn being behind it. They were known for employing more lawyers than scientists for a reason."

"The Masrani Corporation basically put them out of business a few years back, so they probably thought so, too." Felicity agreed. "But then again Biosyn were one of their main competitors for buying In-Gen, too."

"I remember our dads talking about that," Tommy told them, nodding to Oliver, who blinked at him. "Remember, we thought it'd be cool to get pet dinosaurs?"

"You're right," the archer looked surprised even as he thought about it, "But my Dad didn't want to take on Masrani."

"And without Q.C backing up the science Merlyn Global would've had to completely restructure itself to take over. That was only if they won the bidding war with Masrani," Tommy's expression was somewhere between a wince and a scowl as he finished. "Small mercies, I guess. Otherwise we could've had dinosaurs running around The Glades instead of an earthquake."
While the rest of them only winced or scowled at the thought—well able to imagine Malcolm Merlyn deciding to unleash monsters in the streets just as easily as he'd triggered the man-made quake that nearly killed his son along with over five-hundred other people—Felicity shuddered violently, then folded in on herself with a gasp of pain.

Oliver was immediately kneeling next to her, hands on each of her shoulders as he tried to keep her from hurting herself further. "Hey, hey," his soothing words were almost too soft for the rest of them to hear. "Just breathe, okay? Focus on that. In... and out." He moved one hand to her back, starting to rub circles there again. "In... and out. Good."

They all waited tensely, watching as the archer helped her calm down till her muscles could relax enough to unfold again, carefully helping her ease back into the chair so that the pressure was on her uninjured side.

"Good," Oliver approved again, the hand that'd been circling on her back having moved to gently massage her neck. "Better?"

Felicity's tremulous nod was almost too slight for them to see, but then she finally glanced up at him again. "Thank you," she said softly, eyes locking with his for a long moment before finally darting away—towards Sara, who was watching her with concern just like everyone else. Still, she tried to shift away.

"We should head over to the mansion now," Sara said as soon as the other blonde had started to wilt while looking at her. "Raisa won't have lunch ready for a while, but it'd be a lot more comfortable. It's chilly down here."

Felicity was the only one shivering, probably more from pain—emotional as well as physical—and exhaustion than actual cold, but it worked as an excuse.

"I'll go get the car," John said, standing up without waiting for anyone else to agree. Or argue.

So he quickly went to bring the stretch limo around from the back lot to the side entrance. Oliver preferred not to use the limousines, but kept one on hand at the club just in case (plus several at the company and the mansion), and it was the only way to fit everyone comfortably in one vehicle. He was only a little surprised to see Felicity walking on her own as everyone came out to the car, though Oliver and Sara were hovering on either side of her, Tommy and Roy weren't that far off from hovering either.
"Thea's looking forward to lunch," Roy told them, just a little in warning after his phone buzzed on the ride over. "I hope that's okay," he added, sounding more worried.

"It's fine," Felicity was the one who answered, which made more sense than him worrying about upsetting his girlfriend's big brother. "Might as well tell her, too," she finished almost at a mumble.

"Or you could tell us here," Oliver suggested, holding her protectively with the arm he'd wrapped around her as soon as he'd sat down next to her with Sara seated on her other side.

John didn't need to hear her answer to wince: but that could be because he was keeping his fingers crossed on that ginger ale being affected enough to keep her from suffering car sickness during the drive over.

"You want me to talk about when I was almost eaten in a car while in another car?" Felicity clarified, sounding so incredulous it was almost funny. Almost. At least as close as talking about a traumatic attack ever could be considered in any way comical.

"Wait, I thought the T-Rex went away?" Tommy protested.

"It did, but..." Felicity sighed tiredly. "But then it came back because..."

The light up ahead was turning orange, and John was glad. It allowed him to slow to a steady stop as orange became red, so he could look in the rearview mirror.

Felicity was studying her hands in her lap, wringing her fingers together in tight twists of tension. "He left us," She said softly, shaking her head slowly. "Lex—she kept saying that as-as we..." she swallowed. "As we watched the-the fence... fall."

"Hey, hey," Oliver started soothing her again, wrapping himself even more around her as whispered words of comfort almost too softly for the ex-soldier to hear up in the driver's seat. "We're right here. You're here, in the car with us, okay? We're not going anywhere. We won't let anything happen to you."
The genius drew in a deep breath, then slowly leaned back to look up at him with a little, tremulous smile. "I know," she looked between the other two also as she said, "Thank you."

**HONK!**

John was too well trained to just hit the gas as the blaring sound from the car behind them made everyone else jump or tense. He glanced up again to confirm the light had in fact turned green, and then both ways before moving his foot off the brake and starting through the intersection. "Sorry," he said softly, keeping his eyes trained on the road as he heard Felicity whimper—undoubtedly from being surprised into a painful motion.

"No," Felicity answered automatically. "It's fine."

"No it's not," Roy grumbled. "There's another whole lane, if the jerk's in such a rush he should've just gone around."

"Maybe that'd be why they call it road rage?" Tommy guessed; his heart not at all in it.

"Let's hope not," John commented, only relaxing a little as said 'jerk' did pull into the other lane at the next light. Though this time he allowed himself only a slightly longer glance in the rearview mirror—to see Oliver was still wrapped around Felicity, while Sara had saved Felicity's hands from themselves—before he made himself look forward again and focus on driving.

"It was, um, loud," Felicity forced herself to start again. "So loud..." she said the words softly, like that could make her memory softer, less scary.

Unfortunately it didn't tend to work that way.

"I don't think it was 'cause it was right there, either, 'cause sound carries and yeah it wasn't as loud when we heard it from farther away but... it was loud anyway."

"Few years ago I heard a lion roar for the first time in the wild," Sara spoke up when the other blonde went quiet a little too long. "Nyssa and I were in Tanzania, for the League," she chuckled self-deprecatingly. "I coulda sworn it was right there next to me. Scared the shit outta me."
"I take it the lions didn't fare well in the encounter?" Tommy asked, doing a fairly could job of keeping his dislike for the Heir to the Demon out of his voice. Not that even Sara could blame him for it, since Nyssa had poisoned Laurel and kidnapped their mother. He probably would've felt more generous towards her if Nyssa had hurt him, but his anger wasn't hard to understand.

So Sara didn't pay any attention to the barely-there dislike underlying his voice. "They never attacked us, Al-Owal said it was just a warning. Like rattlesnakes, only louder. A lot louder. The roars weren't about threatening, really—it's how they communicate, yeah, but it's more how they establish themselves. Their territory's marked by scent and sound. And violence if necessary." She paused a moment, and John didn't have to risk another glance at the reflection that really should be on the road behind them to know she was remembering. "There was really something primal about it, though. You know? You felt that sound deep down in your bones."

"Well, thankfully there was only one T-Rex on that island," Felicity continued softly almost as soon as Sara had stopped, sounding a little more sure of herself. "And I swear the sound really did make the car shake, like an earthquake. That's what the Undertaking reminded me the most of, that sound. The car shaking..."

John signaled to get onto the highway, which was mostly clear of traffic leaving the city in the late morning. Allowing him to keep his ears on the words from the backseat even while his eyes had to stay on the road.

"You said the T-Rex went away?" Oliver led her along gently. "Is that when it went after the lawyer?"

"No. I-I mean, I don't know, really? But I don't think so." Felicity heaved another sigh. "I don't know what happened to him after he left us. He just left his door open and ran into the pouring rain as the fence was coming down. I don't know where he went—just that Doctor Malcolm and Doctor Sattler said that the T-Rex got him at some point." She was quiet another moment, then she went on. "He didn't deserve that. I mean, he left us, but he didn't deserve that."

Felicity Smoak really might be the most forgiving person John Diggle had ever met. And from the patient silence in the backseat it sounded like everyone else back there probably agreed more with him than her. While the lawyer couldn't be blamed for being terrified in the face of something terrifying, just abandoning a bunch of kids to that terror like that wasn't so easy for the rest of them to forgive. But the man had died: eaten by the very monster he'd run away from, so it didn't bear talking about that the last choice he made was one of completely selfish cowardice.

"Lex kept saying that, though, while the monster was roaring. 'He left us.'" Felicity went on, and he
could hear the frown in her voice. "Reminded me of when my father left. I mean, this was years later, but I remember thinking about it at the time. Not sure why." She sighed. "But I guess that's why I didn't notice what Lex was doing."

*That* didn't sound *at all* ominous...

"What'd she do?" Roy asked the question, clearly just as worried by the allusion.

"She, um..." Felicity sighed again. "I'd never been camping or anything before. That-uh-'visit' to *Jurassic Park* was the first time I'd left Vegas. And after that I never really wanted to try it. You have no idea how much I didn't want to go to that island of yours," she obviously directed at Oliver, babbling on before he could respond. "But, after everything, Lex said that when you waive a light around if you're out camping it'll scare most animals off? Or at least make it so you can see them, I guess. I mean, I don't really get how a little light's supposed to scare off something with a head about as big as the vehicle we were in, but that's what she's said she was thinking then."

"Wait," Roy now sounded completely incredulous. "She started waiving a flashlight at it?"

John was just trying not to start swearing, a sentiment he could imagine most of the others sharing.

"Yeah," Felicity confirmed softly. "And it, um, it saw it." She shuddered so violently that he could recognize the sound of the motion from the backseat even before she gasped in pain. But she went on again before anyone could say anything. "An-And then it came back. Towards us."

"*Shit,*" Tommy swore softly, but Felicity went on like she hadn't heard him. Considering what she was talking about, what she was remembering, she probably hadn't.

"I-um. I was in the front seat, across from Mister Gennaro, before he ran," the blonde went on shakily, and when John risked another glance at her reflection he wasn't surprised to see her shaking in Oliver's arms, her hands in Sara's. "It came up alongside us, on the side with the open door. I was frozen at first, hoping it'd pass by, I guess—like a deer in headlights."

"But you said it's vision was based on movement, right?" Sara remembered, adding encouragingly. "So that was smart. Just instinctive, maybe, but that doesn't make it any less right."

"Maybe," Felicity surprised him a bit by responding, her voice still sounding distant as she went on.
"But then I saw Tim moving towards the door, and I realized he was going to shut it with that thing standing right there. Right next to us." Her sigh was tremulous. "I stopped him, pushed him back into the backseat with his sister. But I guess we made too much noise, 'cause it heard us. It turned back towards us—hit its head on the door, swinging it shut for us. It-It didn't like that at all. And it's roar was even louder when it was directed right at us."

And all of its attention was then on the car with the kids in it, John realized, really fighting the urge to start swearing now as he made himself keep driving, hitting his signal on for the next turn off, which would take them to the fastest way towards the mansion.

"It banged its head against us—a-a few times, I think? When it stopped, maybe realizing the hard metal wasn't edible, Tim tried to get the flashlight from Lex. I think he thought it was the light that'd attracted it, so maybe turning it off would make it go away. They-They were arguing over it as they tried to turn it off." Felicity continued, sounding shaky and distant at the same time—trapped in the traumatic memory, at least a little bit. "The S.U.V's we were in, the park's ride, were more windows than not. Almost the whole roof was a skylight: so that you'd be able to see the huge dinosaurs, obviously."

And John had to marvel a little once again. That damn ride was a security expert's worst nightmare even without the monsters.

"It-It tried to get us through the roof first. Lex and Tim were in the backseat, staring up at it as it smashed in. I-I curled down in the front seat, tried to hide under the dashboard. I think we were all screaming. It was roaring as it tried to get at us. I-I don't think it could really figure out what the glass was, never mind how much it could really see. It-It heard us screaming, I-I guess, so it kept trying to get at us. When-When the roof didn't work, it tried hitting us again from the side. Harder. Knocked us clear off the rail that vehicles rode on. Flipped us over. All the-All the windows broke." By the time she finished her breathing was harsh, labored and too fast. Then she pleaded suddenly; "Out. I-I need to get out."

"Digg, pull over." Oliver ordered immediately.

John was already moving to the side of the road by then. He'd barely stopped when Sara had her door open, though she was careful to help Felicity climb out even as the other blonde almost tried to climb over her. He hit the hazards on even as he put the limo in park, then jumped out to follow the rest of them over to where she was kneeling on the ground, curled in on herself and shuddering in the snow.

"Breathe, Felicity, just breath," Oliver was trying to calm her down again, kneeling right next to her. "In... and out... In... and out."
Slowly her breathing did even out again, and she never did throw up this time. Eventually she was able to collapse back into the vigilante's arms.

"You ready to get back in the car?" he asked her gently.

"I'm sorry," she said the words softly. "I'm sor-"

"Hey now, none of that, Smoaky," Tommy said her firmly before anyone else could. "No apologizing for being afraid of something scary, okay? That's just silly and stupid. And the Felicity Smoak I know, while adorably silly sometimes, is not stupid. Right?"

"R-Right," she agreed softly. "Th-Thank you, Tommy."

"Don't mention it," Tommy told her, before jerking a thumb back at the limo. "But there is some snow on the ground, so do you mind if we get going again?"

"We can wait," Oliver tried to interject.

Felicity shook her head. "No. We should go," she let Oliver help her as she stood up again, then told him, "I'm okay now." But she still let them hover around her, Oliver ready to catch her if she more than swayed the whole dozen steps back to the car.

Once they were all inside again, John turned to look back at the blonde that was still trembling slightly, his hand going to the temperature controls to turn the heat up automatically just in case she was shivering, too. "So, do you want me to drive?"

"Or you could talk here?" Oliver added.

And Sara suggested, "Or wait till we reach the mansion."

"No," Felicity shook her head, finally meeting her friend's eyes. "Drive, Digg. Please," she added when he tilted his head in concern. "I don't want to let myself be afraid of this. I can't. Not again."
"Okay," John agreed, turning around and hitting the hazards off before shifting back into drive and getting on the road again. It was a few long, heavy moments before she said anything again.

"Where did I..."

"It flipped the car," Sara supplied helpfully, her tone maybe too light for the subject matter: but then again that lightness would probably help the other blonde more than kid-gloves or more fear would.

"Right..." Felicity picked up her tale again. "I-I think it climbed on top of us then? The airbags went off for some reason. We were sinking down into the mud... From the rain. It'd been completely pouring the whole time, a torrential downpour. From the tropical storm? Bret..." She shuddered, again the motion so audible it was a sound without the whimper she had to let out afterwards. "The mud was flooding into the car, all over us. We were all screaming, still. I-I don't think we ever really stopped while it was there. I... I could hear it. And feel it—I think it climbed on top of the front end. The underside, I mean. And it was tearing at something—like it thought that should've been the stomach, I guess. Then it-it finally stopped. It left..." She heaved a heavy sigh that they all echoed. "Doctor Malcolm told us afterwards that they'd led it off. There were flares in the cars, too. With the flashlight and the night vision goggles."

"Night vision goggles?" Roy questioned.

But it was obviously an easier question for Felicity to answer. "I think they probably had them there for when they planned to give the tour at night. I'm not sure why Lex didn't grab those instead, if she really wanted to be able to see where it was. But Mister Gennaro had yelled at Tim earlier, for playing with them, so maybe that was why she didn't want to touch them." She released a breath that didn't sound so much like a sigh, then made herself go on. "Doctor Malcolm said Doctor Grant grabbed a flare first, used it to draw its attention and tried to throw it off into the woods. But Doctor Malcolm didn't think that'd work long, so he'd grabbed another one and actually ran away with it. The T-Rex followed him while Doctor Grant tried to help us get out of the vehicle."

"And both doctors escaped but the lawyer didn't?" Tommy put in, surprised but not displeased. "That's karma for you."

Felicity ignored him, "It was hard, getting out. The mud was so thick, and I think the vehicle was at least partially crushed—from that thing standing on top of it. And the airbag had gone off over me, when that thing was attacking us. So I was trying to get around the airbag, and Tim was stuck under the backseat—I think his foot was stuck. Lex was the only one that'd managed to dig her way out, with Doctor Grant's help, by the time that thing came back."
"Jesus Christ," Oliver was the one to swear this time.

"I heard her scream outside—and it's breathing. Tim and I, we could hear its breaths over the rain. Doctor Grant told her—told Lex—not to move then. That it couldn't see us if we didn't move." Felicity huffed a breath that sounded somewhere between a sigh and a laugh. "I'm still not sure how he could ever know that. I mean, when it looked in the window at us, earlier, it's eye was the size of the steering wheel. But he was right. It was right on top of them, but it started knocking the car around again, instead of eating them."

"While you were still inside?" Roy clarified with all the horror the rest of them were feeling. Had been feeling for the three 'kids' involved in this disaster through its whole retelling.

They'd feel bad for anyone that'd had to go through that, but with it being one of their own—with it being Felicity—it was just that much worse.

"Ye-Yeah," Felicity confirmed, sounding shaky again.

When John glanced in the mirror again he wasn't surprised to see her practically in Oliver's lap once more, clutching onto one of the arms he had wrapped around her. While Sara was the one rubbing circles on her back now.

"It was pushing us around: spinning us in the mud. Lex and Doctor Grant had to run around on the outside to get on the other side of the car. They had to climb on top of the wall it banged us into. They got down that wall, somehow. I'm not sure how. It was... I don't know, a hundred feet, maybe less? Doesn't matter, I guess, but they got down it somehow." Felicity sighed. "Tim and I survived it too, somehow. Eventually the T-Rex just got mad at not being able to get at us and knocked the S.U.V over the wall. We crashed into one of the tropical trees down below."

No wonder she was afraid of heights... and islands, apparently. Was all John could think with a wince. Combined with parachuting out of the plane to get onto Oliver's island, that whole trip had to be a bunch of unpleasant reminders packed together like a bad joke.

"Doctor Grant had to climb up into the tree to get us out... That's the next thing I remember. I... I blacked out during the fall? I think I may've been knocked out? They checked me for a concussion afterwards—after we got off the island—'cause I had a nasty bump on my head. I don't really remember anything between being banged around in the mud and Doctor Grant climbing into the car. Tim said we went over the wall, and he threw up. But it's kind of... it's just not there for me."
Felicity sighed. "I don't know, maybe I fainted."

"Nothing to be ashamed of," Sara told her gently. "You'd been through more than enough."

"I guess... Um, anyway, Doctor Grant helped us climb out of the tree. We had to rush when the car started to fall towards the ground. Somehow we ended up back in the car when it fell on top of us at the base of the tree, but none of us were hurt. I'm really not sure how that could've happened... But it did. Anyway, thankfully Doctor Grant has a really good sense of direction. He guided us through the jungle towards the Visitors Center. We had to climb up into another tree at one point, to sleep for the night."

John turned into the start of the mansion driveway at last, slowing down enough for the guard at the gate—looked like Campbell—to see him through the windshield. He didn't need to come to a complete stop, by the time the limo got there the gate was open, so he waived as he went on through. It wasn't something they allowed for the mansion when security was heightened, but there was no reason to check every car that arrived when they were obviously members of the Queen family or well-known staff.

Felicity surprised all of them by giggling softly just then. "Tim didn't like the tree. I think he still hates trees, actually. At least he did a few years ago—got him in trouble when he said so on Facebook. A bunch of environmentalists acted like he was the devil incarnate for daring to say he didn't like trees. Not sure why he never just explained why he said he hated them. By then he could've even admitted to everything that'd happened at the first park. Of course the publicist's for the new park probably wouldn't have liked it..."

"So you don't like trees either?" John asked her as he finally brought the car to a stop and parked it right in front of the mansion's main entrance. Turning around to look at everyone in back directly since no one seemed to be in a rush to get out.

"No. I don't mind trees, really," Felicity answered softly. "It's heights I don't like... maybe that doesn't make sense, since I don't remember falling in the car, but climbing out of that first tree it was the car falling towards us and how far away the ground looked that really got to me. I liked the tree we slept in that night, though. It felt safe there."

"So the dinosaur didn't find you there then?" Roy asked, his relief for the blonde—for the kid she'd been and all the others that'd been there with her—clear to see.

"No. Well, the Brachiosaurus herd knew we were there."
"Those are the ones like Littlefoot, right? The Longnecks?"

"I thought Littlefoot was a Brontosaurus?" Sara frowned.

"Actually all of them are 'Longnecks,' but Littlefoot was an Apatosaurus," Felicity told the two of them. "Though I think he might've been called a Brontosaurus at some point? These were bigger though, about twice as big—up to thirty feet taller."

Oliver and Tommy were both just looking between the three of them in clear confusion—obviously Mister Merlyn hadn't encouraged his son to watch animated movies about dinosaurs either. Then again no one could ever say Malcolm Merlyn was anything close to a good father.

"I thought the triceratops was your favorite?" Sara asked her teasingly, thereby cluing Oliver in while Felicity’s cheeks reddened.

"So this is that dinosaur cartoon again?" Oliver asked.

"Yeah," Felicity answered, before going on quickly. "Anyway, the whole herd of them were all around us that night. They sang us to sleep... it was nice. Sort of like whale songs... Doctor Grant said they sounded more like elephants, but I've never heard them sing, so..." She seemed to notice where she was sitting then, namely that she was wrapped in Oliver's arms with Sara watching her, and she shifted uncomfortably before looking outside. "Shouldn't we go in?"

"Sure," Oliver agreed, though he looked more than a little reluctant to let her go as he started to climb out. Not surprisingly, though, he helped her out and hovered around her the whole way in.

All of them had barely entered the house before Raisa greeted them with a wide smile. "Welcome home, Mister Oliver."

"Thank you, Raisa," the billionaire smiled back. "Is Thea home?"

"No, Mister Oliver," Raisa answered evenly. "Miss Thea has some work to do for *Verdant*, I believe?"
"That's right," Tommy remembered. "She was interviewing a few more bartenders this morning," he nodded to Sara. "Not that we don't love having you behind the bar, Sara, but we don't wanna make you work all night, every night."

It went unsaid that it was a good idea for the club to have a few backup bartenders anyway, so Sara could stay available for vigilante work. But it was yet another way in which Tommy Merlyn being aware of what went on in the basement was a good thing.

Oliver hadn't been entirely pleased to find his sister had claimed ownership of Verdant in his absence and, with Tommy's help, divided it between himself and the two Queen siblings, but so far it'd worked out well. The increased amount of time Thea spent around the club occasionally became problematic—mainly because Oliver didn't want his sister to find out the real reason for the nightclub's creation. Which was something Tommy understood, but in Oliver's absence after the Undertaking the Merlyn heir had to spend a significant amount of time salvaging what he could of Merlyn Global Group, and his decision to distance himself somewhat from the nightclub by letting Thea take over the majority of the management—at least officially—had likely saved the new business from much of the same fallout.

That Thea's boyfriend now knew everything had also helped in keeping Oliver's sister in the dark, though that hadn't been easy on him.

"Miss Thea did say she shall be home in time for lunch," Raisa added helpfully. "But Missus Queen is attending to her campaign for most of the day."

"I know," Oliver nodded. "Francis and Walter have her on a bunch of talk shows today, and she's supposed to start meeting investors after that, right?"

As John watched the housekeeper nod he wasn't surprised to hear that the billionaire had only really considered bringing them all here when his mother wouldn't be home. What Oliver saw as her second betrayal had hit him hard. It would've been a lot easier for him to take—that Thea was Malcolm Merlyn's daughter—if Missus Queen hadn't made the mistake of scaring Felicity. Not that she could know it, of course, but it was always Felicity that managed to change his stubborn mind on things like that. It was Felicity bringing him Walter's copy of the List, after all, that'd finally gotten him to confront his mother in the first place last year. It was a threat to Felicity that'd had him walking away from his mother's trial without a second thought—though no reasonable person could fault him for that. Tommy didn't, and he knew both that Oliver had chosen to risk not being there for the trial's conclusion and that he'd had to kill again to save Felicity's life. The idea of needing to consider Malcolm Merlyn family would've had to be hard for Oliver to swallow, no matter what, after everything the man had done. But Oliver probably could've forgiven that, could've taken some comfort in how well Tommy reacted to finding out they shared a little sister by blood as well as by
choice. If Moira Queen hadn't made the mistake of trying to intimidate Felicity into not telling her son the truth.

"Yes, Mister Oliver," Raisa answered, her small smile clearly forced. It wasn't a surprise, either, to see that the family's longtime housekeeper was uncomfortable with the new dynamic.

"Great," Oliver nodded, his attention more on Felicity than the woman that he'd admitted had been around more throughout both his and Thea's childhoods than their real mother ever had. "We'll be in the library," he told her. "Let us know whenever lunch is ready, alright?"

"Of course, Mister Oliver," Raisa replied again, her worried gaze focusing on Felicity for a moment—undoubtedly as much because of how exhausted she looked as the fact that the rest of them were all focused on her—before she looked back at the billionaire again. "Would you care for any refreshments?"

Oliver frowned slightly as he looked at Felicity again, clearly not sure of the answer.

Sara spoke up before he could decide. "Maybe some hot cocoa and some snacks?" she suggested with a smile. "It's kind of chilly out."

"Of course," Raisa agreed immediately, waiting only a moment for Oliver's nod of confirmation before she turned back towards the kitchen. "I vill have them right out."

"Thank you, Raisa," Oliver called after her, before he directed Felicity down the hallway with a hand on the small of her back. "This way."

"I know where the library is, Oliver," Felicity answered lightly, more amused than annoyed.

"Yeah," Tommy interjected. "It's further away than the living room. Why aren't we going there instead?"

"Library's more secure," John answered the question for him. "Doors close, and the windows all have clear lines of sight out onto the grounds."
"Plus they're bulletproof," Oliver added. "And the whole room's soundproofed." He shrugged when that got raised eyebrows from a few of them. "My dad had it done years ago. His old office is safe, too, but the library's more comfortable."

"The safe room's between the two rooms, right?" Tommy asked.

"One of them," Oliver confirmed. "There's another one on the other side of the house, and two more upstairs."

John already knew that, though he hadn't learned about it until after the mansion had been invaded by an assassin almost a year ago. The boy they'd been protecting really should've been put in a bedroom a lot closer to one of the panic rooms on the second floor—he, and with him Laurel and Tommy would've been completely safe that night without Oliver needing to risk exposing himself by taking the hitman out. But the mansion's guest rooms weren't the ones equipped with panic rooms, and the vigilante hadn't been wrong to not want to take the hitman's target through the dark hallways...

"Good to know," Felicity answered for them, the soft sigh she released after that sounding very weary.

"You okay?" Roy was the one to ask first this time.

"Yeah," the genius answered immediately. "Just tired. Long morning. Long night—I didn't sleep very well." Her eyes moved after Sara as the other blonde darted on ahead of them to open the library door. She barely seemed to notice how much Oliver was still hovering around her even as he led her to the closest couch, practically pushing her down onto it before claiming the seat next to her. She did shift a little as Sara claimed the seat on her other side, but didn't try to move away as he wrapped an arm around her.

"So a bunch of Longnecks sung you to sleep," Sara summarized with a grin that wasn't quite bright enough to not be forced. "Was that the only night you spent in the jungle?"

"Yes, thank god," Felicity confirmed, visibly pushing through her exhaustion with some effort. "We started out early the next morning, after a Brachiosaurus woke us up." She giggled again, clearly fond of at least that particular dinosaur. Or maybe she was fond of all the plant eaters—that any fondness for the gentle giants would be overpowered by her fearful dislike for the meat eaters, however, wasn't hard to understand. "We had to be careful: the electric fences were down, so the dinosaurs were wandering wherever they wanted. We saw the T-Rex again at one point, but one of the..." she hesitated a moment, the shook her head. "I don't remember what they were called. They
looked like ostriches, but bigger." She shook her head, smiling slightly. "Doctor Grant was fascinated by them: I mean, they basically proved his theory about dinosaurs evolving into birds, some of them at least—"

"What?" Roy interrupted first, blinking at her. "Like they turned into turkeys? I thought a big meteor killed them?"

Felicity barely stopped herself from shrugging with the help of Oliver's gently restraining arm around her, wincing anyway as she recognized what she'd almost done and remembered how much it'd hurt every time she'd made the same mistake so far. "That's another theory... the main one, I think. I only read a few books about dinosaurs after all of that—and Doctor Grant's was one of them. I couldn't bring myself to take an actual class on them in college. The one at M.I.T was setting up an exchange program with the park when I was there. It was pretty popular." She winced. "I never did do anything to Mister Masrani for that one."

"Do anything?" Oliver raised an eyebrow at her, and he wasn't the only one smirking slightly as she blinked, clearly not having intended to admit to that.

"I may have made sure he's ended up on the no-fly list... and a few other things, once or twice," their hacker admitted. Then she hurried on. "But Doctor Grant made a compelling case for some of them turning into birds." She shook her head slowly, then smiled. "Lex and I weren't really paying attention—we started running away when we noticed the dinosaurs were turning towards us. Tim actually pointed it out to Doctor Grant before running, too," her smile dropped into a frown then, and she rolled her eyes. "Then he wanted to watch as the T-Rex ate one of them. From, like, not even two dozen feet away. Just a few steps for that monster. Doctor Grant had to actually drag him away."

"Sometimes boys are stupid," Sara commiserated.

"Hey!" Tommy protested.

But Felicity didn't seem to be paying that much attention. At that point she was all but sagging into Oliver's arms, her eyelids starting to look heavy with exhaustion.

"You look like you could use a nap," John pointed out gently, after several long moments of watching the wounded blonde didn't lead to her continuing the tale.
When she only blinked at him slowly, not tensing, straightening, or trying to pull away from the archer's cradling arms, it was all but an admission of how exhausted she was. "It's not even noon."

"Dinner's not till seven," Sara reminded her gently. "You should take a nap after lunch. Trust me, it'll help."

Better the former assassin be the one to say that than Oliver—no one could really take a suggestion from him about taking it easy seriously. Least of all Felicity.

"Right, dinner," the other blonde grumbled, making the last word sound more like a curse than a meal. "I'd almost forgotten about that."

"I don't think I'd heard about that," Tommy piped in with considerably more enthusiasm. "So, seven o'clock where?"

"Nowhere," Felicity replied sourly. "I'm not—"

"You said yourself we need to find out all we can, Felicity," Oliver cut in. "About Isabel."

"That's why I'm going," she insisted stubbornly. "By myself."

Oliver met her gaze just as squarely. "No, you're not."

"Yes I—"

"It's my company you're talking about, Felicity," the billionaire reminded her. "And Masrani won't be able to bully you into anything if I'm there."

"He's not going to bully me into anything," the genius retorted. "I've known that man for more than half my life. Believe me, I know how to handle him almost as well as you," she told Oliver, then blinked at him. "Not that I handle you."

"Yeah, you do," John refuted with a smirk.
"Well, yeah, but not with hands—actually, never mind." Felicity looked away. "I guess that didn't sound as bad as I thought initially." She focused on John sitting across from her then, and blinked. "Are you spinning?"

"No," the ex-soldier answered, not letting himself wince. But he'd really rather make sure she ate something before Oliver carried her upstairs to one of the guest rooms. Or, from how given how possessive the vigilante's understandable protectiveness had been today, maybe his own room.

"I was invited, too," Sara said, more mildly. "I mean, I was the friend he was actually talking to when he told you to bring friends."

"Yeah, but..." Felicity trailed off when a light tapping came from the door.

*Knock-Knock-Knock.*

John was moving towards it before the third knock had sounded, though he waited for Oliver's nod before he pulled it open, even though everyone who'd been at the mansion for any length of time had recognized that knock.

Raisa shot him a polite smile as she entered with shiny platinum tray that probably cost more than he made in a month in her hands. There were only mugs on that tray, but the two maid trailing behind her had similar trays with various appetizers. Behind them came one of the security guards carrying a big urn that was undoubted full of the promised hot cocoa. John knew his name was either Mike or Mark—he hadn't worked at the mansion long enough to be sure though, mainly because this guy looked almost exactly like the other guy that was either Mike or Mark.

As a precaution some months back, Oliver had decided to increase the mansion's security staff before his mother's case went to trial. Thankfully it hadn't proved strictly necessary, but it had made the grounds and house easier to completely secure. The six addition security personnel had been kept on since, with Missus Queen never making any comment towards the necessity of their employment. Then again, Oliver's mother had always been security conscious—how much of that had to do with her first husband's murder and knowing everything she did about Tommy's father was debatable.

Oliver spoke up again before the maids—and Mike or Mark—could leave as Raisa started serving the hot cocoa, "The cheese and crackers are great, Raisa, and so are the popcorn and pretzels. But the nuts have to go."
"Hey, I like nuts!" Tommy protested, his tone more teasing than not.

Felicity still tried to stop him, "Oliver, no. They really don't have to go," she told him. "I'm fine as long as I don't eat any."

"Better safe than sorry," Oliver responded firmly.

The housekeeper didn't even blink, setting down the first mug to pick up the serving tray with a wide assortment of dishes full of nuts on it and handing it off to one of the maids before nodding to them to leave as she started filling the mugs with steaming hot chocolate.

John exchanged a nod with Mike or Mark, then closed the door behind the trio and returned to his seat just as Raisa brought the first cup over to Felicity.

"Thank you, Raisa," the weary blonde accepted her drink with a smile, wrapping her fingers around the hot mug instead of trying to hold it just by the handle.

Soon they were all savoring the rich scent of the decadent liquid between bites of munchies, and Raisa was taking her leave with promises of lunch being ready soon.

"This is nice," Felicity commented quietly, the soft smile on her face doing a lot to cover her exhaustion and pain. "You should serve hot cocoa at the club. At least in the winter, when it's really cold like this."

"We serve coffee," Tommy reminded her.

The blonde wrinkled her nose. "No you don't. You serve this usually lukewarm sludge-stuff that's supposed to be coffee, but I'm not the only one that's skeptical about it having ever come from any kind of java bean."

"And you wanta let them try to sabotage hot chocolate?" Sara asked, smirking.
"It's chocolate," Felicity pointed out. "It can't be as easy to ruin... right?"

John snorted, "You were gonna tell us about the rest of your last day with the dinosaurs?" he reminded her, hoping they were nearing the end of her time on that particular island. Especially since what the man they were meeting with tonight apparently wanted was to make her go back.

Felicity frowned, looking down into her hot chocolate. "I guess," she sighed. After another sip, she made herself go on. "We found our way back to the Visitor's Center after that..." she trailed off with another frown, and corrected herself. "Actually, we found some egg shells first."

"Egg shells?" Tommy asked, blinking as he made the connection first. "You mean from baby dinosaurs?"

"Yeah... Doctor Grant said they used frog D.N.A to fill in the gaps when the samples from the fossilized blood were incomplete." the blonde nodded slowly, taking another sip of her cocoa before going on. "Apparently some frogs can actually change their sex if they're trapped in a single-sex environment."

"That's how they were trying to control the population?" John guessed, and the blonde nodded again.

"Yeah. All the dinosaurs were supposed to be female," Felicity's smile was rueful. "Life found a way. That's basically what Doctor Malcolm's book was about."

"So how'd they get the island under control again?" Roy wondered.

"I don't know," the blonde admitted, looking into her cocoa again. "I really didn't want to have anything to do with it, but I did look..." She took a sip of cocoa, then added. "By the time Mister Masrani approached me about designing the operating system the island was supposedly already under control. There wasn't anything about how it happened in the files he gave me though."

"Probably a lot of firepower," Sara guessed.

John and Oliver both nodded in agreement.
"I guess," Felicity agreed softly, still looking into her cocoa as she went on. "They did manage to get the electric fences back online while we were still there, though, so I guess that might've helped."

"Thought you'd said they'd already broken a bunch of the fences down?" Oliver reminded her.

"I didn't see all of the fences," she answered evenly. "Just the one the T-Rex knocked down. And then it showed up where we were with the ostrich-dinosaurs, and later at the Visitor's Center, too. So it must've broken down one or two more fences at least. I don't know if the other dinosaurs did or not."

"Wait, the T-Rex attacked you again?" Oliver frowned.

"No," Felicity shook her head. "It saved us, actually. From the Raptors."

"Raptors?" Sara echoed, frowning. "Like birds of prey?"

"No. Well, yeah, but..." Felicity sighed. "They call the Velociraptors that, too." She tilted her head back a bit to finish her hot chocolate, then frowned down at the empty cup before starting to try and climb to her feet.

"I got it," Sara stopped her, gently pushing her back into Oliver's hold and snatching the empty cup to go refill along with her own, which she'd emptied almost right away. Apparently the Canary was particularly fond of chocolate. "Velociraptors, huh? Don't remember those from Land Before Time, but I only saw the earlier ones. I'm guessing those weren't herbivores, too, if the T-Rex needed to save you from them?"

"Good guess," Felicity sighed. "They came later, though. I forgot, we had to get over one of the still intact fences before we could get out of the jungle." She shook her head. "I've never been able to decide if our timing was lucky or not there. On one hand, if we'd shown up later we wouldn't have been able to get by it at all, but it would've been nice if we could've arrived just a few minutes sooner that day."

"Why?" John asked the requisite question. "I thought the fences were off?"

"They were." Felicity nodded. "Then the others managed to turn them back on. I'm sure they thought it was necessary to try and regain control of the island. Maybe they thought it'd help us, if other
dinosaurs couldn't get out." She shook her head. "But like I said, the T-Rex found the Visitor's Center later, so at least one of those fences was knocked down before that. Thank you," she said as she accepted her refilled cup from Sara, still huddle in Oliver's embrace as the other blonde sat down.

Not one of the three seeming uncomfortable with the setup at this point.

"You had to get through the fence though?" Roy guessed as he put his empty mug down on the table next to him. "Were the gaps big enough for you to climb through? Or were some of the dinosaurs too small to risk that?"

"Some aren't that much bigger than us," Felicity confirmed. "The Raptors are about six feet tall—but they can jump a lot higher." She winced through a shudder that almost made her cocoa overflow, so she took a sip before making herself go on. "I think that's why kangaroos remind me of them."

"That's why you don't like kangaroos?" John blinked at her. "I don't think they eat meat."

"I didn't say it made sense to me either, but the belly-pocket thing's creepy, too," the blonde grumbled, then sighed. "Anyway, they had to shut off the whole system to try and reboot it without the flaw that Nerdy had faulted the security features with. So they did. And we had to climb over the fence—we had to climb, Doctor Grant couldn't get the metal chords to budge at all. They started turning the power back on when we were climbing over. Tim and I were taking our time cause of the height—but the alarm starting to blare and then the lights over the Danger sign going off was pretty good incentive to get down the other side quickly..." she bit her lip, fidgeting the fingers she had wrapped around her second mug of hot cocoa. "Timmy froze though... He was scared..."

It was a relief to remember that the boy had gotten in trouble with environmentalists while in college a few years ago. Because that meant he hadn't died when he was about A.J's age.

Sara nudged her, gently pushing the mug up to her mouth again, and the other blonde obediently took a sip. "He make it down okay?"

"No," Felicity grimaced, visibly making herself go on. "Doctor Grant tried to get him to jump, said he'd catch him. But Tim only got to two before the power came back on. Doctor Grant still caught him, but we-we had to start C.P.R... 'cause he wasn't breathing."

"Shit," Tommy swore softly, while the rest of them could only agree.
Oliver pulled Felicity a bit closer, and Sara took her mug away because her hands were shaking too much to hold it.

"Lex was beside herself," Felicity went on softly without prompting. "I don't know how long he was... dead, I guess?" She swallowed. "I was doing the breaths, but I wasn't counting." Then she snorted. "Tim was, though. First thing he said when he woke up was 'three.'"

The relieved chuckles were mixed with weary sighs of relief.

"Timmy... He couldn't really walk, so Doctor Grant had to carry him the rest of the way to the Visitor's Center." Felicity went on quietly. "In the dining hall... there was this huge spread there for everyone. The staff must've prepared it before they evacuated the island the night before. A bunch of the hot stuff was overcooked, but the salad and dessert bars were still there, so we started eating."

"Had you eaten anything before that?" Roy wondered. "While you were out there? You didn't say."

"We didn't really feel like looking for dinner that night," Felicity answered dryly. "That morning Doctor Grant had found some berries he said we could eat, but they didn't taste very good. So at least we got to eat a bit then..." she trailed off with a slight shudder, that Oliver and Sara both reacted to with gentle murmur: the archer's arm around her tightening a little while the ex-assassin captured her hand again. Felicity didn't look at either of them; her eyes seemed far away for a moment, then she continued softly. "We weren't on the island much longer after that. Once we got the computers back online, Mister Hammond was able to call the mainland for a helicopter. It was a lot easier to climb into that helicopter than the first one—fear of heights can't really compete with the reality of something that wants to eat you."

That ending seemed rather abrupt to John, but he supposed that was exactly what they'd all wanted to hear: that all of the trauma and terror she'd gone through had eventually ended. And despite it not being even noon yet, Felicity looked completely exhausted. Undoubtedly emotionally from everything they'd been making her relive here, and physically from her injury.

"So which was worse, the helicopter or that little plane we jumped out of?" John asked her lightly.

Felicity immediately shot him a halfhearted glare. "Which do you think, Digg? Considering that so-called plane shouldn't have been flying? And no one wanted me to jump out of the helicopters."

"The plane wasn't that bad," the bodyguard told her with a teasing smile, relieved to see some of her
usual spirit returned so quickly.

"Still pretty sure we were safer once we'd jumped out of it," Felicity insisted. Then she yawned, wincing as brought a hand up to catch the yawn too quickly for the injured shoulder that arm was attached to. "Sorry," she said, her hand almost catching the apology.

"No. You've been through a lot," Oliver told her firmly. "Both telling us about all of this and everything last night. You should rest."

John and Sara shared small frowns when they saw her wince a little as he was speaking, but since there were far too many things that could've caused that new wince neither one of them asked about it just yet.

"I'll have Raisa setup one of the guestrooms for you while we have lunch," the billionaire continued.

Unsurprisingly, their genius immediately tried to protest, "No, I—"

"Fel-liss-ity," Oliver cut her off, leaning forward a little so he could lock their gazes with her still in his arm, which meant he was pretty much wrapped around her but neither of them seemed to notice. "It's not like you're up to driving anywhere, and there's no reason for you to go back home for a nap."

"Besides," Sara spoke up then. "It'd be a better idea for you to stay here anyway." She shook her head when the other blonde frowned at her. "It would, Felicity, really. It was irresponsible of us to leave you alone with your injury last night."

Again, John let it go unsaid that he suspected either Oliver or Sara—or both of them—had actually been keeping watch on her last night. He would’ve suspected as much even if he hadn't questioned the wisdom of leaving her alone as when Sara reassured him they'd have that covered. At the time he'd assumed that meant Sara was crashing on the other blonde's couch, but it was more likely that she'd just taken over for Oliver early this morning. Or they'd both crashed there and Oliver had been the one to leave while Sara waited for Felicity to wake up... which only made sense if Oliver had left before Felicity's morning-callers had woken her up. Because the archer wouldn't have allowed that.

But Sara was going on too quickly for Felicity to get any ideas about that. "What if your wound had reopened? You wouldn't even need to fall or anything for that to happen—just twisting your shoulder the wrong way so early on could do it. Like if you slipped and caught yourself. Or if you
rolled out of bed or had a really bad dream." She shook her head. "Or you could've had a bad reaction to the oxycodone, too."

"The what?" Felicity cut in, her frown deeper.

Sara rolled her eyes. "You knew those weren't really aspirin, Felicity."

"I'm more comfortable with calling them not-aspirins." She wrinkled her nose. "Isn't that stuff addictive?"

"We won't let that happened," Oliver reassured her.

"It's only for the pain, Felicity," John added, hoping to calm her down more. "We're going to cut your dose already anyway, but once you're sure the pain level's decreased we can cut it even more."

"Why can't I just switch to aspirin?" she asked, looking a little mutinous.

"Being a little out of it for a few days is less likely to kill you then not being able to sleep 'cause of your shoulder, Blondie," Roy pointed out to her, shrugging when her little frown turned towards him.

But soon turned towards Sara instead, "Remember how much it hurt earlier this morning?" she asked, shaking her head. "Taking the meds for a little while, and taking care of yourself—by eating, sleeping, staying hydrated—will help you heal faster." She held the other blonde's gaze a moment, then raised an eyebrow. "Trust me, Felicity. Trust all of us. You know we're speaking from experience."

"I know," Felicity finally sighed, sinking back into Oliver's hold a little more once again. She brought a hand up to her brow as she shook her head slowly. "I'm sorry, I'm just—"

"Nope," Sara cut her off. "Ollie already told you: no apologizing." She squeezed the hand she was still holding hostage. "Just let us take care of you for a bit, okay?"

Buzz-Buzz. Buzz-Buzz.
Roy pulled his phone out of his pocket, glancing at the screen for a second. "Thea's home. I'll tell her we're in the library?" he suggested, waiting for Oliver's nod before he actually did so, he'd just finished thumbing the response in before there was another knock on the door.

Knock-Knock-Knock.

John rose faster this time without his friend's painful story—and pain—to distract him, stepping aside to let the smiling housekeeper in with a nod.

"Lunch is ready, Mister Oliver," Raisa told him, glancing around. "Would you like to eat here?"

"No, Raisa," Oliver shook his head immediately. "We'll eat in the informal dining room."

Felicity blinked at him, "You have an 'informal' dining room? What's that even mean?"

"It means the chairs are actually comfortable," Thea Queen answered as she breezed in, stopping beside Roy to lean down and kiss his cheek before looking around as she went on. "And we can't fit three dozen people at the table." Her smile fell into a concerned frown as her eyes stopped on Felicity. "You look terrible."

"Thea!" Oliver hissed, though his sister was already apologizing almost before he'd finished saying her name.

"I'm sorry, that came out wrong. I mean—"

"No, that was honest," Felicity interrupted, forcing a small smile for the younger woman. "I doubt I look any better than I feel right now."

"Raisa," Oliver spoke up again before anyone else could say anything. "Felicity will be staying with us for the next few days. Can you have one of the guest rooms prepared in the family wing, please? The one right by my room?"
"Of course, Mister Oliver. Right away," the housekeeper nodded, before her smile was directed at Felicity. "Are your belongings in the car, Miss Smoak?"

"No," Felicity couldn't quite grumble while she was speaking to the smiling woman who was only interested in being helpful. "I-uh-I didn't know I was staying."

"I'll head back over to your place and grab you some stuff after lunch," Sara volunteered.

Felicity's face fell a little at that, but after agreeing to let them take care of her she shouldn't really argue. At least her injury made her more tired than cranky. "I guess," she sighed. "Thanks."

"Felicity, you were shot," Sara reminded her with a pointed look that said the other blonde was shot protecting her. "There's nothing wrong with letting yourself be taken care of for at least little while."

"Shot?" Thea broke in, her startled blinks quickly turning to upset confusion. "How—When—I-I didn't hear anything on the news?" she looked at her brother. "Were-Were there more of those psychos at Q.C again?"

"No," Oliver answered quickly.

"It wasn't at work," Felicity added before anyone could say anymore. Then she frowned as she probably realized she shouldn't be the one making up stories to tell Oliver's sister while she was wounded, exhausted and hopefully still at least partially drugged against the pain. "I mean..."

"It was nothing to do with Queen Consolidated, Thea," Oliver told her calmly. "And the police already have the guy, okay?"

The younger Queen blinked slowly for a moment, still clearly confused, but the earlier panic slowly seeped away as her boyfriend stood up and wrapped an arm around her shoulders. "Yeah..." she nodded slowly, before frowning in honest concern at the woman she really only knew as her brother's Executive Assistant. "You're really okay?"

"Yeah," Felicity nodded. "I guess it just scraped my shoulder, or something like that? So they just had to sow me up. It-It hurts, um, a lot. But I'll be okay. Thanks."
"Why are you working?" Thea's concerned frowned turned into a scowl towards her brother. "Ollie, she shouldn't be working. She should take time off to rest." Though her scowl was already starting to dim as she noticed the protective arm her brother had wrapped around his E.A.

"She's not working," Oliver replied, visibly forcing himself to pull away from Felicity and stand up. "She's here for lunch, with the rest of my friends," he added a deliberate stress to the last two words that would be amusing even if it didn't make his sister's eyebrows rise a little.

"Which is now ready," Tommy pointed out as he stood up, along with the rest of them. "And we should be eating it." At the look from the girl that didn't know she was his little sister, he added, "Gimme a break, Thea, please? I haven't enjoyed Raisa's homemade chicken soup in years."

Thea laughed lightly, "Well let's not let it get cold then."

"Come on," Oliver told Felicity gently, as he just as gently helped her up, Sara hovering almost as protectively on her other side. "You'll feel a little better once you've eaten something."

"Yeah," Felicity sighed her agreement, not even trying to stand on her own and trusting Oliver to keep her propped up.

John was just surprised the billionaire hadn't picked her up yet, but he supposed the archer was wise to recognize that that would be pushing their computer genius just a little too much when she was still somewhat capable of standing under her own power.

"Hopefully it'll stay down," the blonde went on, her nose wrinkling in understandable discomfort at the idea. "And I'm not going to be able to eat anything tonight, am I?"

"Why not?" Thea questioned before anyone else could respond, her curious eyes darting between her brother and the two blondes even as she asked the one in the middle, "What's happening tonight?"

That just made Felicity groan and everyone else wince sympathetically.

Because really, which monster was worse? Dinosaurs that might eat men, or the woman that wanted to chew up *Queen Consolidated* and spit it back out? It said a lot about Isabel Rochev—Isabitch, as Felicity apparently (and aptly) called her in her head—that John Diggle couldn't honestly say he was
OK, somehow Felicity's injury ended up taking over here a lot more than I planned. Still makes much more sense to me than how the show just sort of forgot about her being shot previously as soon as she changed her clothes... but that was more the last chapter, wasn't it? LOL (The again, when I looked up 'recovery time from GSW to shoulder' online, the minimum time was 3-6 months. Doesn't work for TV, or a fan fic, so some suspension of disbelief is still called for).
The hurt/comfort here, which was planned. How loopy Felicity got really wasn't, but I was so amused by it that I couldn't bring myself to edit it out. Remember, she didn't sleep well last night (however late she got home), was woken up early, has a hole that's just started healing in her shoulder, and being fed really good painkillers courtesy of Dr. Digg. That, and fear from traumatic memories was grating on me a bit after a while, so I needed the break...
Anyway, I thought the pill finally kicking in was a nice way to change up the summarizing of her childhood trauma. Maybe over the top. I was laughing hysterically while I typed some of it. But hopefully it's not TOO much. Don't worry, remember Dr. Digg did decide to cut her dose. There was a lot of emotional trauma here, too, so combined with pain from the injury, the lack of sleep and EVERYTHING ELSE, I don't think it came across as too, too strange... Because really, as much as I love the first Jurassic Park, I do, but after re-watching the T-Rex attacks a couple dozen times to figure out how to portray their mindset after the fact, all I could really think was it'd be damn terrifying the whole way through. Which they did a great job of acting. Poor kids.
Poor Felicity. I needed humor to balance it out a bit - so, Felicity became gradually looper for a little while. Would that REALLY happen as a result of your 2nd dose? Not really sure, but it worked for this scene. We haven't seen the end of all that fear, pain, etc., not by a long shot. (I mean in the 'traumatic past' part alone, I did have her just skip over the raptors her... not JUST because the scene was already LONG).
There's more dino-phobia later: they're going to Jurassic World after all. (As this being a crossover with not just Jurassic Park should make obvious, but it was asked, so yes, they'll be going there). For those that asked how much I'll be involving the characters: On Jurassic Park, I know of at least one we'll see for sure (you might be able to figure out who'd make the most sense if you think about it). On Jurassic World: Well, we'll be seeing Simon again soon. Probably more of him than we saw in the. The others? Well, the team will be going there so some interaction is required! How much? Sorry! You'll have to wait and see. ;)
Special thanks to JSevick, both for the wonderful work that inspired this one and your kind comments: I'm THRILLED you like the story so far.
Thank you to everyone who's commented and kudos'd so far. It always helps keep me motivated at the very least, and a few of you really made my day. Further comments, advice, ideas, theories, or some variation thereof will always be immensely appreciated.
:-D
I'd like to pose this to all of you that actually read my really long notes... Obviously based on the timeframe I've set this story in, Team Arrow has NOT met the Suicide
Squad yet. But I DID include them in the tags already because that meeting WILL be happening... just differently (you know, with dinosaurs and all *cackles evilly*). I DO have ideas myself already, but I'm curious as to what thoughts anyone else might have about the Suicide Squad meeting Team Arrow in Jurassic World. If you do, please feel free to share. And do NOT worry about anything being too crazy - I'm probably much farther out in that deep end than you. (It's kind of the general territory of this crossover. Haven't seen the Jaws-and-Indominus-Rex-eating dino yet, but she must be around here somewhere...)

Arrow's going again so we have that! I liked seeing Felicity still alive, in the present & future, but I didn't like not being able to see Felicity's ring. Especially after that marvelous scene where Oliver gave it back to her after a nurse took it off. I'm thinking they're going to keep taunting us with that future until we actually get there *sigh*...

Mrs. Darhk was much more interesting for me. Her intro was the mid-season finale. If the Arrow writers are true to form, that'd make her the real big bad for the season. Arrows actually been pretty good about girl power in the last few seasons, but a female big bad would take it to a whole new level. Then again they could be the evil couple to counter the good Olicity couple, too. I suppose I shouldn't get ahead of myself...

I look forward to seeing what everyone else thinks - about my story or the show. Please comment. Hope you're still enjoying my insanity! Till next time! :-D

~ Jess S
Thanks to everyone who's commented & kudos'd so far! You guys are great!
Also, apologies in advance, but my kindle decided to die on me so I wasn't able to do
the final editing the way I usually do, which is by listening to it. So sorry for any errors I
missed on my many readings, but I didn't want to make you wait any longer than I
already had. (And if you see anything that really needs to be fixed, please let me know!)
Hope you like the new scene! :-)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In the Hallway.

Sara Lance's P.O.V.

What most amazed Sara about those with absurd wealth was how accustomed to it they were if
they'd had it for any real length of time. Not necessarily that they didn't know how lucky they were
—some did, some supremely stupid ones really didn't, but most were somewhere in the middle. No,
it was the general expectation that fortune's favor would never turn on those that it'd already deemed
worthy. The well would never run dry. Nothing and no one could take that great wealth away.

But ill luck alone could destroy a fortune: just a storm might be too much for any boat's gambit, even
without a bomb on board to make sure of it. Bad choices could destroy even more easily. The source
could dry up at any moment. The ship could sink, with or without a bomb-blown hole in it. And
most of those without such good fortune would take it for themselves, given any opportunity.

Sara hadn't been in Starling City to see it, but she didn't have a hard time imagining how shocked
Tommy Merlyn must've been at that restaurant the first time one of his limitless credit cards was
declined. When his dad cut him off. Something all trust fund brats with any sense whatsoever had to
know to be wary of, but it would've been a hell of wakeup call nonetheless.

As the Magician had intended. And seeing as he'd been planning the mass murder of thousands at
the same time, too, it wasn't hard to imagine his cold calculations for his son. That the nasty shock
and submersion into reality had actually done Tommy good couldn't really be credited to his father
though. Anymore than the fact that 'only 502' people died due to his Undertaking. If that first device
under the clinic hadn't been disabled, if it'd gone off simultaneously with the second device, the pair
of them would've dropped a lot more buildings. And a lot more bodies.

As intended, those buildings and bodies would've mostly been in the Glades, but considering
Merlyn's murder weapon was a manmade earthquake there was no way to be certain that only the city's poorest area would've taken the hit. No way to be sure it wouldn't spread, shaking and dropping building that hadn't been built with massive earthquakes in mind all over the city. Maybe most of the skyscrapers would've been strong enough—and structurally sound enough—to stay standing, but there could've been another Nordell Tower, too. More than one. Every building was only as strong as the weakest part of its infrastructure, but if those weak links went—if the gas line blew or the materials used to make the building just weren't strong enough—that chain breaking would mean a big building falling. No one could know exactly how many might've died as a result. Even if what Merlyn wanted had happened as he'd planned: dropping every building in the Glades and killing everyone there would've meant tens of thousands dead. Maybe hundreds of thousands.

And who knows how many more might've died anyway if Ollie hadn't unintentionally shamed his mother into taking action. Or if Moira Queen hadn't acted by trying to warn as many people as possible. It wasn't really fair that the city in turn had blamed the woman for the deaths both her warning and her son hadn't been able to prevent. But the public obviously didn't know Oliver Queen was the vigilante that'd tried to save them, that continued to try to save them—otherwise his so-called 'copy-cats' certainly wouldn't have targeted him and his sister upon his return home. Though the cops would've been happy to arrest him alongside his mother.

History was littered with scapegoats, and countless would-be-scapegoats that'd been lucky enough to escape their almost fate. That the whole jury had actually found Moira not guilty still kind of amazed Sara though. Only a few months after the disaster, the assassin wouldn't have thought a whole jury made up of the city's citizens could be capable of calm reason, or logic, even if both were supposed to direct any juror far more than emotions. She also didn't think the case should've even been tried in Starling City—all things considered, she wasn't sure why the Queen lawyers hadn't challenged it or the D.A's office thought it was a good idea to start with—but it'd happened, ending in an entirely unexpected acquittal.

How you felt wasn't easy to ignore.

Sara knew her heart would long for Nyssa for a long time to come—likely her whole lifetime—no matter how sure she was that she shouldn't return to Nanda Parbat. To that way of life. She couldn't. She would go back to Nyssa, if it didn't mean going back to the killing, too. Everything else about the League she could stomach, but not the constant killing.

She was still surprised that the Demon's Heir really did love her enough to let her go... after a fight, yes, but Nyssa had chosen to let Sara go rather than kill her or let her kill herself...

Sara shook her head, making herself look around more. Waiting for her friend to emerge from the bedroom that'd been his from early childhood, she marveled at the sheer splendor of the hallway alone—let alone the rest of the Queen Family's magnificent castle of a home.
Money had obviously been no object when this masterpiece was built, about a century ago if Sara was remembering it right. That's why there were beautiful fireplaces in almost every room—though Laurel used to say Ollie and Thea didn't like the ones in their rooms lit when it wasn't completely freezing outside. The rich teak floors were warm under the soft glow from the perfectly placed lights set evenly into the equally warm wood wall panels. Which were either oak or rosewood, maybe both, Sara wasn't sure. Neither one was much use in general combat or training. At least not enough to merit mention during her time in the League. All the wood somehow complimented the rich, royal blue carpeting that stretched across almost all the hallway floors—soft and thick enough under foot that the floors didn't creak when you walked on it whether you were trained to avoid the wrong spots or not. She also didn't recognize any of the art on the walls (she'd never really been into painters), but she didn't doubt even each of the little ones that was set up as a decorative knick knack to be walked by in the hallway was worth more than most people made each month. At least.

Every bit the beautiful castle on the inside, just like it was outside. And while Sara didn't like to think ill of her sister, she did think that this castle—and the fabulous wealth that went along with the Queen name—had at least a little to do with why the elder Lance sister had tried to hold onto playboy Ollie Queen for so long. Sure, he could be sweet and impossibly charming, and his hotness was stupefying even before five years of Hell had helped him get ripped. But he was a boy that didn't want to grow up then, and his high school sweetheart clearly wasn't going to be able to change that.

It didn't excuse Sare stealing her big sister's cheating boyfriend, of course, to imagine that she'd done Laurel a favor by letting herself be pulled between them. Still, even with everything that happened because of it, Sara was kind of glad that Ollie had decided to run. Otherwise they'd probably be the stereotype by now—married too soon, a kid or two in the picture, and a nasty divorce tearing both their lives apart.

Maybe not.

Maybe Laurel would've come to her senses sooner. Stopped fantasizing and seen that what everyone was telling her was true—that her playboy billionaire wasn't at all ready to settle down. Maybe she would've just gotten tired of the 'mistakes' before an actual wedding happened.

Maybe Ollie would've one day grown up into a man who actually wanted to be responsible and make something of himself without The Gambit, Lian Yu, and everything else he'd gone through. Looking back, Sara couldn't really say. She didn't think she'd be anything like who she was today if she'd never snuck onto that boat, but she didn't know who the college girl she'd once been would've become either. Like Ollie, she hadn't had any plan then: life was about living in the moment and having fun. But maybe it would've grown old eventually.
Still, she wasn't sure she could ever picture Oliver Queen as devoted to Laurel as he clearly was to Felicity Smoak. What was all the more amazing about it was the two weren't actually dating yet. Because the billionaire couldn't see clearly with his head still mostly up his ass. And the two of them had sort of tried to consciously friend-zone each other for the sake of their vigilante mission, and forgotten to let their subconscious’ in on what that zone was supposed to mean. Or they just worked too well together for the friend zone barriers to work. Along with every other barrier they'd tried to put up—though the Canary would've kind of liked to see Felicity start dating someone else. She couldn't see that barrier lasting long either, or the tech genius having the heart to keep that relationship going, but she thought she might've enjoyed watching Oliver suffer a bit more than he had, per John Diggle, when a smart kid from Central City had noticed their girl. Unfortunately, said kid was now in a coma after being literally struck by lightning...

Sara shook her head, focusing on the details of the hallway again before her thoughts ran away with themselves anymore.

It was the sort of splendor one expected of a high-end hotel, not someone's home. Not unless that someone was part of a family like the Queens—wealthy beyond belief—real royalty, or some convoluted variation thereof.

It was the kind of luxuries that were afforded to all members of the League of Assassins: to varying extents based upon your worth in the eyes of the Demon's Head. The assassins were expected to undergo brutal training, endure tortuous conditions—and even real torture—without wavering in their missions, and even die if necessary, but their rooms were exceedingly comfortable. Technology was all but forbidden outside of strict guidelines, and the League grew its own food, but many other luxuries were permitted to make their way to Nanda Parbat with Ra's al Ghul's permission.

Or his Heir's? Because while Sara had just about everything she could think to ask for at Nanda Parbat, she'd always gotten the sense that Ra's al Ghul didn't entirely approve of her. Probably because he somehow sensed that the Canary couldn't completely commit herself blindly to anyone: after Ivo that kind of trust was beyond her. But she was loyal to his daughter, and for his daughter, Ra's al Ghul had put up with Nyssa's Beloved for years. Maybe because he could see that Sara did love Nyssa, and maybe his own love for his daughter made the hard, powerful man hope their loved prove stronger than anything else might've made him expect.

That alone gave Sara a glimmer of hope that Nyssa's father might really let her go—since it was Nyssa asking it of him. Not that he could ever let Nyssa go, of course. No. That was something the League couldn't ever allow. The Heir's Beloved, however, ultimately held much less consequence than the Heir herself. Undoubtedly there would be more than a few who'd be interested to see Nyssa return alone, but the coveted position of beloved wasn't one that was given or lost lightly...

Yes, Sara would always be a weakness for Nyssa: one that many might take advantage of if that advantage might be worth the risk. But Nyssa truly was her father's daughter. Even if in Nyssa's
lifetime alone the man had become more and more changed by the Lazarus Pit as the likelihood of his ultimate demise approached... should someone be fool enough to challenge Nyssa al Ghul, the Demon's daughter would do what needed to be done.

Sara glanced up when the bedroom door finally opened, but she didn't say anything right away when Oliver came back out into the hall.

He closed the door carefully, not wanting to risk that closing 'click' waking the blonde still inside up so soon. Only then did he look at her. "She's sleeping," he said softly.

"Good. Glad to hear it," Sara replied honestly, voice also quiet. Then she cocked her head to the side. "How about you?"

"I haven't napped during the day in years." The billionaire shook his head ruefully as he walked by her, and she turned to keep pace with him.

"Not what I mean, Ollie, and you know it," Sara shot back smoothly. "How are you?"

The look he gave her couldn't be more sardonic. "I'm fine," he replied flatly.

"Really?" Sara shook her head. "'Cause I'm not."

Oliver paused at that. "What?" his frown was one of honest concern, even if he didn't want to be honest about anything else.

Sara shook her head slowly. "I like Felicity. And I don't like seeing her like that. Hurt, and sad, and traumatized." She grimaced. "Those are all things she's not supposed to be. And if her seeing her that way sucks for me, I can't imagine what it must be like for you."

Oliver's face twisted through a dozen different emotions before settling on weary worry. "Sara—"

"Don't you dare try to apologize for loving her, Ollie," the former assassin told him sternly. "She's like sunshine. And we've gotten used to living in a world without it, but that doesn't mean wanting that—wanting her—is wrong."
Oliver blinked at her, looking a bit bemused. "Are you sure you're not in love with her?"

Sara snorted, "Maybe a little bit," she admitted with a light laugh, her smile sincere. "She's..."

"Remarkable," Oliver offered with a smile of his own when she trailed off.

"Remarkable. Yeah, sure. That fits," Sara nodded. Then she shook her head again, slowly, "But even if my heart didn't already belong to Nyssa, it wouldn't matter. I'm not the one she's in love with."

Oliver's smile immediately fell. "I can't," he shook his head. "I'm not good for her."

"Why not?"

"You know why."

"No. I don't. Enlighten me."

The vigilante scowled, looking away as he answered. "The people I care about tend to get hurt. She'd be safer far away from me."

"Maybe, maybe not," Sara said, crossing her arms. "But I don't think she's going anywhere, Ollie," she shook her head. "And what you're trying to do will only hurt both of you."

"No, I—"

"At first," Sara kept going over his attempt to deny it. "I thought you were just lonely. That that was why you really wanted me to stay." She shook her head. "Then I met Felicity, and right away I started to wonder if you'd gone blind. But it became obvious pretty quickly that what you really wanted, aside from reuniting me with my family, was a substitute for the blonde you didn't think you could have."
"No, Sara," Oliver shook his head again quickly. "That's not—"

"Let me finish," the former assassin commanded firmly, waiting for his mouth to close in reluctant compliance before she went on. "I get it, Ollie. We're both pieces of each other's past that we can try to hold on to. We've both been through a lot—together and apart. We made mistakes together. We've saved each other. Hurt each other."

"Sara—"

"Still not finished," Sara said, again firmly, this time not waiting for his mouth to snap closed before going on. "Except, I kind of am," she sighed, meeting his eyes. "I love you, Ollie. You know you're like family to me."

"Not too like family," he interjected, the slight smirk that occasionally returned from his more carefree past appearing.

"No, not too much..." Sara nodded, returning the smirk for a moment before she let it fade. "But Ollie, I love you—but I'm not in love with you."

"I know," he answered softly.

"And you're not in love with me," she continued, smirking slightly when he stayed stubbornly silent. "You love her, Ollie. Anyone that pays any attention at all around you two when you're together can see that."

"I can't..." Oliver's voice almost broke on the second word, like it physically pained him to keep making himself say it. Probably because it did. "I'd ruin her, Sara. I can't let myself do that."

"So don't," Sara shrugged with a lot more nonchalance on the matter than she actually felt. "Stop being a stupid, selfish jackass and put her first."

He blinked at her incredulously. "Excuse me?"

"You heard me," she replied easily, shrugging again. "You're not that guy anymore, Ollie. You don't
even like him. Maybe you never did. So stop trying to hide behind him.”

"Sara..." he sighed.

"You know I'm right."

He sighed again. "You're one to talk," he frowned, holding her gaze again. "You left the woman you love. Then you made her leave you."

The released member of the League of Assassins shook her head again. "No. I left the League. And I loved her too much to ask her to."

Oliver blinked, but then seized onto the topic. "That's not how I remember it."

"Then you weren't paying attention," Sara sighed. "And there was a lot more going on there than you could ever see. Nyssa's..." she looked away, shaking her head slowly. "She the devoted daughter. Her loyalty to the League is absolute. It has to be. The League is her family. Her whole life... And her duty—it's how she sees the world."

"'Sees it?'" Oliver repeated undecidedly.

"She tried to explain it to me once," Sara sighed again, "She tried to help me see that however horrible our orders sometimes seemed, they served a higher purpose. That each life we took made the world a better place. For everyone... except them, of course." She closed her eyes a moment. "And I tried. I really did. I just... couldn't."

"So she let you go," Oliver murmured softly, his voice understanding; then expectant. "How can you expect me to do any different for Felicity?"

Her gaze snapped opened and back to his. "It's not the same thing, Ollie. Not at all the same thing."

"Yeah it—"
"No, it's not." Sara's scowl deepened. "Nyssa could never leave the League. Not even for me. She's Ra's al Ghul's daughter... Even if she could bring herself to do it, to even try? Even if she could make herself betray her father and everything she knows? He'd never let it stand. Let her go. He couldn't. I didn't think he'd even let me go, after what Merlyn did... Nyssa knows her father better than anyone thought." Sara shook her head sadly, eyes still locked with his. "But don't you dare try to say that you being an ass to Felicity is even remotely the same thing."

"It's not," Oliver admitted with another sigh of his own, not even trying to deny that the brief relationship the pair of them had let happen was yet another attempt at running away. "But she's safer if she's—"

"Miserable?" Sara snapped. "And trying to take on criminal masterminds without backup? 'Cause the bullet that hit her says otherwise."

Because they were both her friends now, and they were both fools when it came to themselves and each other, and she wasn't going to let love pass them by now that she could see there was much more to Felicity Smoak than her brilliant mind and her adorable babbles. There was darkness and terror in her history, too, and that terror's test forged true strength. Enough to endure even Oliver Queen, in all his glory and his stupidity, once they finally saw sense together. Sure, the genius might need some help finding her way again: but she would, as she had before. And everyone needed help sometimes.

Oliver scowled. "She never should've been there."

The former assassin nodded. "Not by herself, no."

"Not at all, Sara!"

"Pretty sure that's her call."

"Sara—"

"What, Ollie? What right do you have to ask anything more of her?" the blonde snapped back at him, meeting his scowl with her own. "You've already taken over her whole life. Practically destroyed her career, too, from the sounds of it."
"No I—"

"With Isabitch's help," the former assassin went on without waiting for his objection. "And you've
given her no time at all for any kind of a social life away from you, too. So how dare you think you
have any right to demand anything of her?"

"No, Sara, she—"

"And she's sacrificed it all, without any real protests. Sure, Digg said she realized you were going to
ruin her career for the sake of your 'mission' with the so-called 'promotion' you forced on her, but she
let it slide. For you. She put up with Isabitch for you, too." Sara shook her head. "Hell, she's going to
put herself through her own island—her own hell—again, for you."

That gave the man pause, though he didn't flinch. But his voice was flat with the firm control he
locked down to stop that flinch from happening. "No, she's not."

"Yeah, Ollie, she is. Don't try to kid yourself. Even I know her better than that. And we only met a
few weeks ago." Sara shook her head again. "And if you're going to let her do that alone—"

"No," He had to unlock to jerk his head from side to side as he tried to cut in. "We—"

"If you're really going to let her go to hell for you, all the time believing that you don't love her and
never will?" Sara snorted. "Well, then, maybe you're still more that selfish boy than I thought." She
raised an eyebrow again. "Are you?"

The archer swallowed. "...No."

"Good." Sara nodded. "Then be there for her. And maybe, after that, you'll have at least a toe to
stand on when you're arguing with her about her life and her choices. Maybe even a whole foot if
you get your head all the way out of your ass." She met his gaping stare with a slight smirk. "Now,
do I have to drag you down to the home theater?"

Oliver blinked, "What?"
"Roy's talked your sister into a movie this afternoon, and I promise Felicity I'd make sure you watched it."

It took him a long second to get it. "Wait, the dinosaur movie?" he clarified, a little incredulously.

"Yup."

"The cartoon?"

"Yup," Sara's smirk widened as she confirmed it. "And you're gonna watch every minute of it."

The vigilante looked ready to object, but then he thought better of it and asked warily, "Why?" He looked like he thought she might really try to drag him down there and he couldn't decide if he should fight her or run for it while the coat was clear. But she knew better than that, and so did he.

"'Cause you'll want to know what Digg and I find on Masrani before dinner tonight. And we're not gonna tell you anything if you leave." Sara shrugged. "Besides, do you really want to leave Thea alone with her boyfriend and a movie they can mostly ignore?"

"No..." Oliver answered slowly, then frowned. "Wait, what are you—"

"Good. Digg's calling some of his old army buddies, said he'd be back in a bit." Sara told him. "And I've got some digging to do, too." Then she jerked her head towards the stairs. "Better get going."

Oliver's frown deepened as he glanced back in the opposite direction, towards his now infrequently used bedroom doors. "I should—"

"I'll be starting with some emails. Maybe texting," Sara interrupted. "I'll keep an eye on her... Now go, before Speedy and her suped-up boy-toy come looking for you."

Oliver glanced back at the door, then his eyes went between her and the door once, twice, before he finally sighed and nodded. "Raisa should be checking on her in a bit, once her room's ready."
Sara smirked, "And what was wrong with the rooms that were already ready?" she didn't doubt there were at least a couple that were always kept in readiness for any unexpected guests, and her smirk didn't fade as the billionaire scowled just a little.

"Those are in the guest wing." He answered evenly, like it was obvious. Like the housekeeper hadn't asked him which rooms should be made ready before she served them all lunch, and she hadn't promised the picked room for Felicity would be ready shortly. Probably already was.

"Uh-huh," her smirked got a little bigger. "And this is, what? The family wing?" The smirk became a smile as he turned away. "It is, isn't it?"

"Don't wake her up," Oliver replied flatly, voice pitched soft even as he walked away from her towards the staircase. "She needs to rest."

"Uh-huh," Sara chuckled, watching him walk away till he reached the top of the stairs, but turning for the bedroom doors when he glanced back at her. She opened those doors just as carefully as he had, and made sure they shut just as silently, too.

Sara didn't think it was strange, that he'd brought Felicity here instead of asking if the promised V.I.P guestroom was ready yet. It could be called both over protective and entirely possessive, but neither description was strange for Ollie regarding the wonderful woman he didn't want to let himself have. That he didn't believe he could ever be worthy of...

The other blonde was a small shape in the king-size bed, nearly completely hidden underneath the silky sheets, blankets and comforter the bed's owner had bundled atop and around her. In fact, only the very top of her head was visible since she had her nose tucked into the warm safety of the likely very expensive comforter, too. So Sara could see only her closed eyes and the golden ponytail Ollie apparently hadn't been willing to risk undoing for her. Then again, as far as she knew he'd never grown his hair long enough to tie it back so he might not have any idea just how uncomfortable sleeping and waking up with a ponytail that tight could be. He had taken her glasses off, though, neatly folding them and setting them on the bedside table next to a filled glass of water that'd (Because it did have a cupboard of glassware, of course. Fully stocked, just like the one by his equally well-equipped for entertaining liquor cabinet.)

Sara considered the sleeping woman for a long moment after she made her way over to the bedside, then—seeing as the genius seemed to be sleeping quite deeply: done in from the ordeal of retelling her past traumas—she decided to risk it. Carefully cradling her head, the assassin pinched the golden hair near the roots—gently, but just strong enough to keep Felicity from feeling the tug—then with a few deft movements she worked the tie free, then slowly pulled her hands away as the tumble of
golden curls spilled out over the pillow.

Felicity shifted in her sleep just as the tie was tugged loose, her brows furrowing a little and the edges of her lips curving into a frown as her chin emerged from beneath the blankets. But then she relaxed again: starting to shift into a more comfortable position, except she stopped almost as quickly as she'd started to shift. Her subconscious evidently already trained after just one night of attempting to sleep with her injury: so she didn't rest enough weight on her shoulder to wake herself up. This time, at least. "No, not done. It'll beep," the other blonde said, almost too softly for the assassin standing over her to hear. "It'll beep when it's done. Go back... salmon ladder... Like watching you... do that."

Sara snorted softly, smiling as she turned and crossed the room on light feet. When she reached the blue couch that faced the rarely used fireplace she sat down in the spot that'd allow her to watch both the doorway and sleeping beauty, studying the flames for a moment. They were crackling softly today, possibly in deference to the cold winter weather outside, or maybe Oliver remembered how cold the island was, too.

With another shake of her head, she pulled her phone out of the inner coat pocket she kept it safely zipped away inside. Then she stared at it for a moment. It wasn't a phone anyone would recognize on sight. In fact, they'd probably assume it was an older model they never bothered to look at. They'd be wrong.

Sara could tell the first time she turned the device on that it was much more advanced than the one the League had provided her with before she'd left all of that behind. It was military-grade hardware, probably provided by whoever it was that Oliver had gotten all the rest of his higher-end tech and weaponry from. (Except the bow: that was obviously custom-made. And an excellent job of it, too.)

More than that, Felicity had assured her that it was doubly-secure now. Because the team's I.T girl took her thankless job just as seriously as Sara had suspected from the start, and had likely looked over every piece of tech they ever used. Sure, the Clock-King had been able to one-up her with some sort of super-computer-key, but the former assassin wouldn't be too surprised to learn somewhere down the road that their genius had figured out how to block the unblockable tech-weapon.

Sara sighed, knowing she was just stalling as she thought about this sort of stuff, staring at her phone. So she made herself open a new email and start typing. A call might've been braver, but she wasn't always brave, and a text wouldn't be long enough, nor would it be as private as a text. If Nyssa had gone home and her phone was thus not needed at Nanda Parbat, the League member that transcribed it might see it, but the ones that were actually on duty watching the 'inactive' phones wouldn't read every line, too. Plus it'd be easier to hit 'send' when she was done thumbing the message in than it could ever be to listen to rings and then the basic voicemail message that wouldn't even be her love's much missed voice.
Nyssa,

If you're reading this: thank you. I know you may hate me for saying it, and that's your right, but thank you for finding the strength in your heart to let me try to save what little is left of my soul.

Please, remember what I said. I was never with you out of gratitude for my life. I was with you because I loved you. I always will.

My decision to leave was never about you. Not really. You were why I stayed as long as I did. As long as I could. You were everything that was good about my life with the League. I'll always remember that. Remember you.

But the killing... without question, without remorse? Leaving a husband dead next to his wife, for her to find him cold in the morning. Or any child to find their father like that... Or even if they'd just never know what'd become of them, left hoping their loved one would return while that loved one rotted at the bottom of the ocean, like my family thought I was... I just couldn't do it anymore. No matter how many bad choices those men and women had made, too many of those kills just ate away at me, till there was almost nothing left.

I am sorry I wasn't stronger. For you. But I always believed you deserved better than me, and I hope you find that, a beloved that's worthy of you.

I never will: because who could ever compare with you? Please, just remember that I did love you. That I always will. And nothing can change that.

I don't have any right to ask anything more of you. I know that. And I understand if you don't even want to read this, or if you delete it right after you do. You have every right to hate me now.

Sara took a deep breath, her eyes scanning over the heartfelt message once, then again, before she glanced towards Oliver's bed again. At the friend that was wounded and exhausted, both physically and mentally. Then she made herself keep going.

If you're still reading this, and you can find enough forgiveness for one last favor, please answer this as soon as you can.

I wouldn't ask for myself, you know that. But I have to, for a friend.

Sara glanced at the bed again, then tried to put it in words that'd reach the Heir to the Demon.

I never talked about her before, because I didn't know her then. I only met her after I came home again.

You'd like her, Nyssa. Strange as it is to say, she reminds me of you. Not because she's anything like you. She's not. She doesn't have a clue how to fight, really, and all her strength is really her incredible mind. She welcomed me as a friend as soon as we met, and I think she'd always be a better friend than I can ever be. And she's cute, though I don't think she swings our way.
But she is like me. Or at least the me that you always talked about. Remember, when you tried to explain why you loved me? Why I was supposedly worthy of your love?

You talked about my laughter once. About how I'd laugh in those early days, even when I probably shouldn't, but couldn't help it. She doesn't laugh like that, but she's very honest. More honest than she'd like to be, because she'll try to correct herself almost as quickly as she speaks. Even though what she'd first said was entirely honest. And her corrections half the time don't help, other than making everyone laugh or a few people blush.

And she's strong. She doesn't think she is, anymore than I did when you first started training me. Hell, probably less, because she's barely been taught even the most basic self defense. I taught her how throw a punch just yesterday—from the hips, where the power comes from, like you taught me.

Then she took a bullet for me. I was supposed to be protecting her, but the criminal we were chasing was getting away. She figured out how to track him down, and I went after him. I didn't realize she was following me: probably to tell me where he'd gone next when he moved. She surprised me just as he came out, and didn't hesitate to push me out of the way of his shot. Even then, she was the one that took the bastard down. Turned his own weapon against him. Not in any way the League would approve of, I guess: he was a computer expert, and so is she. But she still won in the end.

Thankfully the bullet only hit her in the shoulder, just a deep grace that wouldn't be much if she was used to pain or injuries. And if she wasn't so small that even a bullet that almost missed her could cut deeply enough to cause significant pain. I thanked her later, for saving my life. Maybe I would've gotten out of the way on my own, of course, but it seemed like the thing to say. And she said it was nothing, that she'd always wanted to say she'd taken a bullet for someone. That she finally had her own scar now. I know she really meant it, too, though she was high on the painkiller we'd tricked her into taking by then.

Sara paused, wondering if that was too much. If trying to win the woman she still loved over to liking her friend hadn't made her say too much for either woman to really like. But Nyssa wouldn't be easily moved in person, let alone from afar, so she didn't dare hold back anything that might help persuade her.

The man that shot her is in jail now. Hasn't gone to trial yet: maybe never will. He has a terminal illness that'll kill him sooner rather than later. His crime spree was to get money for the family he's leaving behind... Not that that made it right. His crimes led to more than a few deaths, plenty of injuries. He almost killed a whole bus and train load of innocent people to cover one of his getaways. But he has nothing to do with what we need.

My friend had a visitor when I checked on her this morning: her first morning after getting shot. His name's Simon Masrani. Billionaire C.E.O and owner of that dinosaur island: Jurassic World. For some reason, he wants her to go there. He really wants her to go there. Apparently he's been trying to get her to go for years.

Because she's one of the survivors of the first park. When it was called Jurassic Park, not Jurassic World. She was just a kid then, invited along by the first owner's granddaughter, then chased around the island by monsters that could crush cars: over cliffs, up trees and electric fences. And probably even more nightmares no kid should've ever had to suffer through.

She shouldn't have to go back. She doesn't want to. But Masrani has her now. Because of another
one of our friends. If she doesn't go, that friend wouldn't blame her, no one could or would. But a lot of innocent people might lose their jobs. Their livelihoods. And she's all heart. Brilliant, hilarious, but caring to a fault. So she'll go. She hasn't said it yet, but everyone already knows that'll be her decision.

...I just need to know that she'll be safe, Nyssa. She won't be going alone. I'm going, and I'm sure I won't be the only one. But I need to know that all we have to worry about is the dinosaurs and nightmares. That Masrani isn't tied to anything that puts him on the League's radar, I guess. I know I have right to ask, but I am anyway.

For what it's worth: thank you for everything.

All my love,

Sara.

The former League of Assassins member hesitated for one long moment after she finished, eyes skimming over the words for any obvious error, thoughts blurring through if she would add anything more or make it shorter. Then, after a deep breath, she hit 'send.'

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the wait on this scene. What little free time I have this time of year was kind of taken over by a frozen pipe bursting as the weather started to warm up earlier this week. (Frozen pipes are bad, but burst pipes are worst. Especially if they're in the heating system. The nice (expensive, but nice) emergency plumber came pretty fast the next day to get our heat and water going again, but that night and morning without either one were a weird kind of misery. At least the weather was warm enough for it not too matter too much, it was just annoying that we couldn't REALLY clean up the living room or the basement, let alone shower after we'd cleaned up as best we could... *sigh* But the pipes are fixed now, and we're just waiting for the ceilings and floors... is it weird that I'm almost used to it after a few days? My dog and cat still avoid the living room...

Anyway, back to the wonderful world of fan fiction! This scene probably wasn't at all what you were expecting, all things considered. But we'll get to the dinner (and the Island, PLEASE), eventually... What I have planned for this story, however, involves a bit of working up to it, since I AM trying to basically weave the end of Season 2 into Jurassic World as best I can. Plus some extra Olicity. The step this scene took in that regard should be fairly obviously.

And there definitely won't be as much of a wait for the next scene, since it's almost done. But I want to update Felicitas before I finish writing/editing that. Still, neither one should be very long.

Thank you to everyone who's commented and kudos'd so far! I look forward to seeing what you think of this scene, and anymore projections you have for the story going forward (because those are ALWAYS lots of fun).

Bye for now!

~ Jess S
Longer than most roads

Chapter Notes

OK... somehow this still isn't the dinner scene yet. Sorry. Maybe it actually takes them a while to look that pretty? Hope you like it anyway.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Longer than most roads.

Oliver's P.O.V.

Knock-knock.

Oliver didn't turn towards the doorway at his sister's soft knock. His door was already open and inviting almost anyone in, so Thea was only knocking to be polite. Possibly remembering the time he'd snapped at her for not knocking when he made the mistake of not thinking to close it before changing his shirt and she'd seen his scars for the first time. Right now, he was just finishing getting ready for dinner, and his hands had tightened enough ties around his neck to do it without him really watching, so he turned his eyes went to her not-so-patient reflection in the mirror. "Hey sis," he tried lightly, but his cordial greeting earned him only an eye roll.

"So?" the expectant expression on the brunette's face looked so startlingly like Tommy—her other half-brother—that for a second he could only stare. "Where's this big dinner?"

Her question quickly burnt through that fog, but the lingering sting of their mother's—perhaps foolishly—unexpected betrayal made him frown as he answered. "What?"

"You know," Thea's hand gesture encompassed all of him. "The reason for all your fancy-fancy tonight? I know it's not a date. There's some big business guy from out of town?"

The C.E.O of Queen Consolidated sighed, "Simon Masrani," he admitted slowly, not seeing any reason not to. "From the Masrani Corporation. He's interested in some kind of deal."

"'Some kind of deal?'" she repeated right back at him, crossing her arms in a regal poise that her brother could see she did unconsciously now, but he could also remember watching her mimic their
mom through that poise and others. She couldn't manage the disapproval quite as well as their mother, maybe it took many more years of practice, but seeing as he wasn't talking to the other Queen woman if he could help it, Thea was completely ahead of her now. "No wonder mom's so worried."

Oliver sighed as he finally felt the tie catch in a knot that was good enough, his hands dropping to his sides while he turned to face his sister directly. "What'd you mean?" he asked her, trying to sound like he really cared—when in truth he was torn in half on how much he could care or not. Moira Queen would always be his mother, but he wasn't sure he'd ever be able to trust her again. And that realization sinking in had left a deep wound in his mind's view of their relationship. Thus the main reason he'd told her they were done, their relationship nonexistent except in the fact that they both cared for and about Thea. That, and Oliver would continue to protect his remaining family as best he could, but he couldn't do much to protect his mother from herself. Or himself from her. There may come a time when he'd have to forgive her, but that could really only happen after he was sure he could. And even then: forgiving wouldn't mean forgetting, not even for his mother.

"She canceled her latest campaign thing—dinner with someone or other." Thea answered, still frowning at him. "Super last minute. I mean, she was already all fancied up, too, before she made the call to what's-his-name."

Oliver blinked, "Walter?" he couldn't really imagine that's who she meant, but as far as he could tell Walter Steele was the driving force for Moira Queen's surprise campaign. Despite their divorce and the all the painful, real reasons for it.

"No, not Walter," the look his sister shot him probably couldn't contain more disdain or disbelief mixed together. "He's still family, Ollie, all the lies and natural disasters in the world won't change that. And, unlike you, I lived with him for years before that. I'd never forget him." Thea sighed, then gestured imperiously again. "No, I mean mom's campaign guy. Mark or Matt, something or other." She snorted. "Course she might've told you this, if you'd even said 'hi' to each other today. Or, you know, any time this week?"

"I told you I've been busy, Thea—"

"No, Ollie," she cut him off with a scowl.

It seemed like a lot of women he cared about were scowling at him lately. That almost made Oliver glad that Felicity needed help now. Almost. He hated seeing her hurt—bleeding from a bullet or crying from traumatic memories—but at least he could try to help her. He wasn't sure he could take
her loud voice right now when everyone else was already yelling at him. So hopefully she, at least, didn't think he'd done anything to deserve it.

"I know you two are fighting about something and you're both keeping it from me. Or trying to, anyway." Thea's scowl deepened a little as she went on too fast for him to get a word in edgewise. "Not really fair, since you were the one that convinced me to forgive her for getting involved with a mass murderer."

"That's not what... this is about," Oliver didn't let himself wince at that, instead he slowly shook his head. He didn't like it, but clearly continuing to lie—or trying to, as she'd said—wasn't going to work with his sister. "It's complicated, Speedy."

"Uh-huh," her response had a strong note of sarcastic skepticism, then she raised an eyebrow at him. "I wouldn't think you'd want more secrets, Ollie. Anymore than me."

"Thea—"

"But I get it, kind of," she cut in again, uncrossing her arms as she walked over to his couch, looking up at him as she sat down. "Has something to do with you hooking up with your secretary, right?"

"What?" Oliver blinked again, but then tried to object. "No. No, Thea, Felicity and I aren't—"

"Uh-huh." The note was stronger now, like syrup on the syllables. Syrup that was as sarcastic and skeptical as real syrup was sweet and sticky. "You're really lucky your life doesn't revolve around lying, Ollie." His sister shook her head, going on again before he could try to say anything else. "'Cause I can't think of any other reason you would've had her 'napping' in your room this afternoon. Especially since Raisa already had one of the best guest rooms made up for her. Right down the hall. In the family wing." She jerked her chin in the direction of the specified room. "Where I think she and Sara are painting nails now, but I didn't want to interrupt. I already had my mani-pedi this morning."

Not that Oliver needed the clarification. He knew exactly where he'd had their housekeeper put Felicity. He just hadn't wanted to put her there himself when she'd been asleep in his arms, so tired the exhaustion made her limp even as she slept.

His sister had good points. At least the housing observations were—and Oliver had known it was a mistake to put Felicity in his room as soon as Sara had pointed it out hours ago.
When the other vigilante may or may not have been officially breaking up with him without saying it. Oliver wasn't entirely sure since they'd never really talked about their relationship when it didn't look like they were falling back on each other. It had sort of felt like they were breaking up. They'd never really dated, per say, neither one of them had the time or inclination. Mostly they'd just been good friends with great benefits. They talked, they had sex, and they looked out for each other—as vigilantes, and in general. Except in Sara's mind that seemed to now mean making him realize he should be dating Felicity... thus the breakup without the exact words being said?

Whether that was what it was or not, Oliver hadn't been able to make himself turn back around and move Felicity from where she was sleeping comfortably. She'd faded so fast during lunch, nearly falling asleep at the table as almost everyone encouraged her to try and eat, and then finally falling asleep in his arms as he carried her up the stairs that'd looked so daunting to her tired eyes.

If she hadn't been asleep by the time he reached the top of the staircase he might have been able to keep walking past his room to at least see if the nearest guestroom was ready, he was sure she would've insisted on it. But he wasn't sure she'd still been awake after he'd taken her up the first step. Going to his room and tucking her into the bed that was far nicer than any of the guestroom beds had seemed only natural.

And he couldn't regret it. Not when she'd slept so well—with no nightmares from when he'd tucked her in to when Sara had returned to gently wake her up. Sleeping soundly through the former assassin's watch (while Oliver was being tortured with a cartoon about a little boy dinosaur trying to find his way in the world after his mother died protecting him). Sleeping steadily on, only softly mumbling in her sleep a few times after Oliver took over. Until Sara finally decided they had to wake her up so she could be dragged to her own room, the nearest guest room, to start getting ready for dinner...

In the nearest guest room to his room. Closer even than the one that'd really been Tommy's room here for most of their lives—longer than Thea had been alive. In the suite of rooms the Queen siblings had once agreed only another sibling could occupy, but that was back when even Oliver wasn't much more than a kid and another sibling had seemed possible. That no third Queen child had ever arrived hadn't made them consider relinquishing the room to anyone else. Not for Tommy, who'd only asked a few times in teasing. Not even for Laurel, who never would've dared ask for a different room from the one that the lady of the house had chosen for her. Oliver hadn't even thought about the history when he'd told Raisa to get the suite closest to his own free, but he probably should've expected it'd draw his sister's attention.

But none of that was what the billionaire should be thinking about while he shook his head again. "No, Thea—"
"She's cute." The brunette went on like he hadn't just tried to say anything. Again. "Never really noticed her much before lunch today. And I never would've guessed you'd fall into an office romance, but you haven't been hitting even Verdant much lately, since you're so 'busy' at work. Guess it makes sense. I'm glad Sara's still friends: she seems supportive. And... Felicity, right? She's sweet. And I hope she's feeling better now," Thea shook her head, then shrugged. "But I think I get mom's problem, too."

Oliver stopped attempting protests at that, his frown more of curious confusion for a second. "What'd you mean?" he asked again, unable to keep an edge of defensiveness out of his tone.

Thea rolled her eyes. "Well, the C.E.O falling for his secretary thing can look pretty bad if it's not spun right, Ollie. And mom's running for mayor, remember?" she wrinkled her nose. "Plus, if there was much truth to the stuff about Dad cheating on her, it had to have been at work, right? That's where Dad was almost all the time. At or traveling for Q.C."

Oliver almost swallowed his own tongue as that immediately brought to mind the massive mistake he'd made in Moscow.

No matter what the Canary thought, it'd never been easy to not defend Felicity to Isabel more than he had. Just like it'd always been hard to see the blonde hurt at all, even just by cruel words. But he still thought his read on the Russian woman was right: that the more he defended his E.A, the more his co-C.E.O would attack her. He'd hoped that their one night in Moscow might calm at least Isabel's jealousy, if not win her over somewhat when it came to helping him give Q.C. Apparently it was a failure on both counts, meaning he'd been responsible for that hurt look on Felicity's face for nothing.

The pain in the genius's eyes for just those first few seconds after Isabel had indirectly referred to the E.A as Oliver's whore—by suggesting right in front of her that he could give her the night off since he'd already had sex—had made him regret the attempt at resolution right away. Especially since Isabel's words hadn't seemed like a surprise to her at all.

He'd hated hurting Felicity: and hated himself more than a little. Still did. Hated hurting her. Hated having to let Isabel imply anything hurtful about her, let alone to her. And hated feeling like he was careless, self-centered Ollie again—regretting hurting someone he loved, but unable to undo what he'd already done.

That he'd done it to try and help their situation overall didn't help. That he would've not told Felicity about it if she hadn't shown up at his hotel room when he wasn't twenty minutes early for their meet-up before the mission didn't help. Yes, he wouldn't have told her both because he knew it'd bother her and it meant nothing to him—but that didn't help either. None of it had helped.
Any of it was more than enough of a reason to stay away from Isabel Rochev as much as he could after that. To at least try and pretend that what'd happened in Russia stayed completely in Russia—since he couldn't entirely pretend it hadn't happened at all.

Sleeping with the woman, like she'd so obviously wanted, had seemed like such a good idea at the time. Not just because she was an attractive, assertive woman, but because it seemed like such an easy way into her good graces. Keep your enemies closer and all that. That it now seemed like Isabel's plans in Moscow had less to do with lust and more to do with trying to control him, just like he was trying to control her, almost seemed like karma.

Even if it had worked, it wouldn't be worth it. Ever. Nothing could be worth that agony in Felicity's eyes for that one stunned second before she'd looked down and mostly blinked it away.

But learning that he'd slept with a woman who'd once been his father's mistress added a sickening edge to the punishment. It also explained the animosity between the Stellmoor International V.P and the Queen matriarch all too well. That didn't make it any easier to swallow back the bile at the back of his throat though.

Anymore than seeing pain in Felicity's eyes again had been any easier than hearing it in one of the babbles. Her words were usually so adorably endearing: an honest look into her brilliant mind, not a window to how close she was to breaking down from fear.

And knowing that his mother had put that pain there? Had preyed upon Felicity's fear of hurting Oliver to make her believe she would lose him? That betrayal had made something he wouldn't have thought could be worsened so much worse. Contrasted against Felicity's honest pain and fear, his mother's deception and betrayal was like an eclipse stealing the sunlight. His sunlight, from his sun.

Felicity hadn't been willing to not tell him, or lie to him, when he'd finally asked. But he really wish he'd asked sooner.

"Hit a nerve, huh," Thea's quiet observation forced her brother from his unhappy thoughts. She met his eyes steadily when he blinked at her. "I'll try to talk to her, okay? It's not like you're cheating on anyone, and she should want you to think about settling down. But in the meantime," she insisted earnestly, then went on without waiting for an answer. "How 'bout Mom and I come to this mega-important dinner, too?"

He tried to shake his head again, "Thea, it's not—"
"It'd mean a lot to Mom. And me. I really don't like seeing you guys fighting. Please, Ollie?" she finished pleadingly, her big blue eyes giving him that hopeful puppy look he never had been able to say 'no' to.

Oliver couldn't say 'no' this time, either, he couldn't even shake his head. "Fine," he sighed, silently praying he wasn't making a mistake. "But we're supposed to leave soon. Like you said, Sara and Felicity are already getting ready."

His sister snorted. "I know how to get ready quickly. If there's one thing all my partying was good for, Ollie, it's that. And mom's already ready in the sitting room, remember?"

The archer's narrowed as he realized his baby sister had intentionally played him. Seemingly unaware that their mother was playing her to get her to do this... leaving him trapped between both ploys. Now willing to hurt his sister, and all the angrier at his mother for using Thea against him when she knew very well how much he hated lying to her.

"So I may've thought my ambushing you up here was better than you running into her down there when everyone was ready to go." Thea shrugged as she got up again, "So sue me."

Oliver sighed again. "Thea—"

"Well, I've gotta go get ready, right? See you down there." Then, like the speedy little whirlwind he'd nicknamed her for not long after she first advanced from crawling to running, she was gone.

Making her big brother shake his head in fond exasperation. He almost wished Thea was right. That the only cause of the tension with their mother was just her disapproving of her son being more than friend's with his Executive Assistant.

If he could date Felicity, and there were no other problems (and no other skeletons from the closet dancing over their heads), then ignoring his mother's concern for his image as the C.E.O of Queen Consolidated wouldn't be that hard to do.

Actually, given the now understandable enmity between the Queen matriarch and Isabel Rochev, Moira Queen would probably be inclined to like the woman that the Russian executive disliked so much. And she'd probably be delighted if her son was in a serious relationship with almost anyone.
Almost anyone. If he'd ever actually dated that woman, Oliver wouldn't be too surprised if the League of Assassins showed up in Starling City to kill Isabel Rochev. He wouldn't be surprised if his mother issued the contract herself either. Nyssa al-Ghul might've even accepted it herself.

Yes, Oliver wished he had introduced Felicity to his mother as more than his adorable assistant who babbled when she was nervous. He wished his mother and sister at least remembered the nice girl that'd shown up at the hospital with flowers, whom both Oliver and Walter had called a friend, but neither seemed to remember her.

If his mother knew that Felicity was more than an employee to him—if she'd met her as one of the truest friends Oliver had ever had—he had to hope that his she wouldn't have tried to terrorize her into cooperative silence. Wouldn't have tried to make her think that Oliver would ever willingly abandon her. Wouldn't have deliberately struck some emotional blows that Oliver would have had to be blind not to see the bad bruises that were still purpling blossoms of blood beneath her emotional skin: darkening the sunshine that usually show so brightly he couldn't help but smile as it pulled him in.

Not that Felicity had specifically said anything against his mother. In the face of all her fear, she had only struggled to tell him the truth when he asked for it, in the face of all her fear. In fact, all the beautiful computer genius had told him specifically was the deep dark secret that she'd wanted to give Oliver's mother the chance to tell him herself. And that 'Missus Queen was pretty anti-confessing. Well, more totally and completely against it. And was that where you really got the whole 'gurr' thing from?'

The furrow of her brow and the curious question she'd finished with had almost been cute. But they were an attempt to mask her pain: to make him feel better. When he could still see that she was hurting, but her worry for him was more important to her.

When Oliver had asked, his sometimes too honest Felicity hadn't been able to lie to him. He knew Felicity though. While she would've been afraid of the 'new' secret hurting him, she knew he had the right to know. And he'd asked. He'd had to, with how distracted and upset she'd been that day. Her strength somehow always surprised him, but then again maybe he'd come to expect it—because it'd been indescribably hard to watch her struggle.

How hard it was for her to tell him had been her concern for him—but her hurting, fearful confession before that? Her fearing that she'd lose him by telling him the truth? That he'd choose to leave like her father had? That had to be because of what his mother had said when Felicity had given her the chance to do the right thing.

His mother, who with what had to be only a brief meeting—in what little free times both might've had for their paths to cross—had hurt Felicity. Had, with a few words clearly made more of a painful
impression on the genius than mobsters, serial killers and even Count Vertigo had managed.

Oliver grimaced, sternly not letting his hands rise up his tie because he knew it was already about as loose as it could be and still be considered fashionably acceptable. Instead he turned towards the window his mother had found him sleeping next to not long after he’d returned home—that time he had attacked his mother by mistake—looking out at the front drive, but not really paying attention to the groundskeepers that were making their last few checks of the drive and everything else.

Like the long driveway that was heated enough to ensure ice never formed on it in the wintertime, the regular groundskeepers only merited a glance from him these days because he was suspicious of almost everyone. If they were the people he remembered, longtime staff like Raisa even if they weren't quite as well known, he barely paid them any mind even now. If they were newer, or acting strange, he'd look a little closer. But he'd never suspect a betrayal from within. From the servants that were almost like family, never mind his small family itself.

Not even after the Island.

Not even after ARGUS.

But after this?

That his mother had cheated on his father with Tommy's father, and that Thea was the result had been a shock. But the tale she spun about Robert Queen not being the most faithful of husbands almost put that into perspective. Almost.

Unlike Thea, Oliver remembered some of the time their parents had argued. He remembered his mother trying to hide her tears a few times. He remembered his father telling him he wasn't the man his children thought—that he'd failed their city.

It put how Oliver had repeatedly hurt Laurel with his own cheating in a depressing light. And he'd run away from just moving in together, never mind marriage.

Maybe because some of the rough spots he had seen of his parent's marriage—some of the arguments about 'other women' that'd only started to make sense to him when girls stopped having cooties—had left him with the impression that complete commitment was impossible. If the powerful, successful C.E.O couldn't do it, what hope did his screw-up son ever have? Though Oliver hadn't really ever put that much thought into his own relationship mess ups. More to the point,
he'd tried not to, since after a while he pretty much expected it of himself. Maybe he had from the start...

The hurt, though, was more because his mother had chosen to lie about it. To him. She'd decided to attack Felicity instead of trying to tell Oliver and Thea the truth... that all hurt.

Oliver could forgive that past mistake that'd brought his beautiful baby sister into the world, but not for the lying. And hurting Felicity. That was a lot harder for him to even consider trying to forgive.

If not for Thea. His caring, clever and much too stubborn for her own good little sister.

Looking back, maybe Oliver should've suspected something—but who could think badly of a baby? Or the rambunctious toddler she too quickly turned into? Or the cute little brat she grew into that didn't understand why their limo drivers drove her to school—until Mom had a bus come up their long driveway for a few days and their little princess quickly realized she like the limos a lot better.

Looking back, though, there'd been more than a few times when people assumed the laughing little bundle of smiles speeding after them was Tommy's sister, not his. It hadn't ever bothered them: Tommy was practically family after all. They really were like brothers anyway, and Tommy had always been indulgent, amused and just as protective of Thea, too. That she was his little sister, too, didn't seem so wrong.

No, what was wrong was the lies and betrayals of their not-so-perfect parents.

Looking back, his Dad had to have known. It was the kind of thing that was hard to miss if you knew all the particulars and were paying attention. Robert Queen was always paying attention. He might've mostly ignored his son's reckless, carefree years of partying—frequently leaving his screw-ups in his mother's hands unless his influence was directly required—but Oliver didn't doubt that his father had known about each and every mistake his son had made.

Maybe his own mistakes had simply made him too lenient to his son. Or maybe he just loved his children too much to try the tough love Tommy's father didn't attempt until after Oliver returned from the dead.

But the founder of Q.C was never known for missing anything. And Thea was born with brown hair. Even though every Queen and Dearden, going back as far as Oliver could remember, had been fair-haired. That was something even Oliver and Tommy had noticed back then, they'd just never
spared much thought for it other than a few earlier ponderings of if one of the distant ancestors who's portraits were displayed around the mansion might've dyed their hair blonde to blend in way back when and how early had hair dying been a thing?

Looking back on it now, it was all too obvious in that 'how could I have not seen it?' kind of way.

Then again, after that T-Rex got loose in San Diego and the rumors of a second attempt at a dinosaur park obviously crashed and burned, all of them—Oliver, Tommy and Thea—had been set on going to the dinosaur island...

"They have safaris to Africa," Oliver had pointed out, and Tommy had been quick to tag on.

"Yeah, to see the lions!"

Robert Queen had shaken his head. "African safaris are hardly the same thing, boys." He'd sounded a lot more amused than his wife did talking about it.

"Your father would never allow it either, Tommy," Moria had insisted sternly. "It's not safe. Clearly." She'd shaken her head as her eyes were drawn back to the T.V for another rerun of the T-Rex chasing a car.

Oliver had recognized the mulish expression that fluttered across his friend's face. It didn't matter that Mister Merlyn had been back home for almost six years now, his son still hadn't forgiven the two years he'd been gone who-knows-where. Oliver wasn't inclined to either, and he'd gotten used to his best friend spending most of his time with him — more like a real brother than a friend, ever since his mother's murder.

But he didn't expect Tommy to say anything to either of the Queen parents in defense or defiance of his father—both would try to defend their old friend, and try to convince his son to keep giving him second chances. Or hundredth chances.

So it was a relief when Thea spoke up next. "No dinosaurs?" she'd asked with a pout that made her brother and Tommy both hide smiles.

It reminded Oliver of that time not too long ago he'd come hope to find his mother arguing with the stubborn little girl about a stray cat she'd found at her pre-school. Completely filthy, hissing and clawing even at Thea. Raisa had to replace the white couch it'd dug its claws into by the window after it went to another home to rehabilitate. He'd watched the snarling mass of dirt and grime take just one swipe at his sister when Thea tried to pet it before he'd headed for the nearest telephone. Their father was home barely an hour—several scratches, a ruined couch and carpet—later, and thankfully he'd been able to convince her the nasty little thing could never be happy here in the mansion.

From the upward tilt of his father's lips, he was probably remembering the same thing as he answered his daughter. "No, sweetheart, no dinosaurs. They need to stay on their island, and we need to stay away from it."

"But your brother's right, Thea," their mother hurried to add on. "We could go to Africa to see the islands." She became more persuasive as she went on. "We were going to go years ago, before you
were born, but we wanted to wait for you. Wouldn't you like to see lions? And elephants and giraffes?"

Oliver hadn't liked the comparison. It didn't seem fair. The animals you went to watch on safaris in Africa weren't tame or in cages after all, you were watching them in the wild. The dinosaurs — "running rampant" on that island according to the guy on the news—were just a little bigger, right? So why couldn't they go see them?

He was distracted by his sister's reaction though.

The look the little girl shot her mother looked so aghast that the males watching had to hide not just smiles, but laughter, too. "No." She'd shook her head. "There's hippos there! No hippos. Hippos creepy!"

Five-year-old Thea Queen hadn't wanted to see the African savannah or the animals that lived there. Because dinosaurs were awesome and so big that you'd have to hear them coming, right? But lions, hyenas and hippos could creep up on you and were creepy....

Oliver never had gotten a straight answer from his sister on why she didn't like hippos: cackling hyenas and roaring lions he could see, but hippos? The only thing he'd ever thought of was that she'd almost always lost at the game hungry hippos, even when Oliver and Tommy were trying to let her win... maybe she thought the real hippos would still be hungry and they'd like little girl's a lot more than little marbles?

Back to the point, though, Dad had to have at least suspected. And maybe, after that, he'd felt justified in his own lack of faithlessness, maybe not. Still, he'd loved Thea wholeheartedly anyway.

Just like Oliver did. Always had, always would.

In a way, Oliver was even a little glad—that Thea was Tommy's little sister, too. It tied him directly to their family by blood, and Oliver couldn't regret. Not that he could be happy about any closer, uncut-able ties to Malcolm Merlyn, missing mass murderer. But the man's own son, Tommy, couldn't help but agree on all accounts... and Thea probably would, too. That's why they couldn't tell her. Why he couldn't tell her. It'd hurt her far too much...

Knock-Knock.

Another knock on his doorway forced Oliver from his head again, and he was a little relieved when he turned from the window to see Tommy standing in the doorway now, all dressed up to go out like him.
Not a surprise, because Tommy had been getting ready in his room here. The room that'd been his since their first sleepover when they were four—years before Thea was born, back when Tommy's mother was still alive. Not that Tommy had slept in his rooms during their childhood sleepovers, of course—that would've kept them from staying up late and coming up with all sorts of little boys ideas that'd probably made their parents wish they did set bedtimes for sleepovers. But they never had—well, Oliver's parents never had. Rebecca Merlyn put her foot down at nine o'clock and said they actually had to go to sleep the few times the boys slept over Merlyn Mansion instead of Queen Mansion. Raisa only made sure they were tucked in by then, so most of their sleepovers were here. It wasn't until their later teenage years, however, that Tommy used his suite of rooms for anything other than showering, storing and changing clothes... Still, that suite of rooms was his, and Raisa of course kept his suites just as perfectly pressed and prepped as Oliver's.

"So Speedy and Missus Q are crashing?" asked the childhood best friend that was as close to him as a brother long before they knew they really did share a sister. "You sure that's a great idea, buddy? I mean, I know saving Q.C from Isabitch is the carrot, but we don't know what the stick is. And in the end its Smoaky's decision, right?"

"Yeah, it is," Oliver sighed, walking over to the couch Thea had taken and then left just as quickly a few minutes ago and dropping down onto it. "You're welcome to try to talk Thea out of it. And my mom, since she obviously put her up to it."

Maybe there was supposed to be a dinner with some supporter of Moira Queen's bid for mayor. But canceling it right in front of Thea, then hinting at her 'worries,' were the kind of mind games his Mom played. He'd tired of them in high school, and these days the stakes were a lot higher. It didn't really matter that his mother kind of reminded him of all of Amanda Waller's worst qualities when she did stuff like this, it was just easier to ignore before. An accepted, almost ignored fact of life, or facet of his family that had only annoyed him before. After her betrayals, now, it cut deeper. But he couldn't say 'no' to his sister.

"No thank you," Tommy replied readily as he came over to sit down himself. "I made the mistake of trying to talk Thea out of partying once while you were gone—didn't go over well." He winced. "Though I think someone killing a drug dealer at my birthday party may've at least scared some sense into her back then. Least enough to keep her away from the really hard stuff for a little while. Till the Vertigo shit, anyway. Wonder if we actually have to thank my Dad for that..." he trailed off thoughtfully.

Oliver winced, and he almost didn't answer, but he was sick of all the secrets and this man was his brother in all the ways that really mattered. "No, we don't. He didn't." He waited till Tommy blinked at him before he added, "That was me. Sorry."
Sorry for crashing your birthday party and not telling you?

Sorry for dropping a dead body in your house?

Sorry for protecting Thea?

None of those really worked, so just 'sorry' would have to...

Tommy blinked again. "That was..." he shook his head as he trailed off, coming all the way into the room and shutting the door before looking at him expectantly. "How could that've been you? That was two—no, more than two years before those fisherman found you on the..." he trailed off again, realization dawning. "The island. You weren't there the whole time?"

Oliver sighed. "No. An... intelligence organization found me there. Made me work for them. They knew I was there before the end of that first year there, I guess, but they didn't come looking for me till about a year later." He shook his head, barely making note of it as his friend finally came over to sit down next to him on the couch. "They took me to China. Back to Starling at one point. That point."

"Why didn't you tell... anyone?" Tommy shook his head, looking a little stunned. "Did you tell anyone?"

"No..." Oliver grimaced. "I wasn't supposed to even see any of you, but I saw Thea... she'd grown almost a foot, but she was still my baby sister. I had to follow her. Had to see how she was doing."

Tommy nodded his understanding, then shook his head again. "Why couldn't you just ask her?" he demanded with a small frown.

"If I had, they would've killed her, Tommy." The vigilante grimaced. "That's what... she said, anyway. Pretty sure she was telling the truth—couldn't know for sure at the time. Not a hundred percent sure now."

"So you just followed Speedy?" Tommy asked softly.
Oliver nodded. "She went to the graves out back: Dad's and mine. Met with a drug dealer there." He nodded when surprised recognition overtook the other man's face. "I watched you try to scare that dealer off—"

"Oh, man, I'm so—"

"Thanks, for that." Oliver interrupted, then went on. "But he met up with Thea later, at your party."

"Great," Tommy snorted, "And I thought her promising not to drink that night was a victory." He shook his head again, still frowning. "I didn't even recognize that it was the same guy." Then he blinked again, his frown deepening as he finished. "Wait, China? You mean you were in Hong Kong back then?"

"Yeah," Oliver sighed. "Sorry about that, too. AR—the people that were making me work for them weren't willing to let me go then."

"Then why didn't you just leave with me?" Tommy demanded. "We could've been on the Merlyn Global jet in under an hour, Ollie. Out of Chinese airspace not long after that!"

The vigilante locked gazes with his squarely, "And we wouldn't have been able to make any phone calls home then. They would've jammed all communications. So when our plane either shot down—or the engine sabotaged, whatever—everyone would think it was just you and the crew that died that day."

His friend looked duly horrified. "You've gotta be kidding me."

"Wish I was," Oliver replied. "They would've killed you if you ever saw my face in Hong Kong, Tommy. As soon as you had any proof I was alive, you'd have been dead."

"But—"

"Tommy, they ordered me to kill you."

"What?" his friend blinked again, as visibly stunned as he'd been when he first saw his friend's face
when the vigilante had pulled back his hood, almost a year ago now.

"One of my escape attempts brought you there, I made the mess so I had to clean it up." Oliver went on, thinking back on those early days in Hong Kong when escape was starting to seem less and less possible, and following the orders he was given was necessary until one was unthinkable. "They told me where my target was going to be, and sent me out with a rifle. When I looked through my scope, Maseo—my handler—confirmed it was you. I had to kill you."

"But then how..." Tommy trailed off, again, the quick mind that'd surprised so many since he'd buckled down about saving the company his father had built burning through the question.

Tommy Merlyn couldn't care less about his father's legacy, or even the massive inheritance that was only somewhat impacted by all the lawsuits against Merlyn Global Group's missing and assumed dead C.E.O. But he did care about the employees. About their city. It was more than just the guilt that told him he should've died when the five-hundred-and-two victims of his father's madness did. That was part of it, but like Oliver he needed to give back and help their home and everyone that lived there. And the first step he'd come up with, following Oliver's return from exile was helping him save Queen Consolidated.

The merger of the two biggest employers in Starling City was one of the few things the Q.C board of directors sided with Oliver against Isabel on—unanimously, despite the P.R risks that thus far hadn't hurt too much. Then again, they'd hadn't exactly advertised it, between the mass murder trial that somehow let Moira Queen go and the mayoral campaign that was somehow succeeding, they had to be even more careful with how the city's two titans of industry coming together would be perceived. Especially since it'd be permanent, and the last major joint-project between the companies had been the earthquake machine.

And they couldn't agree on a name. Should they try to merge the two names that the city had known for longer than their lifetimes? Or should everything become Queen Consolidated while Merlyn Global Group just became a name in history? Or should they become something else entirely?

Oliver was reluctant to consider that much change, but it wasn't just the P.R people pushing for what was new. Tommy, as it turned out, wanted everything of his father's to cease existing entirely—including his name. He'd probably take Laurel's last name one day, too, instead of the opposite or hyphenating. Wouldn't her father love that?

"That was you?" Tommy said it softly, like that'd make the realization less likely to be real: but the words still cut into his friend's thoughts. "You kidnapped me? And made me think you were going to ransom me?!" his head jerked from side to side once, then he went on without waiting for any response. Not that one was coming just yet. "Jesus..." he snorted, and shook his head slowly. "And that whole time? All I could think about was that that hope of you being alive was gone—"
"That's what you were supposed to think," Oliver put in just as quietly.

"And I was so glad that it was me and not Thea or your mom there," Tommy sighed. "I knew you'd never forgive me—"

"Tommy—"

"—if I let anything happen to them."

"Wouldn't have been your fault," Oliver told him firmly, but still quiet. "Trust me, this wasn't a group money could do much against. Still isn't." He sighed. "Useful allies sometimes though—if their leader thinks she owes you enough favors. Or your existence and your choices continues to prove useful to her."

"Her?" Tommy repeated, sounding surprised now, as he noticed the gender qualifier he hadn't earlier. "Didn't know the C.I.A had any lady directors?"

"Probably do, at this point, somewhere pretty high up anyway," Oliver shrugged. "But I wasn't working for the C.I.A," he reconsidered that, then carefully said. "Well, maybe they're some sort of black-ops offshoot, I don't know. They do work with the military. Unfortunately, I know that. But I never really wanted to know more than I had to. I just wanted out. Without you or Thea or Mom dead."

Tommy swallowed. "They threatened—"

"Yeah."

"That's why you—"

"Yeah."

The other C.E.O nodded slowly. "And you think they really would've..." he trailed off again this
Oliver met his eyes. "No, not think, Tommy. I know they would have," he answered with absolute certainty that he could see rattled his friend as it should.

Because he should be wary of ARGUS. Anyone with a brain should be.

Unlike many—maybe even most—of the people that had to work for or with Amanda Waller at any point in time, Oliver didn't think she was a monster. Not more of one that he was anyway.

She was cold: calculating maybe every moment of every day. She didn't let emotions control her, didn't really even let many show for the most part, unless they were for show.

Didn't mean the woman didn't feel anything.

After the mess in Hong Kong, Waller had gone through the trouble of meeting with Oliver herself; actually talked to him about 'embracing his inner darkness to get through it.' Then she sent him back to Purgatory to handle the newest monster in residence there.

She had meant it when she'd said she hoped to meet him again someday if he made it out. Given how she'd gone out of her way to tell him what Shrieve was planning for the Chinese city, and that she knew Oliver well enough by then to know she was safer from the gun he had pointed at her once she'd dropped her own, maybe she'd meant for him to play the hero again. To stop Shrieve like he'd stopped Slade—the only real similarity between them being they were both mad. Even in his grief and drug driven rage, Slade had been willing to just leave him on Lian Yu. To rot there for failing Shado. Shrieve, a U.S general or not, was determined to doom an entire city just because he could.

True, the ARGUS director's interest in Oliver after that had been because he could be useful to her again. That he'd proven her right about him had to have something to do with whatever fondness that other ARGUS operative thought his director held towards Oliver. Sure, he hadn't saved Hong Kong, but he had stopped Shrieve before he could head for another city, or something maybe just as bad. Maybe even worse.

Oliver would never make the mistake of thinking he'd be safe if his usefulness ever ended, or if it was just outweighed by some other factor in Amanda Waller's decisions. Just like he'd never assume any morals might keep her from carrying out any unspeakable act she believed necessary to protect her nation. Or threatened ARGUS, which was second only to America in her rigid, short list of
priorities.

She was always balancing the greater good of the majority and she'd always be certain that the end she wanted would justify any and all means necessary to achieve it. That Shrieve had used that to turn the tables on her, officially, only to bring about something far worse than she would've consider for an end-game, had undoubtedly come as a shock to her. Maybe it'd taught her some more caution —then again Oliver hadn't seen her in a while now. Which he couldn't really regret even a little bit.

Waller would follow through on each and every threat that she made, if necessary. She would have killed him. The Yamashiros. Tommy. Thea. And anyone else she had to, if the end result was important enough.

Oliver had to hate himself a little more just because the end result of turning him into an extremely competent ARGUS operative was worth killing anyone, especially people he cared about. He had to even before she'd all but told him that. That it'd always be a mistake to assume power could be innocent, let alone harmless: and sometimes security had to be bought in blood.

Waller would have regretted killing Oliver if she'd had to, because she'd said from their very first meeting that she was confident he could become a very valuable ARGUS asset. And, later, because she'd even come to respect him, and maybe even trust him a little.

She would have regretted killing Tommy only if it brought too much attention, which it would have. Malcolm Merlyn would've probably engineered another earthquake in Hong Kong, to destroy the city that'd taken his son, just like he'd wanted to destroy the part of Starling that stole his wife. It could've been even worse than the bio-weapon attack that Shrieve had unleashed, since that area of the world was known for earthquakes: meaning the same machine used there could've done far more damage, far more easily. Not that even the head of ARGUS could've predicted that outcome. If she'd had any idea what Tommy's father was planning, Amanda would almost certainly have arranged for Oliver to return home sooner to kill him. Though back then Oliver might not have fared too much better than the Triad had, whether he managed to take Malcolm Merlyn by surprise or not. Not if ARGUS hadn't had better intelligence than Chien Na Wei—and given him good backup—going in.

And Oliver would like to think that Amanda would regret ordering the execution of an innocent civilian teenager just to make a point. But he couldn't fool himself into thinking that that was an order she wouldn't give anyway, and his baby sister's murder might've been the result.

When the vigilante blinked back out of his thoughts, he was a little startled to find his friend watching him intently, clearly waiting for him to come back to their talk. "Sorry," Oliver shook his head as he apologized. "Bad memories."
"Looks like," Tommy nodded his empathy, his serious expression almost hiding the sad concern in his eyes.

To a certain extent his friend did understand. His memories of the Undertaking weren't pretty. On top of what every other survivor had experienced—the earth shaking at a madman's command—Tommy had to try and handle the fact that the man responsible, that madman, was his father. His father had tried to destroy their city. Had killed hundreds of people. Had wanted to kill many, many more. Had almost killed Laurel. Had almost killed Oliver. And had even almost killed Tommy himself.

Oliver knew that his friends were seeing grief counselors, separately and together, as a result. He'd been the one that'd had to argue his best friend into agreeing to go to that first meeting when Laurel's pleas hadn't been enough to convince 'the mass murderer's son' and his massive case of survivors guilt. And Oliver had plenty of traumatic memories already, on top of everything surrounding failing to save his city from a madman's rage. So they'd gotten used to sharing the silence in the months since May.

Tommy waited another long second to make sure his mind didn't want to wander back to anymore dark places, then asked, "So what's the deal with Masrani?" When Oliver blinked at him, he rolled his eyes. "The business specifics? You know, the carrot he's using to even get Smoaky to the table tonight?"

Oliver winced again at that. "Yeah... apparently Isabel hasn't been working for the good of Queen Consolidated these last few months."

"Imagine that," the other C.E.O replied dryly. "I told you I should've bought in before. Could've headed the bitch off."

"Wouldn't have helped by then," Oliver reminded him. "Stellmoor was already even with me by the time Felicity and Digg got me back: they were just waiting for the board to release their ten percent. And Walter had to outbid them by a lot for the just five I to keep use even." He sighed, "And I'm sure he had to fight for even that much at the bank, with me supposedly coming to rescue Q.C and my mom's trial coming up."

"Wouldn't be so sure of that," Tommy shrugged. "Even after everything, Q.C's still the largest employer in Starling City, Ollie. S.N.B would have to be stupid to want to see you fall, no matter what that bitch said. After everything, unemployment skyrocketing even higher than it was already could really ruin the city. Everything was bad enough after the quake as is, still kind of is."

Oliver nodded, able to follow along with how that could be true—even though he hadn't completed
his bachelor's in business, like Tommy, and he still didn't attend half the meetings he probably should as *Queen Consolidated*'s C.E.O. Simply put it all made sense, but it'd still been hard to actually ask Walter for that favor. After everything. Not just the rioters outside and the hoods unrestrained attacks, but with everything that'd destroyed what'd seemed to be a happy marriage when he first met the man.

But Walter had been happy to help. It'd been clear to see that even before he'd said a word. From what his ex-stepson had seen walking into the bank, they'd probably been expecting him a lot sooner, but Walter was visibly relieved when he walked in his door, despite everything. So it was more than just a favor for a family member, former or otherwise...

"Well," Tommy hit his knees before standing up. "Better get going. You don't want to get caught coming down the stairs after the ladies, and I've gotta go pickup Laurel."

Oliver blinked at him, "Laurel wants to come?"

"Yeah, she does." Tommy's smile was small but sincere now, with visible relief in his eyes. "We haven't been to Toro's in a while, and she thought you probably didn't think to ask any of the Q.C lawyers along."

"She's right about that," Oliver had to agree with another grimace. "I don't want any of this getting out, Tommy. If Felicity doesn't want to—"

"Laurel's not gonna say anything, you know that. And I already made sure she realized that it's Smoaky's decision," his friend reassured him. "Don't think she believed me on all of the dinosaur stuff at first, but it makes sense considering who we're meeting with. Once she realized that, she wanted to start putting together a case against Masrani for harassing Felicity so much," he shook his head, smiling slightly. "Didn't really want to remind her that she's a prosecutor now. But I'd really like to put more resources towards the new C.N.R.I soon as we can."

"Me to, but you know it's already in the works," Oliver reminded him, shaking his head. "I'm sure you're keeping better track of it than I am though." He frowned. "But I don't mind her helping, as long as she doesn't try to hit him with a lawsuit before we knew know everything."

"Oh, she won't," Tommy reassured him quickly. "Not if Smoaky doesn't want her to." He sighed, wincing a little. "And she doesn't drink too much."
"Yeah," Oliver sighed, too, and they sank into another moment of shared silence.

Laurel's drinking had been an ongoing problem for months now. Not too bad when he first got back, but she'd been starting a downward spiral right around that time. It'd been all Tommy could do to keep her from wrecking her career in the process, especially having to handle all of the mess his father had left behind for him at the same time.

Not that *Merlyn Global Group* wasn't a well-organized, well-run business—it was. But when their C.E.O was exposed for being responsible for being not just a cutthroat businessman, but also a psycho planning a mass murder via an engineered natural disaster that managed to kill hundreds... well, the P.R fallout was about as bad as you'd expect it to be. At least *Stellmoor* hadn't gone after them at the same time: Oliver had enough trouble handling Isabel Rochev, and he somehow doubted her company sicking her on Tommy would've made life any easier for anyone. Though exactly why *Stellmoor* had only sent her after Q.C was anyone's guess...

"Well, gotta get going man," Tommy said again, finally moving back towards the hallway. "We'll see you there at seven. See if you can get them to go light on Laurel's drinks, okay?"

"Sure," Oliver agreed easily, because it wasn't the first time he'd made the requests. It was still hard to see her in pain, either of them in pain, but he'd help however he could. "We'll see you there."

Tommy left as quickly as he came.

And Oliver kept contemplating his best friend and the woman he'd once thought should be the love of his life.

He was happy that his clinging to what was gone and might've been—if he'd been a better man back when he was still mostly a stupid, selfish, spoiled brat—hadn't completely sunk his friends' chances. Happy that Tommy had realized he loved Laurel more than Oliver ever could, and her choosing him didn't mean he was her second choice: before or after he'd run to her rescue and nearly died doing it. Happy that they seemed to be working it out, slowly but surely. Sometimes loudly—though Laurel was almost always the one that was yelling. Sometimes with tears—also more often Laurel than Tommy, but he'd had to shed a few tears, too. But now that Sara was free from the League and could be back with her family, after the shock—and the anger—had fade some, it was starting to look like Laurel might be on the mend at last.

Oliver hadn't been so sure there for a while there. Not with her almost being disbarred and apparently only escaping a D.U.I charge before that because her dad was a cop. She probably would've lost her job, at least, when Daily had searched their place, if not for Tommy—he'd found her father's
prescription and returned it to him only a few days before that and it was a controlled substance.

Her needing to kill not long after that—rightly ruled as self-defense—hadn't helped her anymore than her paranoid accusations against Starling City's popular mayoral candidate had. But as least without the drugs on premise, they couldn't get a warrant for her blood work and couldn't charge her with anything.

Though why Daily had decided to go after her in the first place, when she'd been accusing Sebastian, still didn't quite make sense. Especially given how sloppy he'd been about it—yeah, he wasn't a detective, but he was a cop. And sure, it seemed to tie together to her past association with the vigilante, which any S.C.P.D cop would know about. But it was one of the questions that'd made Oliver glad to switch his support from Sebastian Blood to his mother... before he knew she was lying to him, too.

Oliver shook his head and finally headed for the doorway himself, only to stop when his protégé appeared there just before he could go through the doorway, fist headed towards the door to knock but stopping just before he would've hit it—hopefully carefully enough to avoid shattering it—when he saw the archer was already coming towards him. "Hey, they about ready?"

"No idea," Roy made a face. "And I'm not going to ask any of them that. Send Digg if you really wanna know. He's downstairs."

Oliver chuckled lightly, honestly pleased to see the small smile on the younger man's face once he'd relaxed it out of the faked look of horror. "Or we can just wait downstairs too," he pointed out to him, liking the idea because with Roy there his mother wouldn't want to try and talk to him about their estrangement.

To Moira Queen, after all, Roy was only Thea's friend. Not family yet, and he shouldn't be for at least several years. So he wasn't someone Oliver and Thea's mother would talk about family matters in front of or with. And what her son had always accepted was a smart appreciation for privacy, but was actually all secrets and lies, wouldn't let her reveal the secret that was that straw on the camel's broken back. That she didn't know her daughter's boyfriend already knew—even though Thea herself didn't and couldn't know...

"Okay," Roy nodded, looking relieve himself. Then he frowned as he noticed Oliver's attire. "I'm not underdressed, am I?" he gestured to the suit that had to have been part of the wardrobe Thea had gifted her boyfriend with.

Oliver was pretty sure the kid didn't know that wardrobe had more than a few suits waiting for him
in it. Thea Queen didn't do anything by half measures, and her brother was sure that'd include outfitting her boyfriend. Without a tie Roy did look more causal than the C.E.O of Queen Consolidated, but that was expected. And while the suit wasn't perfectly tailored like Oliver's, it still cost enough for him to fit in at the table tonight—which meant more than the kid made at Verdant in several months combined.

"No, I'm overdressed," the billionaire reassured him. "But I'm supposed to impress Masrani, you just need to say 'hi' and sit with Thea. Relax."

And the younger man did relax, a little. Visibly at not needing to ask either his girlfriend or her brother for a tie. Some tension was still there, but a lot of that was the undercurrent of unnatural rage that'd simmered under the surface of his skin ever since he'd survived his unwilling injection with Mirakuru.

Oliver could sympathize: he'd really rather not need to wear a tie anywhere near as often as he had to these days. He'd had to become accustomed to them early on in life. As the son and heir of a billionaire businessman it'd been a must from early boyhood for many occasions. The stiff uniforms of the stricter prep-schools had had a lot to do with why he'd been happy to get kicked out of a few of them, though he'd only deliberately done that twice when the noose-like ties were perfect physical symbols for the schools themselves. But the slightly looser knots he was allowed to fashion for most parties were also a longtime staple in his life. Even many of the parties he'd attended willingly during his Ollie playboy days had unspoken dress codes you were expected to meet, and flaunting the rules too often was a good way to have your name put on the wrong lists.

These days, though, his discomfort with ties was a balance between two problems. One, they were still symbolic: a big piece of the false image he tried to put forward to the world—that he was just a billionaire, who these days was trying to put his partying days behind him for the sake of the family business—not untrue entirely, of course, but fundamental to Isabit—Isabel's astonishment when she'd realized he wasn't 'at all what people say.' More than that, though, Oliver just knew it was too easy to kill someone with a cord of any kind around their throat to be entirely comfortable tying the noose for himself these days...

"Thea said she'd be down in just a few minutes," Roy told him, indicating his phone before the older brother realized he should frown at that. "Haven't heard from the blondes, but Digg's already waiting downstairs. Says your mom is, too, and her driver's already brought a ride around?"

Oliver had noticed it when he'd glanced down earlier: just another one of those minute details that didn't really deserve a second thought. But it made him sigh as he nodded now, "If it weren't too easy for them to figure out where we're going, or just follow us, I might tell everyone else to meet us in the garage."
They had more than a few vehicles down there. Including several other limousines big enough to fit a big group with ease, just like the one his mother had requested. But it didn't seem worth it.

Roy frowned, "Don't think Thea would like that."

"She wouldn't," Oliver acknowledged.

The younger man shook his head. "You know, you could just tell her." He met him frown for frown, his only a little more severe than it would be without the Mirakuru burning him up nonstop. "I'm serious. She hates the secrecy more than anything else. And I get why we can't tell her the big one, but doesn't she deserve to know this?"

"Roy—"

"She already knows something's going on that you and your mom aren't telling her: it's really getting to her. And can you blame her?"

"No," Oliver admitted, sighing. Not liking that they were having this argument practically in his open doorway. As excellent as the noise-proofing and every other kind of insulation was throughout the mansion, sound did carry in the hallways. Actually, he probably shouldn't have had any of the conversations he just had with the door open. He shook his head, eyes locked with the younger man. "But she's not gonna like the truth any better."

Roy's frown deepened, but before he could say anything more they both heard another door opening and closing out in the hall, followed by the clicks of two pairs of heels on the wood floors before their steps were muffled by the thick carpet.

"Time to go," Oliver pointed out unnecessarily.

"We have to wait for Thea," Roy reminded him, but he was stepping back into the hall as he said, letting the other man threw so he could close the door as they both turned to look at the two women that were ready.

Oliver had gotten used to seeing Felicity in entirely too attractive attire since she'd taken over her unwanted position as his Executive Assistant. She knew without asking that a certain level of fashion was expected of her for the position—even when she'd tried refusing it she'd shown up for work
dressed much more formally than the blouse, skirt and sweaters she tended to wear in the I.T department. Her raise in salary was even part of that, or so accounting had seemed to assume—though the assumptions they hadn't said anything about had been there, too.

No matter how many scandalous rumors there went around as a result, though, Oliver had known he couldn't hope to run his family's company without her, let alone save it and fight for the city at the same time, so it'd only seemed right to make sure she was financially compensated for her troubles. That the figure he'd decided on was annually more than most of Q.C's department heads were paid didn't bother him one bit.

And if worst came to worst and Queen Consolidated tanked, he wanted to make sure Felicity didn't need to worry anytime soon about money. Though before Sara had so soundly scolded him about it, Oliver was ashamed to admit, even if only to himself, that he hadn't given much thought to what all of his manipulations of Felicity's career could mean beyond that. In the back of his mind he guessed maybe he thought that Felicity's abilities were just so obvious than anyone would be able to see them, so getting a job at least similar to where she'd been in the I.T department before he'd promoted her shouldn't be hard for her.

But he knew better, didn't he? Much as he'd always tried to pretend he didn't notice how much rumors, gossip and outright lies circulating through society mattered, they did.

Realistically, for anyone worth working for to hire her they'd have to be smart enough to not only ignore the rumors, but also to realize that the real reason Oliver had made her his E.A was because she was better qualified to run his company than he was. Someone like that he might even want to let her go to: let her be safe, or at least safer than she could ever be with him. Even if, like Sara said, it wasn't a choice Felicity might actually make.

But if she was hired based on the rumors that he'd allowed to exist? That Isabi—Isabel encouraged? That he wouldn't allow. He couldn't. Not when it'd almost have to mean they planned to take advantage of her like that. Anyone who made that mistake would have to meet the same end as Count Vertigo. And Oliver could say with some certainty that even Tommy would probably forgive him for firing those arrows, just like with the insane drug lord.

"Ollie, don't be stupid." His best friend had shaken his head, looking so nonjudgmental he was confusing the vigilante. "It was Felicity. I get it."

Oliver had blinked at him for a long moment, then nodded. Not sure he should just leave at that, but completely sure it wasn't a conversation he wanted to have then either.

And, after all, what he'd said to Felicity was true, too.

The Count had her, captive and terrorized.
Oliver had made the effort to reason with the madman, despite everything. Had tried to keep going with the new way, but some people were just too much a part of the old.

The Count was going to hurt her.

Oliver really hadn't made a conscious decision to reach for the second arrow, let alone the first. The third one was all anger that'd tasted like bitter failure and relief all at once a second later. But the first two could've flown from the quiver into the drug lord all on their own for all the time his brain had put into the action.

It was Felicity.

He had hurt Felicity: thankfully the fear faded faster than he could hope for, and after a few days the bruises were gone, too. But that fear and those bruises were put there by that madman.

And he was going to do much worse.

Not hurt her: kill her.

Kill Felicity Smoak.

And that was something Oliver could no more allow than he could let someone keep the sun from coming up...

The dress Felicity was wearing now was less functional than the ones she wore to work, but even more flattering than the ones he tried to not pay too much attention to. It wasn't too clingy, short, or scandalous in any way. The fabric almost seemed to float around her form, complimenting her curves without drawing attention to them. Her softly shimmering curls and the sparkling earring that probably weren't diamonds completing that fashionably elegant way that many heiresses paid personal shoppers to tell them how to accomplish.

Oliver had seen many women in red dresses before, of course, but for some reason hers made him remember that first time he'd walked into her office and found her chewing on a pen. It was red, too. And almost enough to make him not notice the dark shawl she had wrapped around her shoulders to hide them: to hide her injury from all eyes.

Sara had decided to wear a black dress that the other warrior could see at a glance let her hide at least a few knives. Her hair was half done up; held there by accessories that he didn't doubt were both sharp and sturdy enough to kill with. The dark shawl she had wrapped around her shoulders didn't look like the soft, shielding fashion statement like it was for Felicity. It looked a lot like the one she'd used a few times as the Canary—the same one that the Demon's Heir had danced down several story drops, too.

Oliver wasn't familiar with the martial arts techniques involved with scarf fighting himself (other than the obvious uses for strangulation and the like), but he wouldn't be surprised if it could be used to some much greater effect by those that knew how to wield it like members of the League of Assassins evidently did. And she was smirking, probably because of how long he'd stared at Felicity,
though the other blonde didn't seemed to have noticed.

"You two look nice," Felicity said before anyone else could say anything. "I mean, you always do, but now you're dressed. Dressed nice, I mean. Both of you."

"You look hot, too, blondie," Roy replied with a chuckle, the easy smiles all around seeming to help her calm down even though she kept fiddling with the purse she was carrying. "Both of you."

That purse was probably too big to be considered fashionable for dinner and the like, but their I.T genius never went anywhere without her phone, and she probably wanted to have both the flashdrive Masrani had given her—and at least one other device she could undoubtedly hack half the city from it she wanted—in there, too. Oliver only frowned at it for a second because she usually bore the weight of a purse strap over her other shoulder, and the reason she wasn't was the same reason she and Sara were both wearing shawls they could continue to wear and blame on it being wintertime.

"Thanks, Abercrombie," Sara's smirked turned towards the younger man, who rolled his eyes.

"Huh," Felicity blinked at him, cocking her head to the side for a moment. "That actually fits, doesn't it?"

"No it doesn't," Roy tried to insist much too late, but he immediately went quiet when Felicity flinched ever so slightly at his tone. It was only a little harsher than it should be, but she couldn't be blamed for reacting anymore than he could.

It was probably unconscious. A reaction she wasn't even entirely aware of after all the traumatic memories she'd had to go through in the past day—and getting shot just last night. In fact she didn't even seem to notice when all of them frowned, the nervous nibbling on her lower lip neither deepening or stopping as all three of them frowned in concern.

"Sorry," the genius apologized softly, before her eyes went to Oliver's. "Shouldn't we be going soon?"

"The car's already out front," the billionaire nodded. "We just have to wait for Thea. She and my mother are coming." He tried not to wince as he said it, but it was made all the harder by her reaction.
Because his sister's name only got a surprised blink. But the mention of his mother made her balk even more than the suped-up Roy's snapping had.

Which he could, unfortunately, understand entirely. He could understand Sara's scowl even more easily.

"Wha-What? Why?" Felicity's frown was tremulous, like she wasn't sure she was allowed to object to anything the Queen matriarch did.

That she was standing in Queen Mansion right now probably wasn't making her feel any more confident, but it didn't make it any easier for the woman's son to even think about forgiving her like his sister wanted.

"I can tell her no, if you want," Oliver found himself saying without even thinking about it. Completely disregarding the fact that he hadn't been able to say no to his sister less than half an hour ago.

"No!" Felicity immediately protested, her eyes a little too wide as she shook her head. Though doing that seemed to make her shoulder hurt, something everyone watching her could see even when she tried to hide her pained wince. "I mean, she-she can come if she wants to? But I don't—why does she..."

"She heard about Masrani being in town," Oliver told her when she trailed off, trying for soothing. Not an easy thing when that anger he'd never really be able to unleash was building up again inside of him, but then this was Felicity. For her, it wasn't that hard. "His wanting to meet could be a very big thing for Q.C going forward, so she's being nosy." He shook his head, holding her gaze steadily still. "She doesn't have to come if you don't want her there, Felicity."

The genius's lower lip trembled ever so slightly before she pressed her lips firmly together. If he wasn't looking right at her, studying her every reaction, he might've missed it. "Maybe she should be there," she shook her head. "She probably knows a lot about Q.C. She was acting-C.E.O last year, and she was around a lot when Walter was running the company." She gave another slow shake of her head. "And I'm pretty sure she hates Isabel more than me."

Oliver frowned. "She doesn't hate you, Felicity." His frown deepened a little when the look on her face told him she hadn't meant to say that much but wasn't sure she should say more, because she'd only dig herself in deeper.
Usually her babbles were adorable. But clearly where his mother was concerned that wouldn't be the case. And the gunshot wound that'd become her first—and hopefully only physical—scar wasn't what bothered her more.

"Having her there might be helpful," Sara put in, her face carefully set in what wasn't a smile but wasn't a frown either. "She could help keep Masrani off-balance. Have they met before?"

The question was directed at him, but Oliver had to shake his head. "I don't know." It irritated him to say it, because clearly there was far too much he didn't know about his mother until it was too late...

"Let her come," Felicity told them softly, her eyes studying the carpet instead of meeting his or anyone else's. "I don't want to cause any more problems."

Oliver scowled, "You're not—"

"Let her come," the genius interrupted, soft voice getting a little louder to overpower his own, but nowhere near as loud as it could get when she was actually angry. It was still an improvement for her almost timid terror from before.

Roy was frowning between all of them, and Sara shot him a look, but Oliver was already forcing himself to nod.

"Okay," the C.E.O agreed, and offered her his arm. He pretended not to notice when she glanced at Sara before hesitantly taking it. The Canary had already started stalking down the hall with all the predatory grace her former profession had demanded, but the slightly upturned edges of her lips told him she approved. None of them said anything, though when Oliver looked at Roy the younger man was watching the exchange with clear curiosity. "Better tell Thea she has ten minutes before we're leaving without her."

"Gee, thanks," Roy rolled his eyes good-naturedly, but headed towards his girlfriend's room without a second's hesitation.

With any other boy, the older brother wouldn't have ever considered making the suggestion or accepting it if offered. He probably would've followed any other boy, too, just like he had when his sister had snuck that kid upstairs during their spectacularly failed Christmas party.
But Roy Harper was starting to grow on him. The signs of Mirakuru madness seemed to be getting farther and farther apart, too, so it was easier to trust the young man. Just like it'd been easier to help him once he'd been let in on the secret that his vigilante 'hero' was also his girlfriend's big brother. Then again, it kind of helped, too, that the kid did now know that Oliver was completely capable of killing him if he did make the mistake of hurting Thea...

Felicity didn't seem to have any trouble making her way down the grand staircase holding onto his arm and Sara on her other side. Neither one of them would've let her fall, of course, and they both could've caught her at a second's notice if she started to topple. Her heels were sensible though: tasteful, but than the ones that usually gave her a few more inches of height. All the same, a few hours rest had done her a lot of good.

Oliver only hoped that meant that she hadn't decided to not take anything for the pain she had to still be feeling. She'd just been shot last night. And this dinner was probably going to be hard for her, it would be even if she wasn't nursing a G.S.W.

"Perfect timing, we should be leaving soon," the lady of the house greeted them with a smile that only her son likely noticed looked more nervous than her normal polished poised should've allowed. "You look wonderful, all of you," she soldiered on all the same, her gaze sweeping over them before looking on up the stairs for her missing daughter. "Is Thea—"

"Roy's getting her now," Oliver interrupted, firm but polite. He wasn't happy with any of her machinations, but Sara was right that she could be helpful tonight and Felicity had said she could come.

"You-You look nice, Missus Queen," Felicity said hesitantly a moment later. She tried to pull her arm free once they'd safely made it to the bottom of the stairs, but Oliver didn't let her.

He didn't care how it looked as his mother's eyes came back from searching for her daughter to watching the brief seconds of gentle struggle that her son won. It didn't matter that it was likely to make his mother think the same thing as his sister, or make Thea think her suspicions here were correct.

He couldn't get the memory of her bravely trying not to cry but not quite managing it after she'd been shot—taken the bullet for Sara. He couldn't forget how lost and shocked she'd sounded when she was remembering how the lawyer had abandoned her and the other kids with a monster bearing down on them. He couldn't forget that was after her father had abandoned her, too. And that Felicity, the one that really believed he was a hero, had thought that her hero would abandon her for telling him the truth.
So Oliver kept her arm gently but firmly tucked into his, pretending not to notice the slight struggle at all, or the confused look it earned him from the blonde herself. Or that Sara's smile was growing a little as she watched them approvingly, while his mother's eyebrows went up ever so slightly as she watched them.

Moira didn't say anything, however, instead her eyes went to Raisa. "We should be needing our coats soon then."

"Yes, Missus Queen," the housekeeper nodded, turning for the coat closet herself instead of ringing for any of the many maids that were kept on staff at the mansion even in the evening hours. She never did like to delegate work regarding any member of the family itself, and that probably was why Oliver and Thea had always felt so close to her, but he was still starting to frown till a maid—he thought her name was some sort of purple flower, maybe Lilac or Lavender: he vaguely remembered she'd started working here the summer before *The Gambit*—appeared out of the living room to hurry after her. Probably after making sure that room looked perfect after whatever minimal usage it had with his mother simply sitting in there while she waited for them.

The sound of quick footsteps on the upstairs carpet drew his and Sara's eyes even though they knew who it was. Felicity and Moira glanced up the stairs a second later as the clicks of Thea's heels became clearer on the stairs. Thea came down with her arm tucked in Roy's. She'd changed into a skirt and top that'd be too informal for a gala, but wouldn't raise eyebrows at a dinner and ensured she didn't completely out-dress her date—whom she'd taken the time to force a black tie on.

"You look lovely, Thea," their mother smiled at her, nodding her approval for the ensemble. From the relief he could just make out in her eyes, her daughter would have to be dressed pretty badly for the relieved woman to send her back upstairs, but the gold stripes and flowers printed on the black material made the outfit pretty, and the cut of the crop top was demure save for the fact that it did bare a bit of her midriff.

"Thanks, you too, mom," Thea flashed her a bright smile before she turned it on the smiling Canary. "Hot dress, Sara."

"You too, Speedy," Sara smiled back, her grin not dimming as she watched the youngest queen's eyes go to the last blonde by her brother's side.

Oliver sympathized when he felt Felicity stiffen ever so slightly in apprehension, but if she wanted to let his mother come he couldn't really shield her from his sister.

"Felicity, right?" Thea asked with a smile that lit up her eyes, almost hiding the rabid curiosity there.
"I'm Thea Queen."

Felicity tried to tug her arm free again, ever so slightly—probably to offer her hand for the expected handshake—but again Oliver didn't let her go. Mostly because his firm, steady grip was safer for her injured arm than shaking his excited sister's hand would probably be, but also because she'd started trembling ever so slightly. He wasn't sure if it was at all the attention being on her already, or if she was in pain, or a bit of both, but he wasn't about to let her go when it seemed like a strong wind might blow her over. Especially since both Queen women would probably be more comparable to hurricanes than any lone wind: safe at the center but easily blown away all the same.

"Felicity Smoak," she nodded a moment later, after again giving up on pulling away. "It's nice to meet you."

"You, too," Thea's bright smile back was probably meant to be reassuring, but the interest in her eyes was too strong to miss.

Raisa's and purple-flower's return with their coats was a welcomed interruption. Oliver quickly accepted Felicity's from Raisa as she headed for his mother, making himself let the blonde go for a moment to help her tuck herself into the long coat, mindful of her shoulder even though the bandages had been well hidden by the big scarf that wrapped around her shoulders like it was part of her dress. He quickly taking his from the maid to just put it on himself so he could reclaim her arm again while everyone else finished bundling up.

Then they all finally headed out to the car, where he and Sara made Felicity wait for everyone else to get in the limousine so that they could tuck her safely between them and buckled to the backseat because it'd be the safest place in the vehicle and the least likely to help the pain meds she should still be on upset her stomach. The mansion's driveway was kept in top shape, despite being longer than many roads, so his mother's driver didn't hit a single bump or pothole on the way out, but somehow the ride still felt a lot longer tonight.

Chapter End Notes

Well, it's certainly taking me a while to get to the dinner scene, isn't it? Let alone the island! Sorry?
Anyway, the dreaded dinner should be next. And the nightmare island not long after. Comments are always welcome and a very big help! And really, I promise the odds are against anyone thinking of anything crazier than what's already happening inside my head for this story, so don't be shy.
FYI: Sorry, too, if I missed anything in my quick proof read. I'm catching a plane to Florida tomorrow, and I won't be back for about a week, so I wanted to post before I left. Let me know if you saw anything horrendous, please. And thank you in advance.
Thanks for reading! More to come soon! :-D
~ Jess
Dinner, Dinosaurs & Debates

Chapter Notes

Wow, this chapter took a long time to write. Sorry about that... though I'll apologize more at the end.
Before you start reading (assuming you don't entirely skip my notes), I'd like to add that I'm not a lawyer, banker or big business person and everything written here is with a certain degree of writer's license. Wikipedia is a wonderful tool that I make frequent use of, and I have some degree of access to people who actually do or have worked in those professions, but they're really just the vehicles trying to make sense of my madness here. Try not to take it too, too seriously. If anything really leaps out of the computer screen, stabs you in the eyes and starts running around inside your head as being so egregiously incorrect, feel free to let me know and advise me how I can fix it. Otherwise, please try to enjoy yourselves.
Without further ado, the long awaited dinner!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dinner, Dinosaurs & Debates.

Felicity Smoak's P.O.V.

Felicity couldn't help being nervous at the center of attention with this group. It didn't matter that Missus Queen and her daughter were the only ones here that she didn't see on a regular basis: either one by themselves would make her uneasy anyway, Oliver's mother especially. And this wasn't their 'normal' at all.

Normally Oliver would be the focal point in almost every setting, and the only recognition she might get would be as his assistant. A quiet reminder or polite message were expected interruptions from her at just about any time, because that was her job. Unfortunately, it could never just be her 'secret identity,' because it did define everything she was at this point in time. For all intents and purposes, Oliver really had just made her his secretary when he took over his family's company. Whatever fancy title or acronym H.R came up with didn't really matter, because no one cared to remember, or use, them. Except Oliver and Digg, of course: they did try. Oliver especially; in the beginning anyway. But that didn't change what her job was or what everyone thought about her promotion.

Felicity was supposed to keep Oliver's schedule straight and make excuses for him when he very frequently didn't stick to it. Not ever fun, even when she knew the C.E.O had a good reason for missing a meeting. Though he was often late because he just didn't consider most meetings anywhere near as important as his 'other' job.
When there were lives at stake, Felicity agreed, but the times she found him finishing a workout at the Foundry after missing more than one meeting were another thing entirely. It hardly seem fair that she had to take the flack and ridicule for him and miss watching him on the salmon ladder...

She was supposed to figure out the ins and outs of *Queen Consolidated* and advise Oliver as best she could so that he could actually try to run the company from time to time. Not a typical part of the job description, or anywhere in her contract of course, but a necessity she'd recognized even before she let him talk her into not quitting that first day. And just about the only part of her so-called 'secret identity job' that really was an Executive anything's job to go with her official title.

She was supposed to answer his phone. All calls during normal business hours and any other time of day. Since the C.E.O was supposed to be available at all times, even in the middle of the night if necessary. Somewhat ironically if he wasn't available during some crisis, it was usually because he was already handling the after-hours emergency as the vigilante instead of the executive. Meaning more excuses from his trusty, tired E.A.

And she was supposed to fetch his coffee—but she'd drawn the line there, and she had yet to see any reason whatsoever to even consider crossing it. Not that Oliver had ever really pushed her on that one relatively inconsequential rule she'd set. Save for teasing her when he was entertaining the man that might beat his mother out for mayor and likely fully expecting her to go break the machine upon receiving the request. Violently, as promised, though their definitions of that word were undoubtedly different. She'd sent the fancy machine down to her old break room instead of breaking it, but he didn't need to know that.

Felicity Smoak wasn't even supposed to be an Executive Assistant. She'd mastered computer science at M.I.T, not customer service or business. While her skill set had undoubtedly over qualified her for the place she'd held in *Queen Consolidated*'s I.T Department, that hadn't meant she'd wanted a so-called 'promotion' into a job on an almost completely different career track. At all.

Considering how it'd happened, some of the nastier comments and snubs she'd received from her former co-workers were even almost understandable... but they'd still hurt. A lot.

But Felicity had asked Oliver to come back from his self-imposed exile to save the company and the city. She'd fully expected him to keep coming to her like he had before—just without the poor excuses and with her still using her off time to help as much as she could, whether there'd now be eighteen floors between them during the day, or not. Rather than, you know, half the city sometimes, like last year.

That didn't mean she could turn him down either. How they spent their nights, how they spent all of their time, mattered. As his E.A she didn't have to worry about him objecting to her using her time doing work for their other job during office hours and she could cover for him all at the same time. It
made too much sense to not keep doing it. No matter how much the looks and comments did bother her. Or how much she hated knowing that what they said to her face was probably not half as bad as what they were saying behind her back.

While glancing around the luxurious limousine again though—tremulously trying to return the smile Sara shot her as she caught her eye—Felicity couldn't help but wonder how she'd come to this.

How she could be the one in this group that the upcoming meeting over dinner was all about.

How she'd actually made the mistake of thinking Simon Masrani had given up on convincing her.

And how had she ended up sitting next to Oliver instead of Sara? And why was the other blonde still smiling at her?

The former League of Assassins member had been beyond supportive to the other blonde all day. When she'd stopped by to check on her injured comrade and found Felicity's home had already been invaded, the I.T expert didn't doubt that the Canary would've been happy to toss the eighth wealthiest man in the world out on his ass for her. Or was it seventh wealthiest now? She really didn't know. Or care.

When the combination of exhaustion, pain, traumatic memories and whatever drugs Digg gave her had her babbling too much of her childhood tale for all the team to hear, they'd all listened. Then, when Felicity had somehow woken up in Oliver's bed—seriously, how had that happened?—Sara had helped her get ready every step of the way. Sara Lance was like a force of nature even without her bo-staff, and considering Felicity had somehow woken up in Oliver's bed—seriously, how had that happened?—she hadn't dared protest when the other woman had dragged her out of it.

So Felicity had let herself be gently herded into another room nearby. Obediently showered in the ridiculous shower she found there—trying to not get her shoulder's bandages wet but not able to manage it in a device designed to get her wet.

It'd been embarrassing to ask for help, but Sara hadn't hesitated: carefully wrapping Felicity in a fluffy robe that the I.T girl wanted to keep even if the bloodstains didn't come out, helping her wash her hair, then cleaning and re-bandaging the wound like it was all the most normal thing in the world. Then again, maybe it had been in the League of Assassins?

Felicity couldn't really imagine that the rest of the slumber party stuff would be. Doing pedicures and
manicures, helping each other with their hair—well, Sara had done most of the work since Felicity couldn't trust her dominant hand, but she'd still been able to help her friend with the mani-pedi with only a few mishaps along the way. (Thank Google for nail polish corrector pens.)

It'd all reminded Felicity of when she'd still done that sort of stuff with her mom back in Vegas. Beauty tips were something Donna Smoak was happy to pass on to her daughter, after all, and even as a teenager some of them had stuck inside her head.

It'd also made her wonder if that might be what having a sister would've been like, but she hadn't dared to ask. Felicity was already feeling guilty having feelings for her friend's boyfriend, she didn't want to remind Sara of the troubles she was having with Laurel, too.

It had been nice. Sara had been beyond nice, and continued to be. So Felicity couldn't even look at Oliver without feeling guilty. And he was seating next to his I.T girl turned lousy secretary instead of his girlfriend because they were all worried about her.

"So what's your favorite sushi, Felicity?" Thea broke the awkward silence yet again, like she had almost every time it'd been broken since they'd all piled into the car. This was the first time she'd actually asked the E.A something since her surprisingly enthusiastic greeting back at the mansion though, so for a second the blonde could only blink at her.

"Oh, um," Felicity shook her head. "I-I'm not sure. I haven't really had it in a while..."

Actually she hadn't tried any of the really nice sushi restaurants in Starling City at all, so the last time she'd tried it had been back in Boston. Years ago, when tossing some of her hard earned money at a nice meal hadn't seemed like such a bad idea since her scholarship covered her tuition and student loans covered her room and board at the school. After she'd graduated and joined the work force, needing to pay back those loans that weren't completely crushing thanks to the scholarships, and needing to pay rent, utilities, and countless other bills had to be a priority. Especially since she never wanted to need to use the trust fund she preferred to pretend didn't exist. That had always put the impracticality of trying to find a place for expensive meals anywhere in her budget in perspective, save for the few times she'd just had to treat herself. Which, more often than not, had been during her less than successful attempts at online dating... back when she had the free time for that sort of thing.

Back in Boston she had like the Japanese cuisine the times she tried it. When her shoulder wasn't alternating between aching all the time and agony if she moved it wrong. But right now, raw fish didn't sound like something her stomach could handle at all. With or without Simon Masrani trying to talk her into revisiting her own personal hell again.
"I haven't tried Toro's since I've been back," Oliver spoke up, so obviously heading his sister off that no one could miss it, but his hurt I.T girl was still absurdly grateful. "Are the Mizushima's still there?"

"They are," Missus Queen answered him evenly, her eyes traveling between her son and Felicity—again—before she stopped on the younger woman and offered, "Toro's is best known for their blue fin tuna, of course, though I've been told their tasting menu is excellent as well."

Was the dragon-lady actually trying to be nice to her?

"You haven't tried it yet, Mom?" Thea shot her mother a teasing smirk.

The other Queen shrugged lightly as she met her daughter's smirk with a small, amused smile that almost matched. "I am quite partial to the otoro, no matter what it's used in."

If Felicity was remembering her crash course in sushi right, that was the fattiest part of the fish: the tuna's underbelly. Which was also the most expensive part of the already expensive seafood. Not that cost would've ever bothered Moira Queen.

Remembering that reminded Felicity of the one thing she'd quickly learned she couldn't stand when it came to sushi, and her nose wrinkled automatically. "I'll try anything without wasabi in it. Fake wasabi, I mean," she clarified with a frown as she remembered the college friend that'd long since returned home to Japan saying that real wasabi was worth far more than the imitation.

Satomi had sworn up and down that the other M.I.T student—now fellow alumni—should seize any opportunity to try the real thing if she ever got the chance. Seeing as Satomi was the one that'd introduced her to sushi in the first place, and everything she'd freely taught the other tech regarding what passed for her homeland's food here in America had turned out to be true, Felicity knew she'd have to try to keep that promise if it turned out that the restaurant here in Starling had actual wasabi rather than the spicy green horseradish that most places (even some places in Japan apparently) served instead. Her stomach rolling a little at the thought though made her really hope that that wouldn't happen tonight.

"Fake wasabi?" Thea blinked big eyes at her, sounding surprised. "What'd you mean?"

Felicity winced, but answered honestly. "Um, wasabi's called Japanese horseradish, not sure why since it's not really the same thing, or its not supposed to be. Not real wasabi, I mean. But most
American sushi restaurants don't bother with it, I guess. People are used to the spicy green horseradish, and the plant's rare and hard to grow, I guess, so it's expensive." She started to shrug, but stopped herself just in time, trying not to wince at the thought of how painful that could've been. Her shoulder hurt enough right now not moving.

"Toro's offers the most authentic sushi in Starling City," Oliver's mother objected with a small frown, but she didn't sound like she didn't believe the younger blonde. She still sort of sounded like she was trying to be nice. It was weird.

"Probably is the most authentic American sushi," Sara said, voice unaffected and easygoing in that way that Felicity just couldn't be around that woman. "I tried the real stuff a few years back. It is different. Smoother, more herbal. And it's hot, but the burn hits you up front, not as an aftertaste." She shrugged. "Kind of felt like I was eating green tea that was real spicy, but I can't really say I liked it more or less than the stuff we get over here."

"Probably why the sub doesn't bother most people," Oliver offered lightly, keeping the attention of his scary mother and somewhat scary sister diverted a moment longer.

For which Felicity was grateful. She wasn't entirely sure the rescue was needed, since the Queen women seemed to like her this evening, which was kind of scary. She'd take the rescue though: she did not want the car's attention anywhere near her.

That was why she hadn't really wanted to sit between Oliver and Sara. But by the time she'd realized why the couple had kept her standing outside the limo to sit after everyone else had already gotten in, it was too late. Somehow they'd silently decided on this seating arrangement and since no one had questioned them on it—even Missus Queen hadn't raised an eyebrow at being expected to take one of the side seats—Felicity couldn't really ask someone else to move. Especially not when she was pretty sure Oliver wouldn't let that happen. And she wasn't sure Sara wouldn't speak up, too.

Clearly there were more than a few reasons taking a bullet for a friend could be bad. Other than the pain, nausea, weakness, exhaustion, and all the other obvious stuff that followed. Assuming you survived in the first place. At least she had her own tell-able scar story now.

"Whoa," Roy commented as the limo turned smoothly off the street—and when she followed his gaze out the windows she could see they were in the popular restaurant's parking lot. "They've got a lot of open parking tonight. Are you sure they're open?"

"Unfortunately," the word slipped out on a sigh before Felicity could stop it, and then she was grimacing again as everyone looked at her. She met Sara's eyes as she reminded her, "He said I
could bring as many friends as I want."

The former assassin blinked when she realized what the tech girl was implying. "You think he reserved the whole restaurant? Why would—"

"I know he did. And because he could," the genius answered on another sigh, but didn't say anymore as the car came to a stop at the front doors.

They did all have to have dinner here with the man tonight, it was better not to focus on the bad things, wasn't it? Even if she would rather be down in the Foundry hacking some place or other, instead of dressed up like she was going to one of the many gala's Oliver and his assistant had to attend. She'd rather be at one of those, too, whether she had to make excuses for Oliver again or not...

Felicity bit her tongue just enough to be sure she wouldn't start saying something when she saw the sign that'd always seemed stupid to her—almost as stupid as the sign for her vigilante boss's nightclub. With all the green and the V that looked a lot like an arrow pointing down.

*Toro’s*, at least, probably wasn't another hero's secret hideout. It was just the most renown sushi restaurant in Starling. The vibrant red and orange coloring that seemed to symbolize flames beneath the word 'sushi' couldn't seem quite as stupid as *Verdant*, but she wasn't sure it'd ever exactly make sense to her either...

The restaurant itself was beautiful though. All the dramatic colors against black backgrounds or tabletops. Sometimes the color came from the beautiful exotic flowers that probably had to be grown in special greenhouses, but the table runners and napkins looked bold against the black, too. And somehow the off-white paper lanterns and the wall panels designed to look like them blended in seamlessly, so that the staff smiling at them either all black stood out and blended in at the same time.

"*Konbanwa,*" the man that opened the door for them greeted the group with a bow. "*Doozo o-hairi kudasai.*"

Another man also welcomed them with a big smile from where he was waiting inside, but he wasn't dressed all in black. Mostly, he was, but the bold red vest he wore over the top of that black—probably supposed to signify his importance here—made him look a lot like the tabletops and their napkins.
Then again, it was possible Felicity was feeling uncharitable just now, since he was going to be taking her to another unwanted meeting with Simon Masrani, and this time she couldn't say 'no' when the billionaire 'asked' her to go back to hell with him...

The important-table-like man greeted the group with a bow as soon as they were all inside, with both sets of doors being shut against the cold behind them. "Konbanwa, Queen-san," he bowed a second time to Oliver, shallower but still noticeable. When the billionaire only nodded back, he added, "Good evening. Welcome back to Toro's."

"Thank you," Oliver replied evenly, not phased in the slightest by making the man translate his greeting. Not that he'd really made him, of course, but the C.E.O was a lot smarter than he still wanted people to realize, so he still did stuff like that sometimes trying to hide his intelligence. A futile effort, probably, but that didn't mean it was a bad idea.

Felicity shouldn't have been surprised, but she still blinked when the table-man's eyes moved to her next, instead of Missus Queen or Thea. Considering who they were meeting here and why, though, she really shouldn't be surprised—Masrani had probably put her name on the reservation as his guest before everyone else. Everyone else, after all, was only here because she was allowed to bring as many friends as she wanted...

And one would think Masrani would learn from his mistakes, since the last time he'd made that offer she'd brought a lot of M.I.T out on his dime; at one of Boston's best sushi restaurants, which was probably why he remembered she'd liked sushi once upon a time, since she'd never mentioned this place to him. But the 'stunt'—as he'd called it—back in Boston had seemed to amuse him more than anything else at the time. That, and he probably figured both that she wasn't in college anymore and, since this was about saving Queen Consolidated, inviting too many of her co-workers wouldn't have been wise because it would've gotten back to Isabitch...

"Miss Smoak?"

"That's me," Felicity reluctantly gave him a meek nod, then tried to sound a little less tired as she added, "Konbanwa."

"Konbanwa. Hajimemashite," the man returned with another small bow and a slightly brighter smile for her. "Mister Masrani shall arrive shortly, he sends his apologies for not arriving sooner."

"Not arriving early is hardly late," Oliver's mother interjected graciously, then asked, "Does Mister Masrani expect to be long?"
"No, Missus Queen. Again, he does apologize." The table-man spread his hands. "Missus Masrani's flight landed not long ago at Starling International, but they expect to arrive soon."

Felicity couldn't help but perk up a little at that news. "Lyn's coming?"

The genius was always glad to see Evelyn Masrani. Unlike her husband, Lyn—as she'd insisted Felicity call her from their first introduction—had never been a fan of making the younger woman face her past. In fact, Felicity wasn't entirely sure Masrani's beyond beautiful wife had ever been to Jurassic World herself. Not when her husband never seemed surprised when Lyn called the dinosaurs 'Simon's pet monsters.'

"Missus Masrani, yes, Miss," confirmed the table-man.

She should probably recognize him as the maître d', or whatever they were called in Japan. Maître d' was really French, wasn't it?

"I believe Mister Masrani did not expect her to return from Europe quite so soon."

No, he'd most likely tried to sneak this latest meeting in while Lyn was away—and gotten caught. Not for the first time.

"Bet he didn't," Felicity agreed almost under her breath. Unable to not be a little happy at knowing the one person in the world Simon Masrani would never be comfortable trying to walk over was going to be here tonight, too. It was almost enough to make her look forward to the power couple's arrival. Watching the clashes between the world renown businessman and the wife—that might've been some sort of spy before she became a trophy wife—was just too much fun not to enjoy it just a little.

But Felicity couldn't really think too much about that as she realized that more than one pair of eyebrows had moved upward when she'd referred to Masrani's wife by the nickname that only her friends used.

"Mister Masrani was uncertain as to how many guests we would be honored with this evening," the Japanese maître d' went on.
At least Felicity was pretty sure he really was Japanese, or at least Japanese-American. But either way he was apparently in charge in this nice Japanese restaurant so it worked even if he wasn't Japanese...

By the time Felicity realized that was a question directed at her in the form of a statement, and required an answer, Oliver's mother had already come to her rescue. "I believe two more will be joining us, in addition to the Masrani's," Missus Queen clarified. "For a full party of ten."

"Arigato," the man bowed again.

All the bowing would make Felicity feel sorry for him if he didn't make the motion so easy-looking. She was pretty sure she would've fallen over during one of those bows—maybe even without the still healing gunshot wound in her shoulder...

"Please, have a seat. Enjoy saké while you wait," he said smoothly, yet another bow just as effortlessly done.

The waiters with the trays bearing little ceramic jars full of the infamous Japanese drink were able to bow super easily, too, without breaking a cup or even spilling a drop out of said cups on their trays.

"Thank you, but I think most of us will be having tea," Oliver insisted before the man could depart or anyone could accept the alcohol.

His mother frowned slightly, but after a quick glance at her daughter seemed to decide it was a good idea. As this was a sort of business dinner with someone that could really hurt or help Queen Consolidated, sobriety was a great idea.

Of course, Oliver was probably cutting the alcohol off before it could start for the sake of gorgeous Laurel.

Saké, though, wouldn't mix well with whatever the not-aspirins Digg gave her were, either. Alcohol and painkillers were usually a big no-no. And Felicity wasn't sure if she should still be worried about the anti-biotic Sara had shot her with last night, too. So no alcohol for her. Even if it did usually make dealing with Simon Masrani almost palatable... it wasn't worth risking, however, when her completely losing it in front of him or ending up in the hospital probably weren't going to deter the determined businessman either.
"Hai, gomen nasasi," the head waiter agreed, sending the other two men off with a jerk of his chin that neither one needed because they were already turning away. "Would green tea be acceptable, sir?"

"Perfect." Oliver nodded.

The man immediately bowed again before hurrying away.

And Felicity found herself being helped into a seat right by the crackling fire that kept the restaurant's nice waiting area warm even right by the door. It was one of those fake fires—the flames dancing across artfully crafted ceramic or something similar made to look like wood without burning—but the appearance and overall affect was the same. A toasty warmth filling the air while light mood music played around them. It was nice. Soothing almost—if not for what was still to come.

Felicity fought a yawn, and frowned. After sleeping for several hours this afternoon and then being pampered for a few more, she really shouldn't be so tired already. So what if she had been shot less than a full day ago. Oliver would probably both be attacking the salmon ladder already, or something like that. Sara probably would, too. Digg, too, though he'd probably punch stuff, since she'd never seen him even consider attempting the aerial acrobatics that their archer made look so amazing...

"Are you okay?" Sara asked her softly, and her expression was full of honest concern.

Oliver's face was worried, too. He was practically hovering over her after letting Sara take the seat next to her.

The team's I.T girl had to sigh. "Sorry, I guess I'm still tired."

Oliver frowned, but again it was his girlfriend that answered.

"Don't be silly. You had it rough last night, and today wasn't much better," the Canary reminded her, shaking her head. "Try to drink a lot of the tea. And water. It should help."

"Not sure how much good caffeine will do," Felicity shook her head, wincing a little as that shifted her shoulder a little too much. "I'll just have to hope he doesn't talk too much tonight..." she winced again. "But he will." She sent a baleful look between the vigilante couple. "Any other tips?"
Oliver sighed, "You should still be resting," he said under his breath, like it was a perfectly reasonable complaint from him. Like he hadn't been itching to start flinging himself back up the salmon ladder last year before his own gunshot wound—courtesy of his scary mother—had healed, and again after every other injury his I.T girl knew he'd suffered as Starling City's still entirely too unappreciated hero.

But Felicity accepted the little, steaming cup of tea he grabbed for her without complaint. Though she didn't try to take a sip yet. Not when it was so hot that the cup was barely cool enough to hold. She kind of wanted to though, as soon as she realized she'd let Oliver and Sara maneuver her into the prime spot in the room for everyone in the group to gather around her. The unwilling center of attention. Again.

With the way Thea Queen was watching her right now, Felicity was fairly sure she'd be better off burning her tongue instead of letting it start babbling anytime now. It didn't help that Missus Queen looked almost as interested—like she was trying to figure Felicity out.

And Felicity Smoak did not like that at all, especially since she wasn't sure why it was the older woman found her so interesting all of a sudden. Not when she'd kind of thought Moira Queen must hate her for telling Oliver the truth about his sister.

Did someone tell her already that Felicity was the only reason the C.E.O of the Masrani Corporation was meeting with them? That had to be it. Oliver must've mentioned it when his mother and sister first said they wanted to go. So now both of them were wondering what one of the wealthiest men in the world wanted from her...

"He wants me to go to his stupid island," Felicity let the explanation out before her tongue could get any worse ideas. Hoping, maybe foolishly, that getting that out in the open would stop her from melting into a mess while they waited for the eccentric billionaire to arrive.

"What?" Thea was the one to ask.

"The island. Jurassic World, now," Felicity clarified with a sigh as the younger woman blinked at her. "He's wanted me to go back there for years, 'cause I'm the only one that hasn't. That's what this is about." She looked nervously between Oliver's curious sister and his harder to read scary mother. "Just thought I should get that out there," she explained, before looking down into her tea cup and trying to blow some of the steam away so that it might cool just a little faster.
"Go back?" Thea was frowning now, her brow furrowed in clear confusion.

But her mother had made the connection from some of the seeds the I.T girl had scattered around. "You were there before it opened as Jurassic World?" Missus Queen asked, her voice surprisingly gentle.

Not at all reassuring for the E.A, however. Not when that was the exact same tone she'd used when she'd explained to Felicity that a part of Oliver would always hate her for telling him the truth his mother never wanted him to know.

"When the Hammonds owned it as... Jurassic Park, I believe?"

Felicity really wasn't a fan of the rename. Never had been, never would be. It was terrifying enough to think of those monsters stuck on an island isolated by the ocean somewhere off the coast of South America. She didn't need the reminder that they'd once roamed over every continent, or—as the banner in Hammond's Visitor's Center had once proclaimed—Ruled the Earth...

"Yeah, um, I mean; yes," Felicity confirmed. Then she finally decided to just risk tongue-burning and brought the cup up to her mouth for sip. The tea was very hot: not scalding, but hot enough that her taste buds couldn't taste anything yet. It still felt good going down her throat—almost warming up that part of her that always started to freeze a little when she thought about the most terrifying experience of her childhood.

It'd never really made sense to her as she'd gotten older. That thinking about those terrifying hours—they really were barely there a whole day, but thinking about it—made her feel frozen. The island itself was a tropical paradise before the scientists unleashed all the dinosaurs there, in the middle of the winter it didn't drop below fifty. But her memories were cold: shuddering shivers from the second she realized the first monster was breaking out of his cage right next to them, till they were finally flying away from the island. No, until that helicopter had touched down. She'd felt frightened enough flying in with Doctor Malcolm and Mister Hammond's doomed lawyer for company. After everything else, that helicopter had represented safety, but she hadn't been able to sleep in it like Lex and Tim had. Felicity had had to wait till they reached Costa Rica itself, nodding off while a bunch of the doctors that worked for In-Gen were fussing over all of them...

"Wait," that Thea had just made the connection was as clear in her voice as it was in her wide-eyes. "You mean you were there when all the dinosaurs got out and were eating people?"

"Thea!" Oliver snapped.
His sister was wincing even before he'd rebuked her. "Sorry, I—"

"No, no, it's okay," Felicity insisted, well aware of what it was like to have your mouth run away from you. And the teenager meant her no harm. "I-I mean, it wasn't, but yeah, I was there. Then..."

"And..." Thea trailed off, her eyes narrowing as the keen intelligence few would believe she and her brother shared worked its magic. "He wants you to go back? To that island?"

Felicity only nodded as she took another sip of almost too hot tea. Not really wanting to dignify the question with a response that'd sound at least as unhappy about all of this as she was. Yet also not able to say anything resembling good about it. So: if you can't say anything nice and all that...

"And you don't want to," the youngest Queen said, shaking her head as she went on without waiting for a response because that realization hadn't been a question. "Then why the hell are we meeting with him?"

"Thea," Moira Queen chastised her daughter more mildly than Oliver had, though something about the furrow of her brow and the way her eyes kept darting between her son and Felicity more than her daughter showed she was pretty confused, too. "Mister Masrani is a very influential—"

"Super important big businessman, yeah, you already gave me that memo, Mom," the brunette interrupted her mother snidely. But her frown was directed at her brother. "Big freaking deal! Ollie, if she doesn't want to—"

"No one's forcing Felicity to do anything, Thea," Oliver interrupted his sister calmly. "We're just hearing him out tonight. That's it." He took a gulp of his own tea, looking like the heat didn't bother him but he'd prefer something like saké he'd sent away.

It was sweet that he seemed to really believe that, but Felicity had already realized that the odds of her conscience letting her leave tonight without the means of saving Q.C, at her own expense or not, were too low to truly consider.

"Why?"
"He's found out some pretty damning things about Queen Consolidated," Sara said before the younger Queen sibling could get anymore outraged on her big brother's secretary's behalf.

Felicity was honestly touched that the teenager cared so much about her. Someone she barely knew. Someone she had no reason to know much better than almost anyone else that worked at Queen Consolidated. The tech genius was inclined to like Thea Queen just because two people who were important to her loved the girl. She was Oliver's sister, and Roy's girlfriend, after all. But if she was really this caring in general it was hard to see why anyone wouldn't adore her.

All in spite of her somehow being Malcolm Merlyn and Moira Queen's daughter... A combination that should undoubtedly be something from Felicity's worst nightmares, but somehow the terrifying pair had apparently only past whatever good attributes they had onto their daughter... then again she was kind of scary, too. So maybe it was a case of nurture being a lot more important than nature?

"What things?" Missus Queen's quiet question brought her back to the fireside chat in the sushi restaurant that wasn't going to feed them till their worldly host arrived.

Oliver sighed. "Apparently Isabel hasn't been working towards Q.C's best interests during her time with us," he admitted, and his mother snorted.

Moira Queen actually snorted. Felicity was so busy blinking at her she almost missed what the older woman said after that.

"I told you not to trust her, Oliver."

But the C.E.O was in no mood to be lectured by his mother. "You've told me a lot of things," he reminded her: his tone so neutral it wasn't.

Missus Queen's wince was almost a flinch.

Before she could try to muster another answer the maître d' dressed like the restaurant's tables was welcoming another pair in out of the cold.

Tommy Merlyn and Laurel Lance had arrived. Both looking perfect, with Tommy in a sharp tux and Laurel in an elegant red dress that'd make Felicity feel pretty plain even if her own red dress wasn't half hidden by the nice shawl Sara had wrapped around her shoulders to both hide and protect her
"Sorry we're late," Tommy said as the pair took the nearest free seats to Oliver, who she only just noticed was sitting on her other side: on what could barely be the edge of the sofa. "Almost thought we'd come to the wrong restaurant when we saw the parking lot. Masrani buy out the whole place?" he asked Oliver with a raised eyebrow.

"Seems that way," Oliver confirmed. He didn't seem to notice when Felicity slid a little closer to Sara to give him more room, but he did close the distance at the same time. Sandwiching her more tightly, and safely, between them.

"He's not here yet?" Laurel asked, frowning as if doing so might magically make the man appear. Then again, in Gorgeous Laurel's case that may've happened before with more than one of the men in the room.

Felicity had to wince at her own thoughts. She was being unnecessarily catty. It didn't matter that she wasn't saying what she was thinking—that her brain to mouth filter seemed to be working for the moment, at least—the other woman didn't deserve her ill will. She'd certainly had more than enough problems of her own since the quake that'd brought the building she worked in down like it was made of sand. The A.D.A's attention zeroing in on her a moment later, however, still felt like awful karma.

"Felicity, right?" the lawyer offered a polished, perfect smile that she'd probably practiced as part of her homework back in law school. "We've met a few times, I think?"

Before the I.T turned E.A could come up with any real desire to respond, the other Lance sister was wrapping an arm around her—just under her shoulders so somehow it didn't hurt—and leaning forward as if to shield the other blonde from her sister's sight. "Nope, not happening, Laur-Bear. I already called dibs." Sara smirked, completely unrepentantly as almost everyone blinked at her. "Felicity's my friend, and you can't have her."

It was hard to say exactly what changed, because the brunette's gorgeous face barely shifted, but after a startled blinked Laurel suddenly looked a little less like the intimidating brunette Barbie brought to life to make men drool. "I'm sure Felicity can pick her own friends, Sar-Bear." She raised a perfectly manicured eyebrow. "Questionable choices till now aside, of course."

"Ouch, that hurt, right here," Sara's free hand went to her chest, as if to stop her heart from jumping out. But she was still smirking. "Seriously, though, Felicity's had a rough couple of days and I'm pretty sure she wants to be anywhere other than here—"
"Not anywhere," Felicity corrected, interjecting into the banter without any real thought at all.

The former assassin didn't even blink as she accepted the correction, "Anywhere other than here or the dino-island, so take it easy on her. Okay?"

"I think we're all friends here now," Tommy spoke up, giving his girlfriend's hand a reassuring squeeze as he went on. "Here to help."

The reminder that she had friends here, and that those friends were Laurel Lance's friends, too—and never mind whatever the hell Oliver was supposed to be to her, Sara was her sister—made Felicity feel even worse for wanting to run and hide when the tall brunette looked at her.

"Right," Laurel nodded quickly, meeting Felicity's gaze when the blonde made herself look her way. "But I just want to be sure. You know you don't have to be here, right?"

Felicity blinked, but she was nodding before her eyes had even completed their reaction. "Yeah, I-I know," she sighed, sinking back into the reassuring hold of Sara's supportive arm. "Thank you, but no one dragged me here."

Then Oliver's hard form was right next to her. Sara was sturdy and very strong, of course, but she was small, too. Not that much bigger than Felicity—though she was far more dangerous. Like Oliver. He'd been sitting on the couch next to her already, but somehow she'd ended up pressed into his side. Had she moved? Felicity wasn't sure, but with Sara holding her in place and Oliver right there, there wasn't really anywhere for her to go. She was stuck in a vigilante sandwich that neither one of them seemed to think was strange.

Diggle and Roy didn't seem to either. The bodyguard hadn't entirely managed to disappear into the woodwork as he and his eyebrows and his little smile were watching from by the nearest wall. Roy wasn't even trying to hide his amused smirk as he watched from his fascinated girlfriend's other side.

Everyone else though seemed to be studying Felicity like they never seen her before. Or anything half as fascinating as her. How had this become her life?

Well, Tommy wasn't staring at her. His attention was mostly fixed on his girlfriend. Though he'd shot the blonde an amused yet supportive look once or twice already, too.
And the especially protective vigilantes couldn't be as focused on Felicity as they seemed. She didn't doubt they were both more aware of every way into and out of this room then she'd ever be. She was equally certain they'd categorized every possible weapon and evaluated every stranger there who might be a threat. Like Digg had, too, and Roy to some extent. They did that. All of them.

Felicity had made the mistake of asking Sara how only once. When she'd asked Oliver and Digg the same question, they'd both given her vague reassurances and indulgent smiles. The ex-assassin, on the other hand, was all too willing to share her scary wisdom. The team's I.T girl had been jumping away from shadows for nearly a week after that... though she'd mostly gotten it under control by the time the Clock-King came to town.

"So where is Masrani anyway?" Tommy's question brought her back to the sushi restaurant's fake fireside sitting area. Just in time to see another one of the all-in-black waiters bow before departing after delivering the latest arrivals' freshly-boiled-till-it-was-too-hot-to-taste green tea.

"Mister and Missus Masrani will be joining us shortly," the scary dragon lady answered, giving her son's friend a pointed frown. "Their flight was apparently delayed."

Tommy blinked, but didn't appear otherwise bothered by that frown. "Okay. Well, as long as that doesn't mean they'll be flying in on a pterodactyl, or something like that."

The idea made Felicity shudder. That there had been dinosaurs with wings once upon a time had never crossed her mind while she was trying to escape that island. So when she came across the reports of In-Gen needing to hire mercenaries with a lot of firepower to hunt some of the flying dinosaurs down not too long after the San Diego disaster, she'd been appalled.

The thought of anyone being stupid enough to put one of those monsters on a boat off the island was bad enough, but those terrors in the sky could go anywhere they wanted! By the time the kill-squad finally caught up with that flock that'd escaped containment on the island, the dinosaurs had made it all the way to Canada. Canada! How their flight across Central and much of North America never made the news was a mystery that likely had a lot to do with their long flight somehow missing every major population center. A not-so-small miracle all its own.

But even finding out about it years later when she was creating the computer system for Jurassic World—only because she wanted it to be as secure as it could possibly be—had almost completely destroyed her sense of safety from the idea that the dinosaurs couldn't cross the ocean alone...

Oliver's arm wrapping around her waist forced Felicity back to the couch by the fake fireplace with a startled blink. Sara shifted, too, her strong arm leaving Felicity's shoulders and instead coming
around front to catch her free hand and give it a comforting squeeze. Both vigilantes silently reminding her that they were there, so she was probably the safest person in the room sitting between them.

Felicity could only blink slowly between the pair, completely confused but not wanting to leave their protective sandwich either. It was like a cocoon of safety, that even her frightened memories seemed to warm to. And that she almost wanted to hide in when the restaurant's main doors swung open again a moment later.

A burst of wintry wind rushed in just ahead of the couple they were all waiting for. Evelyn Masrani was every bit as beautiful as Felicity remembered. Even supermodels tended to look plain next to her. But even if she were as ugly as she was beautiful, her smiling face would be a very welcome sight tonight. Her husband's smile, however, was just aggravating as he barely noticed the wait staff all but falling over themselves to welcome him. At least he didn't look smug or superior like other men might have. His honest happiness, at her expense though it was, was too real to really hate.

Felicity almost dropped her teacup as she suddenly found herself rising from the sofa without warning. There would've been no almost—she would've dropped it and there would have been steamy tea and shattered china all over the floor—if not for Sara's swift hands. The Canary had snatched the little cup as it'd started to tip free, just as effortlessly as Oliver had pulled the E.A to her feet at his side like lifting all her weight on one arm was nothing.

Wow, that salmon ladder sure was something...

Everyone else had stood up at about the same time. And Felicity wasn't the only one with puppet-politeness—Thea had yanked Roy to his feet a lot more obviously.

What Masrani noticed, of course, was how closely Oliver was holding her. The misconception nearly made Felicity want to pull away from her boss as the other couple stopped right in front of them.

The two C.E.O's studying each other silently at first. What the other man probably thought was possessiveness—Oliver staking his claim or something like that—was only his normal protectiveness gone into overdrive because of what'd happened of late. Because she was hurt. Because she was scared. Because of everything.

But if Felicity tried to pull away she'd have to be really obvious about it: Oliver's arm was like a steel band. A warm, comforting and steady steel band of super solid muscles not entirely hidden by his fashionable suit. Oliver probably wouldn't notice if she tried to pull away discretely, he'd just readjust
his grip like he was stopping her from slipping. And if Felicity really pulled away she'd probably end up falling into Sara's arms, since neither vigilante would actually let her fall onto her face. It'd cause a scene anyway, and everyone would be staring.

Not a good starting point to whatever tonight was going to be. Better to let Simon Masrani realize Oliver Queen wasn't going to let her go without a fight, and not worry about how he interpreted it. It's not like it wasn't true, technically. The fighting for her part, anyway. Felicity knew he'd fight for all his friends. He'd fight for everyone in their city.

Evelyn's eyes, on the other hand, had focused on Sara first. Unlike her husband, Lyn hadn't missed the teacup's rescue. The way she was swiftly evaluating Sara, and Oliver, made Felicity wonder once again if the rumors about her being a semi-retired spy weren't founded in fact...

"Felicity, darling," the brunette's smile had been for her from the start. "It's so good to see you again." She slipped her arm out of her husband's hold so she could reach for Felicity with both hands, catching the hand Sara had rescued the teacup from gently between her manicured masterpieces.

"You, too, Lyn," Felicity smiled back automatically.

Normally the older woman would've pulled her into a hug and then remained a protective presence at the tech girl's side until her husband finally gave up on trying to convince them. She remained a perfectly amiable hostess at all times, of course. It wasn't like she stood there scowling or silently glaring in reminder of the fact that the billionaire might be sleeping on his couch that cost more than most people could imagine furniture costing. No, she usually didn't even say anything about the ongoing argument through the years unless Felicity really needed her to. She was usually just there. A steady, comforting presence: always on the other female's side instead of with the man she'd married. This time, however, she clearly realized Oliver and Sara weren't going to give up their protective places, and she was wisely not going to fight them on it.

Lyn gave her hand another gentle squeeze, then she looked around. "You didn't bring quite as many friends as Simon feared," she'd observed with a slightly wicked smile that wouldn't be out of place on the femme-fatale in most action movies.

"Obviously, my heart, she has grown up since graduating college," Masrani observed with an amused eye roll. "It happens to the best of us." Then his indulgent smile turned back from his wife to Felicity. "Everyone is here, yes?"

"Yes," Felicity nodded, then offered, "Let me introduce everybody." She said because she pretty
much had to. She needed to tug her hand free from Lyn's grasp, but didn't even try to escape Oliver's arm. Sara was so close on her other side that she'd have to stumble from the archer's arm into hers, or Lyn's, in the unlikely event that he actually let her fall free. So she tried to pretend she didn't notice their protectiveness while she went through pointing everyone out. "This is Oliver Queen. You met Sara this morning. That's her sister, Laurel, with Tommy Merlyn. Oliver's mother, Moira Queen, and his sister, Thea, with Roy Harper. And hiding by the wall over there is John Diggle. Everyone, these are Simon and Evelyn Masrani." She nearly sagged in Oliver's hold as she finally finished, a bit out of breath, but no one seemed to notice.

"We are so very happy to meet you all," Lyn said, her smile sincere.

"Indeed," Masrani agreed with a wide grin. "A pleasure to meet all of Felicity's friends." He said it like he hadn't been sure of who'd be here at all.

Well, maybe he hadn't been. Not really. From what his wife had hinted at, he could have been worried Felicity would issue a general invitation to everyone at Queen Consolidated. Or, given their lengthy history, he could have been worried she wouldn't show up at all. Therefore, he probably wouldn't have really cared if she'd brought a hundred more reinforcements. Not if it got her in the restaurant and to the table. He had only laughed that time when most of her graduating class had shown up at one of the best restaurants in Boston.

That battle he'd be worried about, after all, wouldn't come till after dinner. Because the Masrani's didn't mix meals with business. She'd learned that years ago. Any discussion about why they were really here wouldn't come till after they'd all eaten.

Assuming Felicity lasted that long. With her shoulder and general anxiety, even she couldn't be entirely sure she would.

But she had to. For all the people that worked at Queen Consolidated. Even the petty, spiteful ones that spread vicious rumors in the break room. And in the elevator. And by the water cooler. And every other place Isabel Rochev could encourage the gossip.

Which was also why she had to do this. To help Oliver stop her, and save his company...

Oliver was probably the only one here that Masrani had to expect. If Felicity showed up at all, it'd only happen with Oliver by her side. It was his company on the line...
Felicity blinked as the gentle pressure of Oliver's big, warm hand on the middle of her back brought her out of her whirlwind thoughts. He was helping her sit down—when had they walked into the dining room?

...Maybe the not-aspirin wasn't actually all the way out of her system yet? Wouldn't that be just fan-freaking-tastic?

Felicity tried to focus, and slowly her thoughts started to come together again by sheer force of will, at maybe half the speed that'd be slow for her normally. The only reason she didn't fall into the chair, she realized, was because Oliver had physically placed her there. Still safe and secure right in between him and Sara.

Oliver had taken the seat in between her and the head of the table, which was where Masrani would've wanted her, but Felicity couldn't care if she'd missed him suggesting it while she was completely spaced out after the marathon of introductions.

She had introduced everybody, hadn't she? She thought she had, but the complete disconnect between the rooms bothered her. It was completely blank in her mind—walking, or maybe being more than half carried, from one room to the other—like it hadn't even happened. It had to have, but it wasn't there in her head. Was that the drugs still lingering in her system, or was she really just that tired?

Felicity had never woken up with a killer hang-over and no memory of the night before. She'd never seen the point in drinking anymore than she needed to achieve that pleasant buzz. So she'd been tipsy more than once, and hung over a few times too many, but never falling on her ass drunk.

And she'd never exhausted herself to forgetfulness, either. Working as the vigilante team's I.T girl had brought her closer to that than M.I.T ever had. More than once.

But the only time she'd ever blacked out like this were... During the T-Rex attack, after the S.U.V was sent off the cliff into the treetops. A concussion was to blame then. And after she ate that pot brownie in college. Anaphylactic shock courtesy of those evil walnuts.

Clearly her mind didn't like medical trauma. Her mind was smart. Then again, she was a genius... who everyone was staring at? Why was everyone staring at her?

Felicity's eyes darted between her vigilantes, and she tried not to look too relieved when Sara came
"Not sure you're up for too much sushi tonight, Felicity," the other blonde gave her a supportive smile. "Those prescriptions you're on can't be easy on your stomach."

Were they prescriptions if a doctor didn't prescribe them? Not that that was hugely important. At least now she knew what she was supposed to answer—did she want sushi or not?—though she didn't care for the reminder of just how unappetizing raw fish sounded right now. So that really answered that, didn't it?

"Oh dear," Lyn spoke up before Felicity could remember she should say something. "Are you alright, Felicity?"

"I'll be fine," Felicity tried to reassure her automatically.

Then Masrani opened his mouth again. "You hurt your shoulder recently?"

And his wife's gaze snapped sideways to him, going from concerned for her to livid with him in a heartbeat. "Simon! You knew she was hurt and you bullied her into coming anyway?"

"Evelyn..." the C.E.O sighed, actually seeming to shrink a little. He hated making her angry with him. It was why having Evelyn Masrani on her side was so damn useful over the years.

"Don't 'Evelyn' me," Lyn shot back coolly, before turning back to the woman across from her, again all concern. "What happened?"

"I-uh-I got my own scar?" Felicity found herself saying uncertainly. Not wanting to say she got shot, because how could she explain that?

Her response earned her more than a few blinks of confusion.

Sara laughed before anyone could ask, "And that's really what matters, isn't it?"
Felicity tried to smile back, because in a way it was.

Not that it actually told anyone else anything. They were still blinking cluelessly between the blondes in some case.

Not Oliver, of course. He knew exactly what they were talking about and couldn't hide the fact that he didn't like it. Her vigilante never reacted well when his tech girl was injured, or even threatened. Not that he was hers, and she wasn't really his girl. Sara was. Felicity was just his tech support.

"I think we're all missing something here," Roy spoke up, unexpectedly bringing the table's attention to himself for a minute. Which was likely why he'd said it, since he did know she'd been shot last night.

Then Sara stole the spotlight back. "It's really an inside joke. You had to be there," she raised an eyebrow at Lyn then. "They do the cook in front of you stuff here, too, right?"

"Teppanyaki, yes," Masrani was all too happy to seize the change in topic. "Or hibachi-style, as you say here in America."

"Wait, we call it the wrong thing in Japanese?" Thea asked in disbelief.

"No," Lyn reassured the younger brunette with a friendly smile that made her look all the more like she belonged on the cover of the luckiest fashion magazine of the year. "That's the term that's always been used in America, I think. More marketable, perhaps." She took a sip of her tea, then added. "Many people are not comfortable ordering what they cannot pronounce."

"Learning the proper pronunciation should be part of the experience," Missus Queen observed with a barely there frown that fit the conversation just right.

"Perhaps it should be, perhaps not," Lyn shrugged lightly. "I myself am comfortable attempting almost any menu, but I have traveled a fair bit more than most."

"You're fluent in far more languages than most as well, my heart," Masrani observed fondly.
"How many are you up to now, Lyn?" Felicity asked curiously, knowing studying languages it was one of her favorite hobbies.

How easily languages came to her was also another point of possible proof about Evelyn Masrani maybe being an ex-spy being true, but Felicity had never dared to directly ask that. She certainly traveled, representing her husband's companies at countless events—typically charities—around the world through the years. But her easy adaptability to numerous situations and dialects probably had as much to do with her possible previous career as it did with her being a well-known hyper-polyglot.

"Fluently?" Evelyn shrugged. "About a dozen."

Missus Queen spoke up again before Felicity could do more than roll her eyes. "From the press coverage of all the charitable events you've hosted alone, it would seem that you speak many more languages than that, Missus Masrani."

"Please, call me Evelyn, if you don't mind, Moira?" the brunette offered with a beatific smile that any professional photographer could die happy after capturing.

"Thank you, Evelyn," Oliver's mother replied just as graciously. Her relief not feigned at all. Her mayoral campaign had been surprisingly successful so far, but there were still times she had to struggle with her past mistake. So it could only come as a real relief each time a new prominent figure was willing to be on a first name basis with her despite all that.

Even if Lyn hadn't offered the nickname that only a very select handful of close friends were invited to use. The same nickname that she'd, for some reason, insisted Felicity use from their very first meeting; when her husband had ambushed the teenager—not for the first time, or the last—back at M.I.T.

Evelyn shrugged again, though the graceful way she rolled her shoulders could barely be called that. "Being able to quickly master many commonly used phrases and actual fluency in a language are not the same thing," she offered in explanation.

Then the head waiter was there in his outfit that really did look like the restaurant's table tops. And Evelyn, of course, was completely fluent in Japanese so she spoke to the tabletop-man for several long moments while the rest of them just watched.
What surprised Felicity about watching the rapid exchange of words she couldn't recognize wasn't that it was happening in the first place. No, she'd learned a long time ago that part of going out with Evelyn Masrani was accepting that anytime English wasn't the primary language of the restaurant staff she could be expected to converse for at least a moment or two in their native tongue when she knew it. Which she had every time Felicity had dined out with the Masrani's at any non-American cuisine restaurant in America. She'd personally seen the tactic win the world-renowned beauty even more admiration for her polished personality and learned tongue than her appearance alone did.

It would be more unusual, and worrying, if Evelyn confined herself to speaking only English or not speaking at all, because that was the sort of strange situation that begged the wondering why. The only time that'd happened before was when they'd eaten at Starling's best Chinese restaurant, which Felicity now knew was a front for the Triad. So maybe that was why Evelyn hadn't said a word that wasn't English that night, though she spoke all of China's major dialects fluently... when they weren't eating in an establishment owned by the Chinese mob.

What did surprise the tired tech genius, however, was how comfortable Oliver and Sara were with watching the exchange. Diggle was still a statue over by the wall, because he'd insisted on playing the bodyguard/driver tonight rather than sitting at the table as one of her friends. Roy shifted with just barely hidden discomfort while both Queen women went for sipping their tea as they waited for the conversation to return to a language they knew. Tommy was exchanging glances with Laurel. But the two vigilantes were like Masrani, sitting there watching and listening like every word made sense to them...

The Indian man, Felicity knew, was fluent in the tongue of Japan, as well as many of the other languages commonly spoken throughout Asia. And English, obviously.

Maybe the Canary had learned more than how to kick ass in the League of Assassins. And Arabic, since that was the dominant language of the League, Sara had said so. It was why it was what all their assassin names were in.

But how had Oliver learned Japanese? Then again, how had he learned Russian and joined the Bratva while shipwrecked on a supposedly deserted island? And how had he learned archery and everything else he could do?

Felicity guessed this was just another question she'd have to file away forever into that never-to-be satisfied section of her curious brain. Along with everything else that'd come between the sinking of the Queen's Gambit and Oliver's publicized rescue by Chinese fishermen. From that island that was name Purgatory in Mandarin, and probably wasn't anywhere near as deserted as everyone had been led to believe.

Maybe he could've started putting himself through excessive exercise there for lack of anything better
to do. Maybe he figured out how to make a bow and arrow and remembered enough from watching his sister compete for his natural ability to shoot throw. She could even believe his motivation could've just been the desire to eat something other than coconuts.

But all those scars on his magnificent body were not self-inflicted or accidents anymore than the tattoos were. They filled some of the silence about those five hellish years: told the tales of strength and survival that he wouldn’t. Or couldn’t. And ultimately that mattered so much more than all the skills he'd also managed to pick up along the way.

Sure, Felicity had been jealous. Felt left out, even, when the other three members of the team were telling each other some of their scar stories. The green monster rearing its head then had actually made her wish—just a little bit—that that damn raptor hadn't entirely missed her when she and Doctor Grant were pulling Lex back to safety in the ceiling above the observation room just in the nick of time years ago.

Which was a stupid thing to wish for, since an adult velociraptor's jaw was just as strong as the alligators and crocodiles that, along with birds somehow, were probably the only remaining natural descendents of the original dinosaurs. So she would've ended up losing a chunk out of her arm at best, not just suffered some teeth-marks like Oliver had from whatever had tried to take a bite out of him. Like she did from when the baby raptor had bitten her.

Felicity had been beyond thankful for years afterwards that she hadn't lost her arm—or her hand, or her life—that day. But when she'd been watching Oliver and Digg take a break from sparring with Sara, all three sweaty but wearing big, real smiles as they shared survival stories with a few words about what'd left marks on their lethally fit bodies, the computer girl had started to feel like the one that couldn't hope to belong.

If Oliver had mentioned what left that scary looking bite mark on his abdomen, maybe Felicity would've shown them the tiny, now barely-there bite-scar that the newborn velociraptor had left on her hand with its kitten-like teeth when she was touring the lab with her friends grandfather's other guests before Lex and Tim arrived. That had somehow never gotten infected or anything even after everything else that followed, which undoubtedly had something to do with Doctor Wu's expert care. Though it was the mathematician, Doctor Malcolm, as much as the dinosaur-doctor that'd made her feel better that day. But Oliver hadn't said anything about that particular scar, so Felicity had somehow started babbling about the stupid scars no one could see inside her mouth.

All the same, Felicity couldn't regret the new scar she'd have now, despite her present suffering. Even if it did mean she'd never be able to wear a dress without at least one strategically placed strap or scarf covering that spot on her shoulder. At least it was a survival story she could tell with pride, and not the shiver-inducing memories of outright terror she associated with her childhood trauma. She'd helped save their city her way, beaten the Clock-King and taken a bullet for her friend. All things Felicity could feel proud of even if the gunshot wound was still kind of killing her right now.
Really, how did you come to an understanding with pain, like Sara had said? Like Oliver obviously had, and probably Digg, too...

Oliver's hand suddenly holding hers jerked Felicity out of her thoughts this time, but when she startled slightly and he gave her a reassuring squeeze, she was relieved to find no one staring at her this time.

Because Evelyn and the tabletop-man were still speaking Japanese. Though they turned to the table a few seconds later.

"Would anyone prefer the tasting menu for the sushi or sashimi? Or shall we all be enjoying the hibachi?" Lyn asked the table at large.

"I was kind of looking forward to the spicy tuna on crispy rice," Tommy said. "Haven't had it from here in a while."

"Hmm, that does sound good," Masrani put in.

Lyn laughed lightly. "I doubt it'll ever be spicy enough for you, sweetheart," she said with a smile, then looked around. "Anyone else?"

"I'm quite fond of the tuna myself," Missus Queen admitted.

"Me too," Laurel added.

"Well then, it must be the house specialty for a reason. We'll all have to at least try it," Masrani suggested with a smile.

The suggestion seemed to meet with general approval. Thus, after another rapid exchange in Japanese, the tabletop man was gone.

Leaving Felicity not sure if she was going to be trying to catch a bite of chicken cooked in front of her and tossed towards her mouth or if she'd soon be hoping her unhappy stomach could handle a little spice and some tuna. But she didn't really care. It wasn't like she'd be eating more than a few
bites either way.

Or so she thought. Thanks to the exceeding excellence of every dish that ended up in front of her, however, she never had to worry about the fact that she happened to be the most important person there tonight. And her over-protective vigilantes never got the chance to start spoon feeding her or something like that...

First up for everybody was the miso soup. A staple, she'd learned from Satomi, just like white rice. Usually Felicity thought it was pretty bland, but even though that wouldn't be a bad thing with her body being generally unhappy to be alive tonight, bland wasn't the word for this miso soup from *Toro’s*. Amazing, came a lot closer. The stuff melted in your mouth and seeped down into your soul, warming everything up like chicken noodle could only try to. Why was the bowl so small?

Fried food didn't sound like something her stomach should easily accept, even after it'd been sent into a state of euphoria from the marvelous miso soup. But tempura was not french fries. Oliver and Sara piled pieces on her plate, both of them so much faster with chopsticks then she could hope to be that it made her wonder if the wooden utensils were considered weapons worth training with and not just for eating. Each piece was perfect, melting almost as easily in her mouth as the miso had, so Felicity didn't even care that she hadn't been sure what one or two of them were underneath the crispy layer.

Then the specialty chef came to perform for them. Dressed all in white, like chefs everywhere used to, though for some reason that'd fallen by the wayside over the last few years. Rolled out with him was a cart full of all his tools and their food, and the restaurant also rolled out the special stove for cooking in front of them, too. It was on wheels here, not already installed between the tables. No one said if that was more or less Americanization.

His performance, however, everyone seemed to enjoy. Even Oliver let himself get into the game of how many of the chef's tosses of chicken he could catch in his mouth, though the one he finally did miss was probably just so the rest of them could have some. Masrani hadn't done so well: hadn't managed to catch one at all, though he'd laughed at every one of his misses until he'd finally waived the man on after the seventh hadn't proved to be his lucky number either.

She should've stuck to the white rice, probably, but after watching the flying chicken, the flaming onions that looked like erupting volcanoes, and everything else being theatrically whipped together into the dish, she’d had to try at least a few bites.

Then dessert came. And if Felicity thought the mystery pieces of tempera before were perfect—even after the mouth melting miso soup—then her mind couldn't come close to justly describing desert. Except that it was *amazing*. How had she never tried bananas tempera before?
But all good things must come to an end, including the most dreaded of dinners turned absolutely amazing by yummy food and fun people. So eventually all the small talk over food ended and they had to talk about why they were really here. Hostile takeovers and hostile islands. Hostility all around.

And that was before Isabel Rochev's jarring voice tore through the walls.

"Sumimasen," the head-waiter could be heard first, his voice placating. "We are not open, ma'am."

"Yes you are. Now where are they?"

The commotion the vicious woman was making was actually helpful for Felicity, in that it sort of told her where the entrance was in relation to their table. Since she had no memory of coming in after they'd all arrived at the fake fireplace, which was still sort of freaking her out a bit.

At the same time Felicity was amazed at exactly how bad the villainous executive's timing was tonight. Arriving when she did, just as Felicity's anxiety was starting to gear up—not at all helped by the glaring eyes around the table—it was like Isabitch was there to unintentionally remind the E.A of how evil she was and how much better everything could be if she wasn't able to bother them anymore.

"Sumim—ma'am, we are closed for a private function," the Japanese man tried again, but the evil executive's voice was getting closer as she replied right over him.

"I already told you, I should be in that function!" Isabel snapped back. "Now get out of my way!"

By that point the whole table was turned towards where they could hear her coming from, and they could see her; though the angry woman couldn't see them. Because apparently part of coming to their table—while Felicity's mind wasn't paying attention—had involved one of the pretty paper walls moving. That, or maybe they'd moved it afterwards. However it'd happened, though, they could all watch as the shadowy shapes of the sharp, leggy Isabel and polite, tall tabletop man made their way around the edge of the room. All mutually fascinated by the collision of relentless bitchiness and professional politeness.

Unfortunately, it wasn't like the poor man could physically restrain the woman, so Isabel did eventually make it all the way around to the actual opening in the paper walls. Which was where she ran into a wall she couldn't walk through or around—in the forms of Masrani's bodyguards. Huh,
had they been here this whole time?

Digg had gone around to the same side of the table, but since Isabel was the co-C.E.O of Queen Consolidated it made sense that he didn't want to be the one to stop her. In fact, Felicity was sure her friend would love to throw the bitch out himself if he could, but we can't always get what we want.

The wall of muscular men finally managed to stop the sharp clicks of Isabel's heels. Their suits, muscles and stern composure considerably more intimidating than the nice man that had to dress like the restaurant's tables. For a moment, anyway.

"Excuse me," Isabel tried for firm politeness with them first, but didn't even wait half a second for either of the men to respond before she leaned around them enough to spot Oliver and demand pointedly, "Mister Queen?"

"This is a private party, Isabel," Oliver repeated what the poor tabletop man had been telling her, somehow saying it without even the hint of a smile on his face.

The brunette heaved an exasperated sigh and set her hands on her hips. "I thought we settled this back before Russia? As your business partner—"

"You might be expected at a business dinner, Rochev," Lyn interrupted then. "We were, however, just enjoying dinner with friends, so of course you weren't invited."

"Clifton," Isabel nodded to the other brunette, looking like she'd swallowed a lemon.

"It is Masrani now. Has been for a number of years," Masrani corrected her, his tone so mild Felicity almost had to blink at him. "Took a fair bit of effort to get her to accept that ring, so please don't go giving her ideas about taking it off."

Isabel did blink, but then visibly collected herself. "Of course, Mister Masrani," she smiled at him. "I do apologize for that scene."

"Apologies come after one recognizes their own mistakes, Miss... Rochev, was it?"
"Yes, Isabel Rochev, sir. I—"

"And it would seem to me that you are still making the mistake of 'that scene,' as you called it," the Indian man finished smoothly, sipping his tea.

"I have to disagree, Mister Masrani," Isabel finally seemed to find her footing even though she was still trying to talk between the two bodyguards. "Had all the proper invitations been issued for tonight, I would not have arrived late nor needed to make any scene at all."

"Nice try, Rochev," Lyn spoke up again, though by now she'd turned her back on the other brunette and she didn't turn towards her again as she went on. "But you weren't invited because you weren't wanted, and that hasn't changed. I should think you'd be used to it by now."

Felicity half expected Isabel's face to twist up with that sour look from before or an indignant scowl in response, but the Stellmoor V.P kept her version of a sweet smile fixed on Lyn's husband like she hadn't heard his wife.

"Your interest in Queen Consolidated, while a surprise, is most welcome, Mister Masrani. Cooperation between our companies could be very profitable for us both. However, Mister Queen should have told you that his family no longer holds outright ownership of the company. Any and all business—"

"There's the word I was waiting for," Masrani crowed, raising his teacup in a silent salute, before setting it back down on the table as he went on. "Business. As my dear wife already informed you, Miss Rochev, this dinner was not about business, at all, but dining with friends. Mixing one's meals with their work never works, you know. They are meant to be enjoyed separately, so that one can appreciate each experience to its very fullest."

When he stopped and looked at her expectantly, Isabel frowned ever so slightly. "What is that supposed to mean?"

"It's his rationalization for why I don't let him talk about work when he's supposed to be eating," Lyn said, back still towards the other woman.

Masrani sighed, but started talking again before their party-crasher could. "The point being, Miss Rochev, that this is not a business meeting between companies, but a dinner being shared by friends. If you would like to discuss business at another time, I do not doubt your assistant is more than
capable of contacting mine."

"You have never met with any member of the Queen family before, Mister Masrani," Isabel insisted.

"You are right, I have not." Masrani agreed. "But it is always a pleasure to make new friends."

"Why would you—"

"Perhaps you don't follow politics or local news coverage, Isabel," Missus Queen interrupted then. "But you might remember I am running for mayor."

Isabel scoffed, her focus staying set on the man she didn't seem to realize she couldn't impress or intimidate. "You have no property here in Starling City. Mister Masrani, and the only business interests here your company owns are your recently acquired shares in Queen Consolidated."

"Not true," the C.E.O objected lightly. "I bought stocks in Merlyn Global Group, too. As well as in Stellmoor International."

"Which is why—"

"But that is business, Miss Rochev, and this is dinner." He specified again, reminding her. "And Missus Masrani does not like to combine the two."

"And I'm certainly not going to make an exception for you, Rochev," Lyn put in, back still towards the other brunette. "I sincerely doubt many of your tricks have changed."

"I don't know what you're talking about... Missus Masrani," Isabel replied flatly, though it looked like it hurt her a little to say Lyn's married name respectfully. Well, almost, her expression nearly nullified the wounded effort.

Which had Felicity wondering how exactly the two women knew each other before tonight, and what'd happened to inspire such unrestrained animosity. Because this wasn't Lyn being protective: she really did not like Isabel Rochev. Not that Felicity could blame her. But Isabel clearly hated Lyn at least just as much. Maybe even more than she hated Moira Queen—whom she'd tried to steal a
husband from—and Felicity... whom she seemed to think stood in her way with Oliver, which was creepy no matter how you looked at it. It would be even if Felicity really was in the way when it came to getting hooks into her hero.

"Yes, you do," Lyn denied, finally turning again just enough to smirk at her.

Isabel pressed her lips together, then tried, "You've clearly finished your meal. If you're going to discuss anything regarding *Queen Consolidated*, I must be included in the discussion."

"No, in fact, that is not necessary," Masrani shot her down. "If we really must discuss business, do have your facts straight."

"I own half of—"

"Your *employer* now owns forty-two percent of *Queen Consolidated's* stock, Miss Rochev. Not half. *Stellmoor International* could not afford to hold onto so many shares when they didn't even make the majority controlling interest you'd promised initially. Therefore, they have merely maintained the status quo, as it were. Ensuring that you—as their representative—remained on equal footing with Mister Queen in the general sense. Ignoring the minority ownerships of the thus far silent partner—namely Starling's largest bank and, now, myself."

"And unlike yourself, I do own my company, as well as my recently acquired shares of interest here. While you are privileged to represent your employers, Miss Rochev, it is rarely wise to be caught claiming outright falsehoods as facts."

"Sir, I don't know what your wife has told you, but—"

"About you, Miss Rochev? Nothing." Masrani shook his head again. "Missus Masrani does not like business very much. Another reason we do not discuss it while dining as a rule."

The executive's face worked, like she'd only just caught herself as she was about to scowl and made herself smile politely instead. "I should have received an invitation to this party if you intend to form any sort of workable cooperative or joint projects with *Queen Consolidated*."

"Something to perhaps consider if such an interest should ever arise," Masrani replied, straight-faced. Then he nodded. "Thank you for your advice. I'm sure you're quite capable of finding your own way back out."
"Mister Masrani, please be reasonable—"

"I am entirely reasonable, Miss Rochev. This meal was meant to be about seeing old friends and making new ones. Your presence does not help with the meal or the friendships. That is why you were not invited. Any future opportunities for business between us would be best served by you finding the door now."

"Mister Masrani—"

"Or these gentlemen can find it for you, if you prefer," he finally indicated the bodyguards that'd never moved to let her through.

Neither one started to move right away, to grab her and drag her out or something like that, but the implication—or how Masrani's tone had gotten a lot harder—seemed to make Isabel realize she'd pushed her luck enough.

"I can find it myself," she nodded to him. "Thank you for your time, Mister Masrani."

"Enjoy the rest of your evening, Miss Rochev," he nodded to her, then turned his back on her just like his wife.

Leaving Isabel only the choice of turning around to leave herself.

And Felicity now had to admit, at least in her own head, that Masrani had undoubtedly earned every step on his way toward becoming one of the world's best businessmen. Something she'd sort of known just from how successful his companies were, along with his seemingly ever-rising net worth. But he was now also the only one she'd ever seen take on Isabel Rochev and win. Sure, Oliver had managed to halt Stellmoor's hostile takeover with Walter's help. But that minor victory had really been more of a tie, hadn't it? One they'd only barely been able to pull off. And it hadn't really stopped the Russian V.P, just made her slow down and get sneakier. Simon Masrani, however, had beaten her into full retreat with just a brief exchange or words.

Watching that evil woman have to admit defeat and leave—after months of giving them all hell at every single opportunity—was almost enough to make Felicity like him. Except dinner and dessert were both over, and the temporary distraction that followed had been summarily dismissed. Which meant they had to talk about why they were really here.
Masrani didn't say anything until after Isabel's shadow had stalked all the way back around and out, and the violent *click-clacks* of her heels had gone out of earshot. "Well, perhaps that was unavoidable," he sighed, draining his teacup before setting it down. "I do apologize for the interruption, my heart."

"There wasn't any way to avoid it. Rochev can't lose with any grace, so she fights all the harder to win without it instead." Lyn replied as she picked up the pretty teapot and refilled it, before one of the hovering waiters all-in-black could, while her husband went on.

"Miss Rochev is good at her job."

"And that's got nothing to do with helping *Queen Consolidated*," Sara spoke up. "Yeah, you said that this morning."

"I did," Masrani agreed, accepting his refilled teacup with a silent smile of thanks for his wife before his eyes went back to Felicity while she started topping up everyone else's tea. "I also furnished you with a fair amount of proof, which I'm sure you at least glanced through?"

"Some of it," Oliver answered this time. "The reports from *Stellmoor International* were informative."

"A benefit of having friends in the right places," Masrani shrugged.

"That wasn't why you bought into *Stellmoor*?" Tommy asked him.

"Oh no, it was in part. The staff I assigned to that particular problem appreciated the increased access that diversification allowed, I'm sure," Masrani shook his head. "It was not entirely necessary there, of course. The reports to *Queen Consolidated's* own board were enough on their own."

Oliver frowned at him, "What do you mean?"

And Masrani shook his head slowly, as if in disappointment that wasn't entirely unexpected. "Your every decision is evaluated, Mister Queen," he told the younger C.E.O. "Your board has the right to be kept informed of your decisions, as well as everything your company does. Every success, every failure, and the reasons behind them. How those reasons are spun? That's what usually determines what your board, your investors, and eventually everyone else remembers."
"And what decisions has Oliver made that you believe are so problematic, Mister Masrani?" Missus Queen asked carefully.

"Simon, please, Missus Queen," Masrani smiled at her. "Evelyn already told you that."

And Oliver's mother of course returned the polished smile. "I don't like to assume, but thank you, Simon," she demurred, before returning to the earlier question. "I confess, I have not seen any of these reports myself. I have been quite occupied with my campaign." She paused, then admitted, "Though I have, myself, never trusted Miss Rochev."

"No, you certainly couldn't, could you?" Masrani asked, but went on without waiting for an answer as the rhetorical question made the woman's smile fall. "That, is at its root the basic problem, yes."

"You said Isabel's job—with Stellmoor, I guess?—was still to takeover Queen Consolidated?" Felicity finally made herself ask.

"Yes," Masrani nodded again. "Generally speaking, that is what the executive in charge of a company's acquisitions' does."

"Take over Q.C and break it down for Stellmoor, you said," Sara remembered.

And once again the businessman nodded. "Indeed." He paused a moment, as if waiting for anyone to say something else, then shrugged. "Where your inexperience shows most, Mister Queen," he looked at the younger man. "Is with each occasion in which you have made it unnecessarily easy for her."

Oliver met his gaze steadily, "And when exactly have I done that?"

Masrani laughed shortly. "Nearly every time you have let her call the shots!" He went on before the younger man could decide if he should argue. "Though you have been lucky in your friends, at least. Mister Steele, especially, has been a great ally to you these last few months."

Oliver couldn't deny that. "He has."
"No matter all our difficulties of late, Mister Mas—"

"Simon."

"Simon," Missus Queen nodded, going on. "Queen Consolidated has always been a family business. And despite our divorce, Walter will always be family."

"Fortunately for your family, as I said," Masrani nodded, going on again before anyone could decide if arguing with him was worth it. Or if they even should. "Your late husband, as well, left behind an excellent company."

"He did," Missus Queen agreed. "Robert was a great man."

"And a very good businessman," the other C.E.O continued. "Which is largely why his company has continued to survive, despite all it has had to endure."

"I won't say I haven't been lucky," Oliver spoke up then. "Or anything against my family and friends." He shook his head. "None of that tells me why you think Isabel is out to get me."

"No," Masrani agreed. "The proof for that is in all the reports I provided Miss Smoak with this morning." He waived off whatever she might've said in response before she could. "Granted, it was a lot to go through... but I do remember some of the specifics." He thought a second, and snapped his fingers. "Moscow."

"Moscow?" Oliver's blink looked almost like the wince that Felicity knew she hadn't been able to hide at all.

"Yes, yes," Masrani clapped his hands together. "You flew to Russia only a few weeks ago, did you not, to visit your subsidiaries there?"

"I... did," Oliver agreed slowly.
Watching him, Felicity was pretty sure that some variation of 'Why is what happened in Russia not staying in Russia?' was going through his head, too. If only it could ever be that easy. Or, you know, if only it were possible to just delete certain memories from inside your head. Though she should probably be grateful they weren't sharing a suite or something like that; if they were, she could've all to easily walked in on them. And that would've been just about the only thing that could've made that whole situation worse.

"Certainly it is not outside of the duties of a C.E.O to interact with their subsidiaries. But it is best done with a certain degree of care." Masrani shook his head. "Perhaps the visit, for you, was not about oversight or direct communication with your company's holdings at all. However, Miss Rochev went to Moscow with every intention of turning your Russian partners against you." He spread his hands. "Luck, it seemed, was on your side. For though you chose to not attend any of the meetings Miss Rochev held while in Moscow, none of your partners there were willing to turn on you. You have some good friends over there."

Specifically some friends that no one over there wanted to piss off, Felicity realized, not really sure how far Masrani could've looked into that. Money could buy a lot—and Oliver's friend, Anatoly Knyazev, kept saying money could buy anything in Russia—but she had a feeling that whether or not you were a member of the mob over there or not, let alone a high-ranking member, really made a difference. Which, again, brought her back to wondering how exactly Oliver Queen—rich American playboy turned castaway turned vigilante and eventually C.E.O—had happened to also become a Captain in the Russian mob at some point. But that was another one of those questions she wasn't sure she'd ever receive any sort of satisfactory answer to.

"Call me Anatoly, Schast'ye. Any friend of Oliver's is my friend as well."

She almost—almost—wished she'd found the courage to ask the Russian mob leader when she'd had the very brief chance. Or, you know, that she'd at least asked what he'd called her meant...

"I do," was all Oliver said with a firm nod.

"Hum," Masrani watched him for a moment, what looked like real curiosity in his dark eyes.

That could just mean he hadn't learned much of anything about Oliver's Russian ties or he had learned something that related to the tattoo over the vigilante's heart. Felicity wasn't really sure either was a good thing if it'd made Simon Masrani too curious about Oliver Queen. Though ultimately all the fault for that was her own.

"So you have some luck, some very good friends, and your family," Masrani went on a moment
later, spreading his hands again with a small shrug. "Businesses can be built on much less, when one is willing to put the work into it." He picked up his teacup again and took another sip, studying Oliver over the rim, then shook his head. "But that is where you are failing, my young friend."

Oliver cocked his head to the side, sounding curious as he asked, "Is it?"

"Yes," Masrani nodded. "You have been playing the part of C.E.O for not quite half a year now. A very eventful number of months, I grant you. Under attack from politicians and criminals alike, with more than one crisis hitting your home in the same timeframe as your mother's trial," he nodded to Oliver's mother. "For which I suppose congratulations are in order."

"Thank you," Missus Queen bowed her head slightly, looking uncomfortable with the topic. Just a little; like she always did when it came up during her campaign.

It was something Sebastian Blood had stopped trying to attack her with, because she had gotten off. That, and the remorseful, frightened widow that'd been trying to protect her family and had, in fact, also tried to do the right thing in the end by warning the city, surprisingly seemed to be a strong point for her campaign.

But that didn't mean it didn't pop up every now and again in a not so good way. Like when a woman who'd lost her husband and son to the unnatural quake had demanded an apology at one of the mayoral candidate's public rallies. Oliver's mother, however, had handled that with enough grace to impress Felicity even when she was still smarting from the scare the woman had given her to try and make her not tell Oliver the truth...

"And now you may well be your city's next mayor," Masrani recognized. "Quite a reversal—but then that may well be some of your appeal." He didn't wait for any of the Queens to respond. "Should the company survive that long, your victory could be a very good thing for Queen Consolidated."

"And our city, I hope," Missus Queen concurred, her eyes going between her son and the other C.E.O even as she said it. Like she wasn't sure, herself, what they were hoping for here.

Honestly Felicity was kind of surprised that Masrani was letting him get so caught up in this discussion. Sure, she knew saving Queen Consolidated was his selling point for getting her to agree to go back to the park... but he almost seem to really give a damn about what happened here. Like it mattered just as much as the end it was the means to achieving... And she really wasn't sure what to think about that.
"There have been many distractions, far too many of them completely unavoidable," Masrani continued. "But how you handle all of that, my friend? How you handle everything." He shook his head. "That is what people will remember. What makes your reputation."

"That seems at odds with your philosophy for life," Felicity put in. Mainly because his be happy by accepting that you are never actually in control philosophy had always annoyed her. Not only did it not make any sense to her as a business practice, but it especially didn't do anything to help her feel safer about the fact that there were dinosaurs somewhere in the world and this man was in charge of them.

Masrani laughed, shooting her a smile, "So it is. But business, while a part of life to be sure, is a part you can control. A part that is all about control." His smile fell as he looked back at Oliver. "Lack of control in business? That, is when you lose."

Oliver held his gaze. "I haven't lost yet."

"No, you have not," the older man allowed. "So there is still time." He turned to Felicity then. "Which brings us back to you, my dear."

"Goody," Felicity couldn't help but sigh.

Oliver's mother surprised her by speaking up then. "And why, may I ask, Simon, are you so determined to see Miss Smoak return to Jurassic World?" She shook her head. "Your park, from what I understand, has done quite well for many years now, and continues to thrive."

"John Hammond was a very good friend of mine, Moira," Masrani told her, still looking at Felicity, who made herself meet his gaze the whole time. "A very good friend who entrusted me with his dying wish."

"To make Jurassic Park a reality. To finish what he started, I know," Felicity reminded him, despite her doubts there. "But you've already done that. And as Missus Queen said, Jurassic World has been a huge success. Hasn't it?" She made herself finish it, even though the words almost hurt to say.

"So it has," Masrani agreed, smiling slightly as he nodded. "But you forget, my dear, that our friend also wished to make amends with you."
"I didn't 'forget,'" Felicity couldn't help but scowl. "He did that, before he died."

It hadn't been easy, accepting financial compensation for what'd happened to her. For almost dying on that damn island. It had felt like hush-money, because that was partially what it was. But it'd also felt like she was agreeing that, since she'd survived, what happened didn't matter... and that couldn't be farther from the truth for her. Still, she had accepted it in the end.

That money had meant financial security for her and her mom. Had meant she could go to whatever school she wanted even without the perfect G.P.A she'd managed. That she'd gotten into M.I.T on scholarship for that G.P.A and worked her way through so she didn't have to use the trust fund Mister Hammond had left for her had seemed like a major victory. But that didn't mean that she hadn't known it was always there.

If she or her mom had some major medical crisis or some other sort of disaster—it was there for them to fall back on. And Felicity was too smart not to accept that. Too smart to at least try to make herself be okay with that.

She'd never used it for anything. After she'd received reassurance that as long as she didn't withdraw any of it she could legally pretend it didn't exist she'd mostly tried to just put it out of her mind.

Just like the money from the job she had agreed to do for Simon Masrani during her senior year at M.I.T. The ridiculous paycheck and the job her college advisor thought she was totally nuts for not really wanting to accept. That she had accepted, in the end, just because she'd wanted to make sure that when the park opened it was as safe as she could possibly make it...

Oliver's hand squeezing hers forced Felicity from her thoughts again, and she winced when she saw everyone was watching her with varying degrees of worry.

Even Masrani's brow was a bit furrowed with concern. "Are you alright, my dear?"

"Sorry," Felicity apologized automatically. "Got a little lost in thought for a second there."

"Quite all right. Such is life," The C.E.O nodded slowly. "As I was saying, you know it would've meant the world to him for all of you to see the park as it was meant to be seen."
"Maybe it would have, but Mister Hammond never said anything about that to me." Felicity shook her head. "I know he felt badly for what happen, but—"

"It was more than that for you."

Felicity closed her eyes. "I know," she admitted, but didn't say anymore.

Because she did know that she was one of the kids that were there. She did know that in John Hammond's mind it didn't matter that she was just the computer friend that Lex had invited along. She was one of the kids his park almost killed, and because the other two were his grandchildren, that basically had made her like family to him. Family his creation, his mad dream, had almost killed. Which was also why she didn't think that Mister Hammond would've ever asked her to go back, even if he had lived to see the park re-open under its new management.

"Doctor Murphy was like you, you know," Masrani told her, nodding as his words made Felicity's eyes immediately fly open. "She wanted nothing to do with the park again." He nodded. "Had a number of... not so nice things to say, about the dinosaurs, as well."

Felicity frowned at him, not sure she wanted to ask. But she had always wondered how he'd managed to get Lex and Tim to both go back.

No, she knew her long-distance friend still held strong hatred for 'the most savage and dangerous creatures on the planet,' as Lex had referred to the dinosaurs more than once. Both before and after her short return to the reopened island.

Felicity had never received a clear answer on how Masrani had convinced the other hacker—now founder and C.E.O. of LexxCrop—to go back at all. But she'd never pressed hard either. Not really wanting to know if the answer was the obvious one: money. Since it seemed likely, as Lex's company had only taken off, fast becoming a world-renown producer of organic crops, after she went back to that island close to Costa Rica...

Tim Murphy, after all, had some money to spend, too. He was one of the 'idle rich' even after all the problems his grandfather and uncle hadn't been able to solve, and his trust fund undoubtedly came with at least a few stipulations from the man that'd ultimately saved it. The younger Murphy sibling hadn't, as far as Felicity knew, seriously considered dedicating himself to a specific career like his sister after he completed college, but if he had received a considerable boost in capital courtesy of facing dinosaurs again he undoubtedly had some money to spare...
Masrani went on a few moments later without waiting for her to ask the question. "She was glad, I think, to have gone back. In the end. It meant she didn't have to be afraid anymore."

"Like you care?" Thea said, scowling at the man when he looked at her. "If you don't want her to be afraid, stop trying to make her go back."

"There is an immense breadth between avoidance and assuredness, Miss Queen," Masrani told the frowning teenager, unbothered by her apparent protectiveness of her brother's secretary. His eyes turned towards Felicity as Thea blinked at him. "Tell me, Miss Smoak, do you still have nightmares?"

Felicity stiffened automatically. She couldn't help it. And she had to swallow before she could make herself answer with a nod that even felt timid. "Sometimes," she admitted, adding quickly; "But it's not that often, really, I—"

"It has been nearly sixteen years since you escaped Jurassic Park, my dear," Masrani interrupted gently, shaking his head. "More than half your life. Avoidance, it would seem, has not been working for you thus far."

Felicity blinked at him, not sure what to say to that.

Sara spoke up then, "Going back might not help her at all," she pointed out, her tone almost mild. She was still twirling one of the chopsticks she hadn't left on the plates for the servers to take away dexterously through her fingers, making Felicity wonder again if the thin sticks really could be considered weapons in hands that were as dangerous as the protective pairs on either side of her.

"Perhaps not, but it is better than doing nothing, is it not?" Masrani shook his again, going on without waiting for a response. "I cannot believe that the ostrich hiding its head in the sand feels safe there."

Felicity wrinkled her nose, "Are you really comparing me to—"

"Not at all, my dear," he interrupted before she could finish, which was good because it could stop her before she might've started babbling about the dinosaurs that'd reminded her of ostriches. Or something worse. "I was merely speaking in metaphor, which I am sure your brilliant mind has no trouble at all following."

"Thank you," Felicity said automatically in response to the compliment, blinking for a moment.

Then Oliver stopped his silent scowling. "What do you get out of this?" he directed at Masrani, who cocked his head to the side.

"Oh nothing financially, of course," the businessman admitted, as unbothered by the direct suspicion as he'd been by the younger Queen's version of protectiveness. "As I said, John Hammond was my friend. More than that, he was my mentor," Masrani nodded, a look Felicity couldn't quite place flitting across his face—fondness, regret, loss?—before he shrugged it off. "Whatever his mistakes, he was also a great man. A great man who's dream deserved to be made a reality."

Felicity reached for her water glass, because taking a long sip seemed like a better idea than trying to say anything. She couldn't not agree with the first part—but she also couldn't agree with the second. Deep down, she thought she'd always feel that dinosaurs shouldn't exist today. That they should be only bones. That their teeth and claws shouldn't be weapons to hurt and terrorize, but pieces of puzzles put together in museums meant to remember them as they were. Back before humanity came along. But that was all before John Hammond changed the world, and before Simon Masrani took up his mantle...

Hammond always regretted what happened. As his park had very nearly cost him his beloved grandchildren that he'd lumped Felicity right along with, she couldn't see how he could've ever even tried to make anyone go to that island ever again. Even if he'd had the money to make it reality, or if he'd found more investors who—unlike the board that didn't like that their lawyer had been eaten while investigating the island's stability—would be willing to take the chance of that happening again.

It was part of why Felicity Smoak had never been able to trust Simon Masrani. Yes, she knew Mister Hammond had been his mentor in the business world. That Lex and Tim's grandfather had been good friends with the senior Masrani before he died and his son took over the family business. But in the back of her mind she could never quite shake the thought that he hadn't swept in to make the dinosaur theme park a reality until after John Hammond's death because, when asked, the wise old man had said no...

"I'm afraid I never had the honor of meeting Mister Hammond myself," Missus Queen admitted, looking honestly curious as she glanced between Masrani and Felicity. "What was he like?"

"John was a visionary," the businessman replied first, the clear fondness he still felt for his now long dead mentor all too apparent. "And he was a good man. No, a great man."
"He was," Felicity had to agree softly, earning herself a smile from the businessman before he went on.

"Creation, he used to say, is an act of sheer will," Masrani nodded thoughtfully. "He made mistakes, as we all do. His only had greater impact equal to his own greatness." He shook his head. "Truly, he was well before his time. In-Gen had the capacity to recreate the dinosaurs decades ago, certainly, but they were hard press comprehend the means necessary to contain their creations."

"Could be argued they shouldn't have made them then," Oliver opined, and the older man nodded again.

"And it certainly has been," the businessman allowed, then insisted. "Yet there can be no progress without experiments. Nothing learned from doing nothing." He shook his head again. "His failures cannot diminish his astounding successes. Whole new scientific fields were opened thanks to the advancements In-Gen made under his leadership. More than that though, those dinosaurs are what the moon was decades ago. The impossible; made possible."

"Only you have more than pictures to show for it," Missus Queen put in, more generous than her son.

"Much more. That we do," Masrani agreed, smiling. "So my friend lives on in them. Touching the hearts, minds and imaginations of the world. Proving to everyone that anything can be possible."

It wasn't that his words were terrible. Even to Felicity who'd suffered through the first park's epic failure to 'contain' the monsters they'd made. Dreaming big, or at least dreaming at all, was important. It was what made tomorrow better than today. The possibility that those dreams could someday come true. But the terrors that echoed out of the past were there to haunt your nights, too.

Sometimes though, it seemed to her that men like John Hammond and Simon Masrani couldn't properly recognize and balance the two in their minds. That they valued the dreams so much that the nightmares didn't bear anymore consideration than they got in the moments of sleep they haunted. They focused so entirely on tomorrow more than today, and never really yesterday, because it was simply easier that way. But that thought was maybe the only thing more terrifying than the monsters they'd made, because those that don't remember the past really are doomed to repeat it. Unfortunately, that past that no one wanted to remember was the mistakes, and not remembering them all but guaranteed they'd happen again...

"Just because it's possible doesn't mean it should be done," Oliver interjected. And considering how much of his scar-creating past he wouldn't talk about, he was probably the other end of the spectrum.
Thinking *that* made Felicity suddenly sad, because her heroes should get to dream just as much as everybody else. Their dreams should come true even more than everybody else's; from karma alone. But that wasn't the way the world worked.

"A conversation my lawyers had with many governments already, I assure you," Masrani told the younger man with a nod. "*Jurassic World*, however, is without a doubt both the most secure and the most monitored ecological preserve in the world. Were it not, it never would have opened."

That, Felicity knew to be true. She'd had more than just a hand, after all, in creating the computer systems that made most of that security possible. Not all of it, of course. Dependence almost on computers alone was what first made *Jurassic Park* crash and burn years ago. So the computers and tracking systems were far from the only things keeping everyone on that island safe. In addition to concrete walls and electric fences, Masrani also employed a not-so-small, fully armed army twenty-four seven. Not just as a 'just in case,' last resort sort of measure, but as around-the-clock security for the island and its guests, and for further control of the dinosaurs as necessary. *Asset Containment,* they were called. Which Felicity supposed sounded better than her nickname for them: *Monster Management.*

Still, the more she listened to him, the more it didn't feel like this man had been waiting for Lex and Tim's grandfather to keel over to takeover where he'd left off. That fondness couldn't really be feigned, could it?

"John wanted to create a place where we could see and touch wonders," Masrani went on, still smiling. "Where what was real and what we might've imagined could be one and the same." He shook his head again. "I only wish he could've seen his dream become reality."

Surprisingly, that made Felicity remember one of those too short magic moments that came before all the terror and chaos of that life-and-death disaster.

"He let me hold a baby dinosaur," Felicity said, shaking her head. "Doctor Wu didn't want us passing her around, but he insisted that I get to hold her. It reminded me of a kitten." Her smile fell automatically into a wince after that, as it always did when she talked or even thought about this memory. Not really because of what happened, but because she couldn't not associate that baby with the far more deadly adults that they later almost didn't escape.

"Ah yes, that was an infant Velociraptor, was it not? Right after it'd hatched?" Masrani asked rhetorically, already nodding since he knew it was. "Always exciting, that moment. Which reminds
me; I do apologize for that incident with Doctor Balog a few years back, though he did not mean to frighten you."

"He didn't frighten me," Felicity replied before she could really think about it. "He pissed me off."

Masrani looked a little surprised as he frowned, "That is why you, uh, 'maced him,' I believe is the colloquial term?"

Felicity started to shrug, but stopped with a wince as even only the start of the action sent a shot of pain through her shoulder like it'd been hit by another bullet. "No," she made herself say. "I maced him because he was a weird guy trying to drag me out of my dorm room." Ignoring all the frowns and the eyes drilling into her head, she added. "He probably didn't deserve to be maced by three other girls, too. And I'm not really sure how campus security justified holding him overnight without a lawsuit—"

"I do believe Doctor Wu was unhappy enough with him for upsetting you as it was," Masrani interrupted smoothly, spreading his hands. "And that was well before the incident report reached my desk." He looked thoughtful for a second, then added. "I cannot remember if I ever thanked you for your discretion then. My P.R team was terrified of the negative publicity you could've released for weeks thereafter."

Felicity snorted, "Yeah, 'dinosaur doctor attacks college girl' wouldn't have made a great headline for you when you were trying to keep the park's reconstruction hushed up."

"Indeed it would not have, so I do thank you."

"You thanked me then," Felicity reminded him sourly. "With flowers."

"Oh god," Lyn sighed, rolling her eyes. "Is that when that started?"

Her husband only looked amused. "I believe you are right, that would seem to be the right time period."

"When what started?" Sara asked quickly, probably getting it out there before Oliver could. Probably a good thing, since the archer looked like he'd prefer to be wearing his hood right now. Though at least he hadn't started the hand thing—subconsciously looking for his bow—just yet.
"The quest to find her favorite flower," Lyn shook her head, looking a little bemused as she looked at her husband. "Where did you even get the idea from, anyway? I know she didn't actually tell you you'd never be able to."

"Wait, what?" Felicity blinked between the two.

"That was what he was doing," Lyn told her. "Why do you think he kept sending you so many different kinds?"

"Honestly I thought he was trying to make me hate flowers," Felicity answered, blinking again. "All flowers."

"You never asked me to stop sending them," Masrani pointed out.

"No, I did that," his wife reminded him. "The poor girl had to be running out of places she could give them to."

"Thank you," Felicity said to her, hesitated, then made herself admit. "Actually I kind of liked giving them away. Everyone else seemed to enjoy them."

Lyn smiled at her, "Yes, I particularly liked the children's hospital."

Making Felicity blink again, "That's why you started sending flowers there during the holidays every year?"

"Brightened the place up a bit," Lyn shrugged.

"I don't remember P.R covering that," Masrani frowned in confusion.

His wife's frown in response was decidedly more displeased. "Why would I tell P.R about it? They'd want to drag the dying children out for pictures."
"Only if it would be—"

"Simon, it would be crass," Lyn told him sternly. "No, beyond that. It'd be immoral." Her frown deepened as she added. "And no, you are not going to start inviting sick children to your island."

Masrani frowned back at her, "I thought you liked showing the children the young herbivores?"

"I did," Lyn agreed. "But the children the Make A Wish Foundation came to us about asked for that. That's entirely different from trying to temporarily move a whole hospital of terminal patients."

"They're not all necessarily terminal."

"That's what you got from that?" Sara interjected, effectively snapping the couple out of their mini-spat.

Felicity tried not to frown. She usually just watched them go at it. Sometimes for hours. It tended to be entertaining and sometimes fascinating. And it meant the man wasn't focused on convincing her that he was right and she should go back to hell. Though that couldn't be the case this time...

"But why'd the doctor attack you?" Thea asked the E.A, concern and confusion covering her face. "Before the flowers, I mean?"

Next to her, Felicity felt Oliver shift—not quite stiffen, but get a little tenser again—at the reminder of what all the talk of flowers had gotten them away from.

"He really only wanted to take a picture of your scar," Masrani spoke up before she could make herself answer.

"Scar?" Sara turned to blink at her, and she could see Digg was looking at her, too, from a feet away. Both of them—and Oliver, who'd managed to tense further behind her—undoubtedly thinking back to how proud she was of getting shot and thus having her own scar once the damn thing healed.

Felicity sighed. "From when the newborn raptor bit me."
"Wait," Tommy said with clear confusion. "This was the baby dinosaur that reminded you of a kitten?"

"That was before it locked its teeth into my hand." She grimaced, then looked at Masrani. "Please tell me you don't give the baby dinosaurs to people they can bite, too."

"Predators are not part of the Gentle Giants section, no," Masrani reassured her. "Nor are most guests generally permitted to interact directly with any of the infants, until their caregivers no longer consider them especially delicate."

Felicity snorted. "Delicate?" she repeated incredulously, not quite able to believe he'd use that word. Not when she remembered that miniature monster locking onto her hand and not letting go...

_The tiny thing seemed a lot less adorable once its little teeth sank into her hand: each tiny tooth like a thick needle that could dig and stab: cut and catch._

_Felicity screamed, and immediately tried to drop the dinosaur back into its nest, but it hung on tightly, its little jaw locked in place—and just about stabbing clean through her palm._

"Here, here, here," Doctor Malcolm was the first to reach her, wrapping his arms around the preteen without a second thought, one hand going to hold hers still while the other tried to pull the dinosaur off. "Come on, let go," he mumbled, and she knew it was directed at the dinosaur. "Dammit, let go."

_But it wouldn't be shaken off or tugged free. It didn't have the tiny, miniscule baby teeth of a kitten either: nothing was going to move that thing. It was going to keep hanging off her hand forever—or at least until it got the bite out of her it wanted._

_She'd never type again!_

_Felicity sobbed at the thought, still trying to pull her hand away from the monster that was all but hanging off of it while the mathematician tried to keep her calm and come to her rescue at the same time. "Getitoff-getitoff!" her tearful pleas ran together so she could barely understand them, but nothing the man did seem to help._
Then another set of man's hands were there, one grabbing the monster's body while the other wrapped around its neck. "Hold still," Doctor Grant told her: calm and commanding. "Wu, now."

And then the nice Chinese-American doctor was holding what looked like a weird eye-dropper over the dinosaur, by its snout. He just held it there for a second; following when the dinosaur pulled back a little—still holding her hand that the other two doctors wouldn't let her tug away—and when following it didn't work, he squeezed the dropper near its mouth instead.

Immediately, the little monster let go with a hiss that became a sharp shriek as Doctor Grant yanked it away from her, dropping it back in the enclosed nesting area where it could shriek through its bloody jaws all it wanted. Evil little thing.

Felicity barely noticed because it felt like her hand was burning. More than that, she desperately didn't want to take her eyes off her hand, which miraculously looked whole still. Bloody, but less than she would've expected. And trembling just as much as the rest of her. But the creature hadn't gotten its mouthful of Felicity Smoak, somehow: just whatever was still stuck in its gory mouth. She'd thought for sure she'd be missing a chunk of her hand: with how tight the thing's grip on her hand had been. But the imprint of the little monster's jaw into her hand looked like someone had attacked her with a bunch of needles shaped like a bite. Some of the holes were a little bigger, and the skin looked like it'd almost been torn a little. All of them were bleeding and starting to burn.

"There we go, there we go," Doctor Malcolm was reassuring her again, gently leading her away from the nest where more of those little monsters would soon be hatching. Not before she saw one of the other eggs was starting to shake though, another baby monster about to burst free into the world. "Let's let someone take a look at that, okay?"

"Allow me," Doctor Wu said, kneeling in front of her with a kind smile while one of the other people in white lab coats handed him a first-aid kit. "Sorry about that, usually they're not that aggressive till they're a few days older."

Felicity didn't find that particularly reassuring, but she was focusing really hard on trying to not let herself cry in front of all the adults as she sank into the chair somehow rolled behind her. It didn't matter that she was the only kid here right now, she really didn't want Lex to hear that she'd been a crybaby all by herself... even if it was only after an actual dinosaur had bitten her.

"Strong jaw for so young," Doctor Grant commented. "Like an adult snake?"

"Some reptilian D.N.A was used in the genetic reconstruction as well as amphibian," Doctor Wu admitted as he carefully cleaned around her wound, "Good girl, you're doing great," he reassured
her. "We'll just have to wrap this for a bit to keep it safe from infection, okay?"

"W-What about poison?" Felicity had asked fearfully. "Aren't snakes—"

"Some snakes are venomous," the scientist interrupted calmly, going on in the same measured tone as he started bandaging her hand. "But very few of the dinosaurs are. Trust me, you'll be fine." He caught her eyes with a smile. "It's Felicity, right?"

"Ye-Yes, sir," she answered tremulously, still trying not to cry. Her hand didn't feel so bad anymore, she told herself, so it shouldn't fall off or anything like that...

"Well it's nice to meet you Felicity, I'm Henry."

"Henry is our chief geneticist here at Jurassic Park," Lex's grandfather told her, catching her unhurt hand to give a gentle squeeze. "So you can trust he knows what he's talking about."

Felicity had barely been listening when the doctors were throwing questions at the man—Henry—and he was answering them almost just as quickly, but she had realized he was pretty important here. So he did know what he was doing, right?

"What species is this?" Doctor Grant asked.

"There we go," Doctor Wu told her as he finished wrapping the bandage around her hand. "Now we'll just get you an ice-pack. Thank you, Doctor Sorkin," he said as he accepted an already ready icepack and pressed it to her hand. "Now just hold that there for a few minutes for me, okay?" After she nodded shakily he finally turned to answer Grant's question. "They're Velociraptors."

Grant stared at him for a moment, then sounded completely disbeliefing when he said, "You bred raptors?"

"...ity? Felicity?" Oliver's voice calling her name brought her back to the present, where she found everyone staring at her again.

Maybe by the end of tonight she'd be used to it?
"Felicity?" Oliver said again, his hand on her arm moving up a little, not touching her injured shoulder because he stopped himself just in time.

The E.A startled as she realized she hadn't answered him, "Sorry," she said quickly. "Lost in—well, memories for a minute there."

"Again, I can only offer my apologies," Masrani offered, redirecting the table's eyes back to himself—and she couldn't help but be grateful for half a second. Then he continued, "Truly, though, Doctor Balog only wanted a picture of the scar. To confirm that there were no lasting ill effects."

"And document it, I know," Felicity sighed, reaching for her water again, but deciding at the last second—after that memory—she'd rather drink more of the hot tea instead. "He said that," she rolled her eyes. "Doesn't mean I had to let him take a picture of my hand."

"Your hand?" Sara repeated curiously.

Felicity sighed and held it out to her, explaining as the former assassin gently turned her hand to study the barely-visible tiny teeth-marks that the years hadn't wiped completely away. "Mister Hammond let me pet a raptor right after it'd hatched—they can bite then." She grimaced. "I thought it was kinda cute, like a kitten, till it wanted to eat me."

"Of course you did," Masrani smiling softly.

"I don't anymore," she reminded him unnecessarily.

The man sighed, "Yes, all of you seemed to hold lingering resentment towards that specific species. Even John was wary of them." He shook his head. "They possess above average intelligence for animals, I grant you, and I understand escaping them that day was not especially easy. But I'd think your experience with the Tyrannosaurus was more traumatic."

Felicity snorted, "We didn't escape them at all," she shook her head. "We couldn't. They were too smart," she shook her head. "They could open doors and shrug off bullets. If we'd tried to run they
Oliver started to interrupt, "Felicity—"

"It's not important," Felicity insisted, forcing herself to meet Masrani's eyes. "What is important is what's going to happen next."

"What do you want to happen?" Lyn asked her gently, not looking at her husband as she waited for Felicity's response.

The E.A that still more than sometimes wished she was a lowly I.T girl sighed. "What I want doesn't matter. You said you'd help save Q.C. How?"

"Very well, to business," Masrani almost bowed his head. "You already know I have acquired some of Queen Consolidated's stocks."

"Eight percent."

"Yes, eight percent," the businessman nodded. "The purchase also has already helped you somewhat. It has given your board pause for the time being, and ensured that Stellmoor International cannot claim a majority of the stocks."

"So she can't challenge me without Walter's backing, or yours," Oliver realized. "But she still owns part of the company."

"She does not." Masrani told him. "Her employers do." He shook his head. "Miss Rochev is quite capable at her job, but she does not hold any ownership of the company she works for, thus she merely represents them. Should her performance fail to meet expected standards, those she represents shall recall her."

"Starling National Bank also holds eight percent of the stock," Missus Queen interjected. "Combined with your holdings, we would have an undeniable majority."
"Thus the little show Miss Rochev attempted tonight, yes," Masrani nodded. "She is well aware of what my involvement could mean."

"So, what, you'll sell Ollie your eight percent if Felicity goes back to the island?" Thea asked, looking like she was trying to follow along with the logic and not quite getting it.

But then it wasn't entirely logical in the business sense. It was a point of pride and sheer stubbornness colliding with equal stubbornness and fear.

"Oh no, I won't be selling the stocks," Masrani said, glancing towards one of his bodyguards who'd taken some papers out of a briefcase. He smiled as he held them out to her.

Oliver snatched them before she'd had the chance to decide if she even wanted to try it with her injured arm.

She was somewhat glad. Memories of that baby raptor's painful bite hadn't helped her shoulder feel less painful at all. It was starting to throb again now.

Oliver looked over the papers quickly, his brow furrowing just a little between his eyes as he was surprised, but the corners of his mouth never turned down. So he didn't completely hate whatever the papers said as he read through them at about half the speed she would have. After a few long moments he glanced at Masrani, meeting his eyes for another long breath, then turned towards her and placed the papers in her good hand.

Felicity nodded her thanks, then quickly started reading. Then stopped. Went back to the beginning and started again. And again. And a few more times before she had to accept that the words weren't going to magically change into something that wasn't so much of a surprise. Finally she looked at Masrani, "What is this?"

"A simple contract," he answered evenly. "And the deal we will be making tonight."

"What deal?" Tommy tried to ask, looking like he wanted to reach across the table to take the papers from her next, but he wasn't willing to try it with the vigilantes sitting on either side of her in overprotective mode. Unlike his girlfriend, he knew exactly how dangerous they were: that they wouldn't intentionally hurt him was mostly a moot point.
Felicity swallowed, glancing between him and the cover sheet again once, before shaking her head. "This doesn't make sense."

"I have to disagree," the businessman replied. "It makes perfect sense for you. You would be a fool not to accept, my dear, and you know that."

"It doesn't make any sense for you," Felicity ground out. "Good press can't be worth even a fraction of this. I-I mean, you already have plenty of it."

Masrani held her gaze for a long moment before he slowly told her, "It is not about the press, Miss Smoak. It never has been." He shook his head slowly. "I had thought you knew that."

Felicity stared at him.

"All she has to do is go to the island?" Oliver clarified, and when she glanced at him he was watching the older man intently.

"I should hope you would at least consider what you're getting in return worth far more than a fly over," Masrani responded lightly, still focusing on Felicity. "At least a few days of your time. Spent finding your courage and trying to enjoy yourself."

Felicity shook her head, still disbelieving. "You're giving me everything you've bought here in Starling. For nothing."

"Not nothing," he countered firmly, gesturing towards the contract. "Despite what you may think, my dear, I am a businessman. And your part in this bargain is quite clearly outlined therein. You must visit Jurassic World, and visit as many of the offered attractions as you possibly can."

"What does that mean?" Oliver interjected before she could say anything in response, which surprised her a lot less than his mother following up immediately thereafter.

"Surely you don't expect all of your guests to necessarily make use of everything your park has to offer, Simon."
The side of the Indian man's mouth tilted upward a bit in an almost-Oliver-like smile, then he nodded. "Quite right. *Jurassic World* has something to offer everyone, but no, I don't suppose everything is for everyone." He paused for a moment, like he was actually considering his next words, but Felicity was fairly certain he already knew what he was about to say. "How about a compromise then?" He held her eyes as he offered, "As part of the deal you must attend every attraction your V.I.P access offers, with the option of passing, shall we say, three times? That is fair, is it not?"

Felicity thought about it for a long moment, then started to nod.

But Oliver spoke again before she could, "No."

She blinked, startled, turning towards him in confusion. "Oliver?"

Her C.E.O wasn't quite scowling at the other businessman, but he wasn't far off either. His face softened as he turned towards her. "You don't want to do this, Felicity. You don't have to."

"But Isabel—"

"We'll find another way to deal with Isabel," Oliver told her. "You don't have to do this, and you don't want to," he said again, then added: "So don't."

Felicity stared at the hero she hated herself just a little for falling for, because she knew it was stupid to want what she could never have. She knew that before the Canary joined the team. But she also knew that had nothing to do with this. "Thank you," she forced herself to say slowly. "But I do have to."

"Felicity..."

Instead of holding his so very blue eyes, she looked at the other businessman again. "How is this going to work?"

Masrani didn't look bothered by the interruption at all, though it wasn't the first by far; actually he just looked intrigued. And, to her surprise, he didn't look especially delighted by having finally forced her hand here. He only nodded with a small, polite smile that looked a little sad. "Time is, I think, of some importance to your company, so it'd be best to be done as soon as possible. Agreed?"
Felicity swallowed, but nodded. "Where do I sign?" she asked looking at the contract, then blinking as she realized another problem. "And I'll need a pen."

When she looked at Masrani, his briefcase carrying bodyguard had already handed him the writing implement, which he passed to her.

But Laurel spoke up, for the first time since all the after-dinner business chit-chat had started, holding out her hand. "Let me see that, please." When Felicity blinked at her, she added with a small smile, "I practiced business law before I switch to criminal. It's always better to have a lawyer with your interests in mind look things like this over before you sign."

Without another word, Felicity complied, even though she was pretty sure she understood exactly what she was agreeing to. She was a tech prodigy, though, and had never had any interest in even the idea of law school, so it made sense to let Sara's sister have at it.

"While I have no qualms with Miss Lance ensuring everything is to your best interests," Masrani spoke up as the A.D.A scanned each of the pages. "You will agree to this, Felicity. You did not come here tonight to not make this deal. I know that, and so do you."

Felicity didn't say anything, instead looking towards Oliver's ex as the lawyer finished reading through the packet of papers even faster than the tech girl had. Her law-trained eyes undoubtedly skimming over the legal jargon as speedily as the hacker read computer codes.

As soon as she finished, Laurel looked at Masrani, "Where's the rest of it?" she asked, one elegant eyebrow going up.

"The rest of it?" Felicity repeated, blinking at her, before jerking her head towards Masrani when she heard him sigh, trying not to wince as the slightly too quick motion made her shoulder unhappy. When she looked at the billionaire, though, he still didn't look exactly unhappy.

And the bodyguard only handed Laurel a few more pages, which she breezed through even more quickly than the first set.

Her perfect eyebrows were high on her forehead when she finally finished, and looked over at the businessman. "This contract is acknowledged contra proferentem," the lawyer stated.
Masrani nodded, "Surely you can have no objections against that on Miss Smoak's behalf, Miss Lance."

"What does that mean?" Felicity asked before Laurel could respond.

"Against the author, basically," the brunette answered, looking back at her as she explained. "It's the standard position of the courts on contracts anyway. Especially one like this, where the parties can be considered to have unequal bargaining power." She looked back at the international C.E.O as she finished. "It's not normally written right into the business contract. I'm surprised your lawyers would allow it."

"Not usually, no. And no, they don't care for it," Marani nodded again. "It would seem Wethersby Posner suffered quite a loss when you declined their offer in favor of criminal defense, and now prosecution, Miss Lance."

"Thank you," Laurel answered, continuing smoothly. "Other than that this is a standard business contract."

"Indeed it—"

"But the provisions against the Masrani Corporation weren't listed in the summary," the lawyer spoke right over the businessman. When he sighed, she shook her head another time. "It's strange, isn't it, to hide the parts of your offer that make it more appealing?"

"What do you mean?" Felicity asked her, brow already furrowing up in concern.

Laurel looked back at her. "Mister Masrani is personally insuring the contract's safe completion," she gestured to the top page, specifically to the corner where the man had already signed. "Specifically, he's agreeing that if anything were to happen to render him unable to complete his obligations herein, you personally inherit a controlling interest in all his assets and companies."

"I believe that part only comes into effect if I were to die someday soon," Masrani put in with a shrug. "Which I obviously have no intention of doing, but best to be prepared."
"Wait, a controlling interest?" Felicity repeated, turning to stare at him. "Why would you give me your company?"

"Why not?" Masrani shrugged like it really didn't matter. "If I'm dead, I won't be able to do anything with it. And my dear wife wants nothing to do with it, though she'll have no choice but to accept my monetary assets."

"If you're thinking that seriously about dying anytime soon, sweetheart, you're obviously doing something too dangerous," Lyn spoke up again. She thought a moment, then asked shrewdly. "Your flying instructor doesn't think you're getting any better, does he?"

"Ah, he's just being dramatic," Masrani waived her observation off, effectively confirming it.

"I don't want the Masrani Corporation!" Felicity protested.

"You see, this is why that relatively irrelevant aspect was in the fine print," Masrani told Laurel. "Typically when you want to give someone a lot of money they just say thank you. But dear Felicity has to be almost as dramatic as Craig."

"Who's Craig?" Thea asked.

"His seventh flight instructor. Or is he number eight or nine? I think I've lost track," Lyn answered around a delicate sip of her tea. "By now, I think the classes have cost more than the helicopters."

"I have never crashed a chopper," her husband protested.

"And how many of your instructors were willing to fly with you after the first time?" Lyn shot back. "Wasn't one of them a fighter pilot?"

"Clearly he's lost his nerve since he entered retirement," Masrani claimed.

His wife laughed, then towards she added, "Most pilots don't particularly care for his philosophy on life either."
Felicity had to laugh a little, too, and her friends all smiled slightly at her amusement, somewhat hysterical though it was.

Oliver's mother wasn't so easily distracted. "What are the exact conditions of the contract, Miss Lance?"

Laurel didn't look surprised by the question, or by the fact that Missus Queen—who'd used her first name fondly all throughout dinner—had now switched to the more formal address as soon as she started performing the part of a lawyer here. "On completion of her part in the arrangement, her visit to the island, Miss Smoak will receive all of Mister Masrani's assets here in Starling City."

"The stocks in *Queen Consolidated,*" Oliver nodded.

"Yes," Laurel confirmed. "As well as shares in *Merlyn Global Group*—"

"What?" Tommy blinked, but his girlfriend kept going like he hadn't said anything. Then again, Masrani had said something about that earlier.

"—and *Stellmoor International,*" the brunette finished, pausing a second before going on. "By signing, Miss Smoak, you're also accepting ownership of your shares of the *Masrani Corporation.*"

"That-That's just if he dies, right?" Felicity asked hopefully, then added with a quick towards the man's wife. "Which he said he's *not* going to."

Lyn just looked bemused, saying nothing as the lawyer replied.

"No," Laurel refused, "If he dies before his part in the contact can be completed, you will inherit majority control of all his business interests."

"If he dies," Thea nodded, looking interested despite herself now, which somehow made Felicity like the younger woman a little bit more than she already did. "What's she get if he doesn't kick the bucket?"
The girl's mother shot her a frown for that last part.

Laurel didn't react to it, only answered precisely. "Then she still becomes a shareholder with the Masrani Corporation, with... what looks like a considerable investment portfolio already assembled for you."

Felicity blinked at her, but her brow quickly furrowed as she turned to frown at Masrani, who spoke up before she could say anything.

"It's really not all that much, my dear," he insisted, raising his hands as if in surrender. "Much less than your natural talents deserve, to be sure."

Felicity rolled her eyes, "Aren't you supposed to be trying to get the best deal for yourself out of this?" she demanded of him, shaking her head in bewilderment. "Isn't that what good businessmen do?"

"Well, no, speaking in terms of morality, it could be argued that is only what bad businessmen do," Masrani replied. "Economically, you might not be wrong, but I have more than enough money to get by with either way," he assured her. "I promise you, either deal will not leave Evelyn or myself penniless."

When Felicity just stared at him for several more moments, with the man only staring guilelessly back at her, Laurel spoke up again.

"The only other provision you're agreeing to by signing, Felicity, is that you'll allow 'at least limited communication' between yourself and Mister Masrani?" she turned a confused look on the businessman.

"I do not know how she does it," Masrani shrugged. "But it's bothersome."

Everyone looked at Felicity, but it was Lyn that explained.

"He's just tired of needing to steal my phone to call you."
At that, every member of Team Arrow looked at least a little amused. The people here who weren't as aware of her technological acumen were still visibly confused.

"Why would he need your phone?" Thea asked the businessman's wife.

"His phones won't call her."

Oliver huffed; that barely-there sound that was almost a laugh but not quite. It was about as close as he tended to get without at least half faking it though.

"Won't call her?" Thea repeated, blinking at her, before asking the businessman. "Are you sure you have the right number?"

"Yes. We have the correct number," Lyn sent a little smile Felicity's way then, "However you did it, the program must be a thing of beauty." She shook her head. "I tried to tell him the only way he'd definitely get around it'd be by buying a phone with cash, but after that only worked on the first phone call he wasn't willing to try it again."

"Yes, yes, very impressive," Masrani agreed, shaking his head. "You are exceedingly bright, my dear," he told Felicity. "But not ambitious. Or at least not enough to overcome your fears. You let them hold you back."

Felicity looked down at the table. "I already said I'd go," she reminded him softly. "I don't understand why you'd want to give me—"

"Everything I easily can?" Masrani broke in, waiting till her eyes snapped back over to his again to go on. "Perhaps because I'd like to see what you can do with it."

She blinked at him, then shook her head again. "I don't—"

"You, Miss Felicity Smoak, are without a doubt one of the brightest minds of your generation," he told her, nodding in firm conviction. "I have always been good at judging these things." He shook his head. "Were you not the technical genius that you are, I would not have offered you the contract for setting up the park's systems while you were still in school. And make no mistake, many people argued most adamantly against that decision. But you proved me right..." He nodded. "Had you allowed it, I would have happily made you the head of any department you wanted. Recent graduate
Felicity sighed, trying to not react to being the very focused on complete center of attention again. "You said that back when I was at M.I.T," she shook her head. "I think my advisor considered having me committed for turning you down."

Masrani laughed lightly, "To each their own choice, of course," he shook his head. "All the same, Miss Smoak, I would very much like to see you live up to your potential. Even if only from afar." As he finished, he looked at Oliver then. "Which brings me to you, Mister Queen."

Oliver only raised an eyebrow at him as the bodyguard with the briefcase took out another pile of papers, this time putting them directly into Mister Masrani's waiting hand instead of trying to give them to Felicity, Laurel or Oliver.

"As I have already said, despite the rough start and some stumbles, your company is not entirely a lost cause," Masrani told him, pausing as if to give the younger man a chance to say something like thank you, but going on unperturbed when he didn't. "Your lack of education and inexperience, however, has hurt you more than once."

"What's your point?" Oliver didn't quite demand, but there was a little too much gruffness there for the typical C.E.O persona.

"My point, Mister Queen," Masrani went on succinctly, "Is that you need to learn how to make up for your shortcomings. Can you do that?" he asked, and this time he waited for the younger C.E.O to respond.

So after a moment Oliver said carefully, "I've been learning as I go so far."

"Not exactly an answer, but I'll take it," Masrani chuckled, then handed the papers to him.

"What's this?" Oliver asked, not looking at the papers. His eyes still locked with the older, now solemn C.E.O.

"It is very likely that upon realize they have lost even the pretense of ownership at Queen Consolidated, the board of Stellmoor International will begin to reevaluate their plans towards you. In the not so distant future, it is very possible they will begin selling off more of your company's
"With what money?" Missus Queen asked him promptly. "Nearly all of our liquid assets are already tied up in the shares we own now."

"They are?" Thea asked, blinking as she looked between her mother and her brother in something between confusion and surprise. Like she'd never really given much thought to what the hostile takeover of *Queen Consolidated* meant outside of the fact that it'd brought her brother back home again. Then again, maybe she hadn't.

"I, personally, will invest the necessary capital for you to acquire the necessary shares," Masrani told him.

"Why?" Oliver frowned at him, still not looking at the papers he'd been handed, while Felicity thought Laurel might be fighting the same impulse she was: of wanting to snatch them straight out of his hand.

"Because you had the good judgment, at least, to keep Miss Smoak close after winning her trust, so you can't be a completely lost cause," Masrani replied, holding his gaze. "And, as I said, I'd like to see what that mind of hers can really do when it's not held back."

Oliver was unquestionably a lot faster than her all the time, and there wasn't any hesitation slowing him down now at all either as he put the papers down, picked up the pen the briefcase carrying bodyguard had put on the table earlier and scrawled his kindergartner's cursive of a signature on the line the older man had indicated.

Felicity only just heard Moira Queen's soft sigh as she watched Laurel just barely keep herself from lunging across her boyfriend's lap to reach the papers when she saw it was too late and Oliver had already signed.

Masrani looked surprised for only the half second he watched it happen, then his expression shifted to mild enjoyment as he shook his head and accepted the papers. After he handed them to the bodyguard with the briefcase, he said, "Strictly speaking, my young friend, Miss Lance is right. You really should have a lawyer look over any legally binding contract before you sign it."

"Or, you know, at least *read* it," Laurel added dryly, making Masrani outright laugh.
"That would work for some, as well. Others, not so much," the C.E.O sent her a smile. Then he looked at Oliver again. "As you did not yet read the deal, Mister Queen, you would be well served to study your own copy at some point." He indicated the papers that the briefcase bodyguard—maybe that really was his job?—was handing Laurel. "Simply put, you just agreed to hire an actual Executive Assistant to take over for Miss Smoak while she takes over as the new head of your Applied Sciences' division."

"What?" Felicity stared at him, while Oliver for some reason started to relax in his seat—he'd tensed up only when it sounded like Masrani was going to make him get rid of her, which might've earned him an arrow from the looks of it.

"You have also agreed," Masrani went on. "To discuss all major executive decisions you will need to make, before they are made, with myself until you have amassed the capital required to refund my investment without sacrificing that complete controlling majority of your company. And I must stress that that last part is written quite clearly into our contract."

"That is a very generous offer, Mister Masrani," Missus Queen commented.

"I can be a very generous man," the world's either-eighth-or-seventh-richest man replied. "When I find an individual, company or cause worthy of it." He nodded to Felicity. "With that out of the way, the transfers shall begin once you have held up your end of the agreement, my dear. I was planning to visit the park soon either way, so the necessary arrangements are already being made."

Felicity swallowed, but then asked, "When do I..." she trailed off, not sure she could finish the question with her voice failing as she remembered the roar of the T-Rex and the screeches of the raptors from years past.

"You need only be prepared to leave Starling International Airport aboard my jet. Shall we say tomorrow night, at six o'clock?"

That sounded terrible, but any time for what she was agreeing to would, so Felicity just made herself nod mutely.

"She's not going alone," Oliver wasn't so speechless.

And Masrani again smiled. "I'd be unexpectedly disappointed in you all if she was," he looked back
to Felicity again as he answered. "You may of course bring however many friends you like. Though the jet can only seat two dozen comfortably, I can call for another if necessary."

It took her a moment, but she was finally able to make herself say softly, "Thank you, but I-I think we'll all fit in one."

"I look forward to it," Masrani replied, standing up and offering his hand to his wife to help her rise, though she did so with more grace than Felicity ever could with or without help.

Lyn reached across the table to squeeze her hand again, her smile kind. "Take a breath, then a step..." she trailed off.

After the obedient breath, Felicity finished, "One after the other, and you'll always get where you're going." She had to smile, albeit a little tremulously, as she completed the phrase that'd helped her through more than a few stressful situations since the enigmatic older woman had given it to her back when they first met.

After a moment, Masrani nodded, "Until tomorrow night then."

Lyn gave her hand another squeeze before she let go.

Then, after quickly navigating the maze surrounded by all the bodyguards who's shadows almost completely obscured their own as they rounded the paper walls, the powerful pair were gone.

"Is it okay that I kinda like her?" Roy asked the table at large as soon as the shadows of their hosts and entourage had disappeared. He held one hand up defensively when his girlfriend looked at him, "And I swear it's not 'cause she's kinda hot."

Thea snorted as she shook her head. "I like her, too," she admitted, then looked at her brother. "So we should probably head home and get packing."

Chapter End Notes

FINALLY! The dinner is done! *sigh* So sorry it took so long, but I really did not want to stop until the next chapter could start with us finally headed towards the island.
But we're there! Hopefully the wait and all the technical details wasn't too boring for anybody.
And now that I have some actual free time again, hopefully updating won't be such an arduous task... especially since none of the chapters to come should be quite the mammoths this one was.
Thanks for reading!
More to come soon! :-}
Nothing in this Complicated World is Simple

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! Sorry for the much too long wait on this! Hope it's still fun to read anyway! Enjoy! :-)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

John Diggle's P.O.V.

John didn't need to double-check his gear. He knew it was all squared away, but he checked anyway. Better to check twice than find out later that something vital wasn't there.

The clothing he could pack in his sleep. All of his suits for his official 'job' fit easily into the carrier that was designed for them. All the other clothes—a whole week's worth it'd somehow turned out—didn't take up much room either.

Guns and ammo apparently weren't going to be a problem. At all. Even more so than should usually be the case with his profession. Simon Masrani must've said more than a few things to his people about not giving their group any trouble whatsoever, because everyone he'd talked to was so over-the-top helpful it was flat-out strange. He'd checked in with Masrani's head bodyguard to start with, as he'd met the man at Toro's and that call was expected.

The rapid response he'd gotten from the head of Jurassic World's security forces, on the other hand, was the sort of thing that normally took several cycles of phone-tag. Instead the man had called him, seemingly ready to bend over backwards for anything it make 'those under his care,' as the man had called them, 'comfortable.' Making sure everything was 'set.' And of course his licenses to conceal and carry as Oliver Queen's bodyguard—and Felicity Smoak's, on this island especially—were both expected and completely welcome.

Even more bizarrely, it was requested that he not shoot any of the dinosaurs 'unless absolutely necessary, which of course it never should be,' had sounded more like a lighthearted joke than a warning about each and every monster probably costing more than any bodyguard could hope to make in years. If ever.

Bizarre, or maybe indicative of just how much emphasis Masrani had placed on the importance of
Felicity's visit. At minimum, he was a hundred percent positive that the owner of the island and both companies there had gone out of his way to make sure there wouldn't be any problems for them whatsoever. Not a single excuse for Felicity to not follow through on her side of the bargain. After watching the Masrani couple's interactions with the team's computer genius, however, John couldn't say they he didn't think they weren't fond of her themselves. Which could go a long way in rationalizing why they—or at least Mister Masrani himself—would want this entire trip to not just happen, but end with everyone happy about it, too. At least so far as they could be.

Still, from his interactions with Masrani's staff, John thought it was fairly safe to assume that at least some of them might be aware of the fact that Masrani might be handing the keys to the kingdom over to her. Which struck the ex-soldier as more than a little strange as the transfer of almost everything one of the wealthiest men in the world owned was only supposed to occur if something happened to him before he could complete his end of the bargain. All the same, that was what John's gut was still taking from all of this. And anyway, what about all of this wasn't strange?

John sighed, shaking his head. He was still coming to terms with the fact that Felicity Smoak—the one member of their team that they'd all thought had never been hurt—had her own painful past that was coming back to bite her now. That she did have her own little scar that she wasn't comfortable talking about; not out of embarrassment, but because talking about her childhood trauma simply brought it all back to the surface.

But she was doing that. Making herself go back to face it all again. Not because she wanted to: she didn't. But because she had to. The ex-soldier shook his head; and she kept saying that they were the heroes...

Double check done, and all his gear right where it was supposed to be, John zipped it all up. His cell phone started vibrating on his hip just as he finished.

He grabbed it to check the incoming text automatically. Expecting an update from Felicity. A tentatively estimated—and undoubtedly accurate—E.T.A on when the rest of the group would be ready to go. Or, maybe a report on what her search programs might've found on that donation to Moira Queen's campaign that'd triggered red-flags.

Oliver hadn't even blinked at the fact that their tech genius was keeping track of his mother's campaign, even when she'd admitted she was covering all the Queen accounts, which would include his own. That really went to show how worried he was for the blonde, because the same protectiveness that had made him hostile to his friend even asking questions about his mother last year was still there. Buried beneath his anger at his mother's many lies and her involvement—however unwilling—in Merlyn's Undertaking last year, but it was still there. With almost anyone else it'd likely come back up with almost no trouble, but not with Felicity. The archer was walking on egg shells with her; in the same over-protective mode as the Canary, and John himself to some extent. So he didn't have it in him to snap at her, which was a good thing. Whether he thought she was wrong
to keep track of those kinds of things or not.

She wasn't wrong, of course, and he could hope the vigilante realized that to some extent, too. Though that extent was likely very, very limited. But John Diggle wasn't going to weigh in on that argument before he had to. No point in starting it before it had to be started.

This text, though, wasn't from Felicity Smoak at all.

**UNKNOWN: OSTRANDER HOTEL. ROOM 1141. NOW.**

A clear command. Equally as clear as the expectation that he'd follow through on it even without knowing who it was coming from. If only to find out who'd sent it in the first place.

Not anyone on the team. Oliver was occasionally abrupt, with issuing orders under pressure especially, but he didn't send texts. The year before he'd begged off whenever his sister had harassed him about it, claiming the new phones were difficult for him, and no one else who had his number would ever expect a text from him. Least of all his bodyguard.

These days Felicity handled almost all the team's technical communication anyway. She had ever since she became the C.E.O's very reluctant assistant.

And she was never abrupt at all. Somehow she babbled even by text... John had never wanted to ask how that happened.

Even Sara had said she didn't communicate with Oliver by phone. Both when she was the friend recently returned from the dead and after she became the sort-of girlfriend. The pair talked in person, face-to-face. Phones were for everybody else. If the Canary did have to rely on technology to find Oliver: well, it hadn't taken the former assassin any time at all to figure out Felicity's phone number was far more important than Oliver's. Besides, if she had been the one texting—from a number other than the one already programmed into John's contact list—she would've identified herself. Probably using her initials, the letter 'C' for Canary or something similar.

Not that it necessarily had to be a member of 'Team Arrow.' There were plenty of possibilities outside of the team.

John had been in contact with a number of people regarding the upcoming trip just this morning. In their eagerness to make sure everything was going smoothly, everyone from the *Masrani*
*Corporation* or *Jurassic World* had understandably contacted the bodyguard, instead of the Executive Assistant that was apparently already one of their shareholders, whether she'd ultimately end up owning both companies or not. But this wouldn't be them, because they wouldn't be abrupt even by text, much less commanding. Or telling him to meet them somewhere here in Starling. After all, their boss's boss (at least) was the one waiting in his private plane at Starling's international airport.

That still left countless possibilities. John hadn't changed his phone number since he'd left the Army; courtesy of Felicity even though she'd switched him to a much more secure phone than you could buy on the public market, his number had stayed the same. The former soldier could think of more than one army buddy that might be this mysterious because they knew they could get away with it and count on him showing up as expected. An expectation that—with everyone he'd gotten involved with in the past year—he should doubtlessly discourage. But there were more than a few friends out there he couldn't leave hanging just to make a point.

So John sent a quick text to Felicity himself that he had to make a stop on his way over, and receiving her responses, plural, barely a few seconds after he'd sent it. Her many more words all coming in much less time than it'd taken him to text a third as much.

**FELICITY: OK.**

**Great. Gives me more time to pack.**

**With Sara's help.**

**You know I really can pack by myself. But it's kind of fun doing it with another girl. Even if she is going to be borrowing half my wardrobe for the trip.**

**And by doing you know I didn't mean — never mind!**

**See you soon!**

John shook his head again as he clipped the phone back on his belt, picked up his bag and headed for the car. Not sure how the tech genius could possible thumb out a response—with no abbreviations, errors, or weird auto-corrects at all—in less time than it took him to send one sentence to her. Maybe she had some sort of speech-to-text thing he hadn't seen her use yet?

Not that he could ask that either. Not without either unintentionally making her feel self-conscious, or maybe needing to dodge offers of more tech lessons. Learning how to handle all the basics of their communications and technical systems was one thing, but he was fine with his phone the way it was. Really.

The hotel was about halfway between his apartment and Felicity's. It meant heading more downtown...
than he otherwise would, but it wasn’t an inconvenient place to stop while in route to Queen Mansion.

He was not expecting to see his ex-wife—and new girlfriend—on the other side of the door though. Maybe he should have been, but last he knew Lyla was headed to somewhere in Asia for something ‘top secret.’

"Hey Johnny," Lyla gave him a small smile as she opened the door.

"Lyla?" John blinked at her. "Thought you were gonna be overseas a while?"

"I just got back from a mission in Pyongyang," she answered with a smile.

A smile that automatically triggered a few alarms inside his head. Because she was nervous. And Lyla Michaels needed a damn good reason to actually be nervous enough to let it show. Even—sometimes especially—with him.

John didn’t focus on that though, because he knew better than to just straight out ask her right away. "That was you?" he asked instead.

The smile she shot him was a little more real, though the long gasp was fake. "I’m sorry, that’s classified information," she finished, her smile almost coy. But not able to hide her worry either.

"Uh-huh," John nodded, looking around the nice suite. "What’s all this?"

It’d be nice if there was champagne and lingerie, or something like that, to go with what had to be one of this hotel’s best set of rooms. But Lyla was dressed a lot like him: ready to go in a leather coat and at least two guns on her. And the bag on the bed looked a lot like the one he’d left in his car before coming up here. Ready to head out, not just got in...

"ARGUS has a standing reservation at this hotel for very important assets," Lyla answered, her smile saying she’d rather be here right now in lingerie, too. Then she shook her head. "But we can’t stay now."
"Yeah," John nodded slowly. "Looks like we've both got places to be." He raised an eyebrow at her. "So why are we here?"

Lyla sighed, then she made herself meet his eyes like she normally would: straight and steady. "Because we both have the same place to be."

He didn't want to assume the worst. But if Lyla wanted to tag along for a while as some sort of vacation she'd just say so. It wasn't like he'd say 'no,' and his team would welcome her, too. Her nerves and the not wanting to ask meant that this was job related. ARGUS related.

John couldn't stop himself from frowning as the realization struck. "What? ARGUS can't afford the ferry tickets to dinosaur island?" he asked disbelievingly.

From what he'd seen, the Advanced Research Group United Support had money to spare, so that couldn't be the problem. Not based on what he'd seen and every little bit that Lyla—and Oliver—had said.

ARGUS was the top of the food chain. Or at least near enough to it for all the cutting-edge tech and burnable cash they could ever ask for. Tickets to the world's most unique resort destination were well within their means by any stretch of the imagination. There was no way they'd need to hitch a ride aboard a billionaire's jet...

Unless that jet was the owner's own plane, which might very well off them a lot of access they'd never otherwise get?

That had to be it. But there wasn't anything covert about monsters as big as buildings. Whether many of them were actually anywhere near Godzilla-size or not: dinosaurs were big. So what else did Masrani have that Lyla's boss wanted?

"We've already evaluated the island, Johnny. More than once," Lyla told him, calmly shaking her head. "But we can't access the areas that are closed off to the public. Not without setting off a lot of alarms."

"ARGUS is scared of alarms?" he asked, each word weighted down by doubt, plus plenty of skeptical suspicions he'd rather not aim at the ex-wife he was trying to make things work with again.
"No. But we can't find out what we need while they're going off. Not without any chance of getting back out," Lyla sighed. "Their security system's beyond state-of-the-art. Our techs have been trying for a while now, but they can't break it." She shook her head again. "And the areas we have to see are under the highest level security."

"'Course they are," John snorted; because why would ARGUS want anything that wasn't? He shook his head. "So what?"

"Those systems don't just trigger alarms," Lyla told him. "If they're set off..." she sighed, shaking her head yet again. "The techs think the system's designer might've been paranoid about the dinosaurs getting loose again. It's rigged a lot tighter than many military installations. The wrong alarm goes off ad everything clams up and shuts down, or something like that."

John knew that was true, because Masrani had straight out said Felicity was the one he had to hire for that. After her experiences there as a child why wouldn't she be more than 'a bit paranoid' about that kind of thing? Maybe it only wasn't paranoia if they really were out to get you, but those that forgot the past were doomed to repeat it, too. Still he stayed silent as his girlfriend went on.

"If security's triggered, they have pretty much every extra security measure you can imagine. All before the local mercs' storm in." Lyla snorted, shaking her head. "I think Amanda's actually more impressed by that than she is by the dinosaurs."

The last part made him stiffen, and he'd started scowling even before she'd paused. "So, what, she wants—"

"Don't worry, Johnny. ARGUS isn't going to touch Felicity Smoak," Lyla cut him off, continuing to reassure him when that first statement, containing his friend's name, didn't help. "Amanda listed her as off-limits months ago. As soon as we knew she was working with Queen."

John blinked. "She did?"

"Yeah, she even told me that was the reason," Lyla nodded, then shrugged. "Probably would've put you on the same list if she didn't have me." She paused again, and sighed before she went on. "Don't ask about that. It's beyond complicated. Maybe your boss will talk about it, but mine definitely won't."

"And when am I going to be seeing Amanda Waller?"
"You're not. She'll be off-site the entire time. Commanding the mission by comms once it's a go."
Lyla replied evenly. "I'll be there with a few other agents... and a special taskforce, but we shouldn't
need them. Either way, I'll take care of everything, Johnny. We really just need your help getting into
the right places."

"Special taskforce?" he repeated with a frown, not liking how quickly she'd tried to skip over that
anymore than he liked the idea that anything more than normal field agents might be needed here.

Lyla held his gaze for a long moment, then sighed again. "You won't like them, either," she told him,
then shook her head. "But like I said, they're my problem. You shouldn't even see them."

"Uh-huh, if all goes well, right." John nodded slowly. "So who will I see?"

"Me. If it's not too much of a hardship." Lyla gave him a little, teasing smile that was much more
'her' than the earlier nervous ones. "And four ARGUS agents acting as additional security for their
cover."

"I already checked in with Masrani's people," John told her. "They know I'm coming as Oliver's
bodyguard. That's it."

"So call them back. Say Queen wants more security around the dinosaurs," Lyla shrugged slightly
this time, like it couldn't matter less. "It's not like that's something they haven't heard before."

"Probably not," John agreed, rolling his eyes. "But you're forgetting my client's not exactly
uninvolved with his own security. He's the one that can get the Director of ARGUS to declare
people untouchable, remember?"

"Actually, I don't think they've talked to each other in a few years," Lyla answered, then raised an
expectant eyebrow. "But are you really telling me you can't convince him? He didn't seem to have
any problem backing you up in Russia to rescue me."

"That was different, and you know it. It was a rescue op." John specified, shaking his head. "And I
didn't ask him then. Probably would've had to if I'd gone on my own, once I'd figured out you were
in one of Russia's worst prisons. But he'd already offered: said he was coming as soon as I said I
needed the time off."
"He's a good friend," Lyla allowed. "They both are, and I am grateful." She paused again, then made herself say, "Johnny, you know I don't like to ask, but—"

"I can't do anything with what you've told me so far, Lyla. 'Cause that's basically nothing." John interrupted firmly. "Why does ARGUS even care about the damn dinosaurs as long as they don't leave that island?"

Lyla was silent for a few long moments, then she said, "Remember what you and Gaynor were joking about, back when we first heard about the island opening under new management?"

"Yeah, that eventually some idiot at a desk might get the bright idea to replace boots on the ground with 'em," John's eyes narrowed. "Tell me that's not really happening. Please. My faith in our country's politicians' collective common sense hasn't ever been that high anyway, but that'd do it in completely."

The brunette was silent for a moment that was much longer than he liked, but then she shook her head. "There is something like that in the works, but we're keeping eyes on it through the military already. Doesn't sound like it'll come together fast: Masrani's been slowing it down enough that it shouldn't be an issue anytime soon." Lyla answered, taking a breath before going on. "But some of the stuff coming out of the In-Gen labs—stuff that their C.E.O may not really know about—that's more concerning. A lot more."

Those labs had brought back creatures that'd died out millions of years ago. Those same creatures could be the stuff of any sensible person's nightmares from sheer size alone. Monsters made by men. Or at least remade by them. So he couldn't really think of where to even start asking anything about that...

When he only looked at waiting for her to say more, Lyla sighed and reached into her coat pocket. "You want your team to look through this before you head to the airport. Some background, theories, and mission specs. We'll meet you after the T.S.A checkpoint."

John accepted the flashdrive even as he asked her, "Can't you just tell me, Lyla?"

"Not sure you'd believe me. I know I don't want to. Some of it you have to see to believe." She told him with a grimace, then nodded. "See you in a couple hours."
"Roger that," John nodded, stepping back to hold open the hotel door for her while she grabbed her bag off the bed. He stopped her as she past him. "I'll take that," he told her, reaching for the luggage that was almost identical to his own, and shrugging when she looked at him. "We're going on the same plane anyway, right?"

"Thanks, Johnny," Lyla handed him her bag and leaned forward for a too brief kiss before she was headed out and down the hall.

John sighed, then followed, closing the door behind him as he went, and reached for his cell phone to send another text.

The team's tech girl's response to the news wasn't all that much of a surprise.

FELICITY: I'm NOT telling him that.

Tell Lyla I said hi!

John rolled his eyes, smiling slightly as he started to tuck his phone away, but stopped when it vibrated again. This time with a message from a different blonde.

SARA: Extra security's not a bad idea.

Ollie's not gonna like G-men getting involved though.

John snorted, and texted back:

DIGG: Don't I know it.

Which he'd barely sent before another text came in.

FELICITY: Lyn says it's OK.

John shook his head. Apparently he just had to tell Oliver then. His phone buzzed yet again before he could think of any response.

SARA: She only said extra security.
I checked.

John rolled his eyes and texted back:

**DIGG: Good to know.**

**You 2 ready to go?**

Their answers, far as he could tell, came at the exact same time.

**SARA: Yup.**

**FELICITY: As I'll ever be.**

**SARA: We'll see you at Q.M.**

**DIGG: Thought I was picking you up?**

**FELICITY: She thinks I shouldn't leave my car here.**

**Outside my locked house.**

**In my quiet neighborhood.**

**SARA: It's easier if we just meet there.**

**DIGG: See you there then.**

John couldn't help but chuckle at the byplay. Once again glad that the two women seemed to get on so well. If they didn't, all of this could've been much more difficult.

As they'd all expected, Oliver was not at all enthusiastic about the idea of ARGUS coming on board. The billionaire was scowling as soon as his bodyguard had broached the issue once the team had hidden in the library. "This isn't just Lyla, Digg, you said that yourself."

John couldn't deny that. "You really want me to try and tell her no? 'Cause if I do you're gonna be talking to Waller next."

That was how these things worked, and it made the vigilante's scowl deepen.

"Extra security's not a bad idea, Ollie," Sara interjected, shrugging when the archer's scowl turned towards her. "It's not like they're asking us to sneaking them into the dinosaur cages or anything,"
she looked at Felicity then. "Are they?"

The team's tech girl—who'd grabbed the flashdrive off him before he'd even started telling their fearless leader anything—didn't respond. She was still combing through the contents on her laptop, her eyes going continually from one side of the screen to the other: back and forth, as she kept reading whatever was there, frowning all the while.

Oliver waited only a second for her to answer, before he tried calling her name, "Felicity?" He went around behind her without even waiting for an answer, which still didn't come; the bodyguard and ex-assassin shadowing him.

All three of them tried to read what was on the screen at first, but there were no graphs or pictures this time. Only a whole lot of tiny words that didn't look like English: and it was only the font-size that was tiny, more than most of the actual words were unreasonably long. If he had to guess, he'd expect it was all science—the numbers in there looked like math, but maybe they were, maybe they weren't. Passing all the basics back in school was all that was required of him, and educational excellence wasn't something he suspected either vigilante had ever aspired to either.

After a second of probably making no more sense of it than his bodyguard was, the billionaire put a hand on his assistant's unhurt shoulder, gently holding her in place when surprise made her jump in her seat. "Felicity?" he said her name softly. "What is this?"

Once again John found himself blinking at that. The shoulder-touch. Maybe the vigilante thought it a relatively impersonal but friendly gesture: like a pat on the back. To the bodyguard, at least with these two, it always looked a heck of a lot more intimate.

Then again, Oliver had pined after one ex, briefly dated another woman and then started dating the ex's sister all while he'd seemed to be trying to remain emotionally unattached to Felicity Smoak, so who could tell? He couldn't.

It'd been almost a relief when the genius was briefly interested in the kid from Central City, if only because she shouldn't wait around on the vigilante who'd still been childish about sharing her when she wasn't his to share or not... but then Barry Allen was struck by lightning, and he was still in a coma. So that avenue for Felicity to attempt any effort at making herself move on once Oliver started sleeping with Sara was slammed shut. Leaving the genius stuck in that awkward spot where Oliver seemed to want her to stay.

At least whatever the hell it was between the two of them had never seemed to bother Sara Lance. That could've gotten messy very fast. So, for John, it was one very big point in the Canary's favor.
Of course, that point may well be deep-rooted in the fact that the released League member was still in love with the same assassin that'd released her, which could still get very messy down the road.

Whether Nyssa al Ghul was in the picture or not, however, the ex-soldier couldn't imagine the Canary resenting the chemistry between Oliver Queen and Felicity Smoak. Sara wasn't a jealous person; though maybe she had been before: back when she went off in a boat with her big sister's boyfriend. In many ways, however, a much more mature woman had returned to Starling City, and while her fling with Oliver might be seen as a step backward, John didn't think so. Not when he'd seen her watch the archer with their tech girl just like she was now: visibly fond of them both and a little too worried about the other woman to hide it...

"What?" Felicity tried to lean back to look up at them, wincing when the little bit that the archer let her lean still pulled at her healing injury. Then she instead turned a little in her seat, Oliver's hand never leaving her good shoulder. "Sorry," she continued when she could blink at them. "What were you saying?"

"We asked you what that is," Oliver repeated, jerking his chin towards her computer screens.

The genius's confused expression melted immediately. Transforming into a look that was somewhere between disbelief and disgust. Further unneeded proof that she was a lot smarter than all of them and so she could tell heads from tails in what she'd been reading. Along with what each head and each tail meant. "It's... uh. Crazy?"

All of them expected her to go on, so Oliver waited a whole two heartbeats before he pressed, "Could you be a bit more specific?"

No growling at all, even with ARGUS involved. It almost made John wonder if maybe Felicity should've revealed some of her bad memories before now. Though that would've weakened the impact now. But her G.S.W was unquestionably still in play here, too: and would be until it didn't make her wince anymore, at the very least.

Felicity's face worked expressively through several emotions as they watched. All clearly displaying just how much she didn't like what was on the flashdrive, but just as clearly not really wanting to say it anymore than Lyla had.

John tried to help out. "Lyla said something about them giving dinosaurs to the military?"
The hacker flat-out scowled. "They're actually trying to train raptors! Like-Like they're some kind of attack Chihuahuas!"

John hoped he wasn't the only one that had to blink at the bizarre comparison as she ranted on.

"But they're-they're wolves at least! An-And—"

"And they aren't some kind of dog," Sara interrupted. "Or bird, right?" she clarified: voice completely calm as she sought a clarification that made about as much sense as comparing a Dinosaur to Chihuahua did.

Felicity met the other blonde's steady gaze with a blink, before she winced and made herself take a few breaths while she visibly thought about it.

Oliver spoke up before she could answer at all. "That's the one that bit you? The baby one, right after it'd hatched, right? And you almost didn't get away from the adults?"

John only let his eyebrow rise a little as he caught the barely-there frown Sara gave the other vigilante in response, but the archer didn't notice because he was completely focused on Felicity's face folding again.

"We didn't get away from them!" the genius shook her head, wincing when her shoulder undoubtedly hurt again but it didn't stop her now. "The T-Rex just thought were bigger snacks than us. Or maybe they were hunting on its turf, I don't know—"

"But they're not birds, right?" Sara interrupted again, gaze locking with Oliver's when both he and Felicity looked at her again.

While the archer's brows furrowed ever-so-slightly in confusion, their tech expert looked thoughtful as she tried to answer.

"Actually, if you look into the modern research, Doctor Grant's theory—that a lot of the dinosaurs became birds—is a lot more mainstream these days." The genius sighed. "Accepted, you know? But those are the dinosaurs that died and are fossils now, not the ones they brought back from mosquito blood with cloning and genetic sequencing... or was it their stomach contents? Maybe both? I don't know, the doctors kind of interrupted the ride about it 'cause they wanted to see the inside of the lab."
John had no idea what to say to that, and it looked like Oliver didn't either, but Sara wore the same look for only a second.

"So they were birds, but now they're not?"

The Canary was clearly very stuck on the idea monsters being big birds. It made the ex-soldier wonder if the League of Assassins really put that much stock in the idea of their namesakes, or if it was just Sara Lance that did. But the frown she'd given Oliver made him think it was more about keeping Felicity's mind out of her memories.

Felicity grimaced. "Kind of?" she sighed, then tried to explain. "The raptors really are a good example, 'cause they're probably based from a different kind of dinosaur. The original Velociraptors weren't anywhere near as big. But In-Gen called them Velociraptors for *Jurassic Park*, so Masrani wasn't gonna let them change it for *Jurassic World...* the name fits better anyway."

The last part sounded off-hand, but not like it was a bad memory so Sara immediately zeroed in on it. "What'd you mean?" she asked, to all outward appearances fascinated. Or still stuck on the monsters being birds or not.

"The other dinosaur—the extinct, bigger one they probably used as a base?—that was called, um... Achilles-something," Felicity frowned as she tried to remember the name, which had never been one of her strong points as an E.A.

If she weren't so damn good with computers—everything from Google to hacking security cameras and rival companies' computer systems—she wouldn't have been much of a help to Oliver when it came to who he had meet with as a C.E.O most of the time. But her unrivalled skill with computers had, thus far, made up for every shortcoming she might have when it came to the finer points of being a C.E.O's assistant.

"Which sounds sorta perfect phonetically, but the meaning's not meant to," Felicity went on with a shake of her head, "The real base's name means 'Achilles hero,' I remember that. I guess it was named after the, uh, Greek warrior..."

"From the Trojan War?" Oliver interjected as she trailed off, affectively clearing her frown away to be replaced by surprise.
"Uh... yeah?" the blonde answered uncertainly.

"Why would you know that?" John was the one to actually ask him, because it didn't seem at all like the kind of thing the billionaire-vigilante would ever bother to learn. Literally ancient history that was probably mostly made-up—and not likely to be brought back to life by any modern-day mad scientists either way.

The archer shrugged. "The Odyssey's the only book I actually read in college."

"The only one?" John blinked at him now. "When you dropped out of four different schools?"

"There was a reason he had to drop out of all of them," Sara pointed out with a light laugh.

"But isn't The Odyssey about Odysseus? Wasn't Achilles in The Iliad?" Felicity complained, her frown still more confusion when they all looked at her again. "I can't really remember. I read them back in high school."

"Didn't read that one," Oliver shrugged, not looking at all put out by the thought that the one classic he could be proud of himself for soldiering through wasn't even college material in the genius's mind. Instead he looked thoughtful for a moment before he told her, "I think he was a ghost when Odysseus met him?" he shook his head. "Or they were in hell, something like that?"

"The Underworld," Felicity corrected. "That's what the Greeks called it... in Greek, you'd assume. 'Cause they didn't speak English. I don't think I've ever heard the Greek term though..."

"Whatever the real ancient Greeks called it probably doesn't have much to do with any dinosaurs," John pointed out before they could get anymore sidetracked in fictional stories.

Sara smiled slightly as she suggested, "I think she likes that the bad dinosaurs aren't called heroes, basically."

"Right," Felicity quickly agreed, nodding sharply. Visibly pleased that the other woman had followed her line of thought without it even needing to be said.
The former soldier supposed it did make sense, given her justifiably enduring resentment towards the predatory dinosaurs.

"What's 'Velociraptor' mean, anyway?" Sara asked her. "You said it fits better with the modern ones? Even though they're not birds?"

"The modern ones definitely aren't. Doctor Grant thought that by filling in the gaps in the gene sequences, the way the In-Gen scientists did, it might've really changed some of them. Like they probably should have some feathers—"

"Felicity," Oliver cut her off, smiling gently. "The name?"

"I was getting to that," Felicity insisted, then sighed. "In Latin 'Velociraptor' means 'quick thief,' basically." Their genius shrugged, and winced almost instantaneously at another complaint from her poor shoulder. "Not that the 'new' ones have to steal anything, really. They're more than twice the size of the originals, so..." she started to shrug again, but this time stopped herself just in time. "But they're fast and violent, like the name implies..." her voice got softer as she finished, then she was staring off into space for a moment.

That was all the time Oliver gave her before he squeezed her good shoulder again: he'd never taken his hand off that shoulder this whole time, so she wasn't startled by him now but it effectively forced her from the thoughts that didn't look like they'd be pleasant the longer they went on.

"These were the ones you almost didn't get away from?" Oliver asked her softly, still hovering over her all the while.

Making the blonde grimaced again, and repeated. "We didn't get away from them... They got in a turf war with the T-Rex and lost while we ran away." She shuddered, needing to stop with a soft gasp as her shoulder protested. It took her a long moment to make herself finish. "If Mister Hammond didn't drive up just then, though, we would've had to run from that thing again anyway."

Out of the frying pan and into the fire didn't really work, but John's mind didn't want to wander through monster metaphors when they were talking about actual monsters. Actual monsters that they were going to see themselves, with their own eyes, all too soon.

Felicity sighed, visibly forcing herself to focus. "It's not important."
"Felicity—"

"It's not important," she insisted, looking like she was trying to convince herself just as much as the rest of them. "They've got some guy doing it. Training them, I mean. I guess." The genius sighed deeply, wincing when the motion moved her injury, but making herself keep talking anyway. "And that's not even the craziest part."

"It's not?" John asked, because he wasn't sure the billionaire wouldn't keep trying to go back to the memories she didn't want to talk about.

"Then what is?" Sara followed up, the two of them effectively silencing the archer for now as they all waited for their genius's translation of all the science mumbo-jumbo that'd mean nothing to any of them if she wasn't here to read it. Lots of letters and numbers, and not much else.

It took Felicity a few long moments, but eventually she sighed. "They're... Doctor Wu, he's the head scientist at In-Gen still. He was before, when... Well, anyway, he's been working with, um, well cloning, basically. But, uh, not?"

"Isn't that what they did to bring the dinosaurs back anyway?" Sara asked her.

"Yeah. Yes, it is, but..." Felicity sighed. "ARGUS doesn't have any of In-Gen's actual company records here. Hammond was always very secretive about that sort of stuff, and Masrani's worse. There's more than a few companies that have tried to compete with them—I mean the first time, it was basically caused by corporate espionage, so makes sense—"

"Felicity," Oliver interrupted, sounding more careful than cutting. "What does ARGUS think they're trying to do?"

"Not 'think,' exactly." The genius sighed again, closing her eyes. "They have the press release Jurassic World's P.R team's already released to investors, so it's kind of proof. But I think ARGUS just wants to know how much farther they're going to go... and, you know, what they've already done?"

"Thought they had the press release?" John pointed out.

"Which says what, exactly?" Oliver added.
"What they want sponsors to invest in," Felicity answered the archer first. "It's a... a new dinosaur."

After a moment more of thinking about that, Sara asked her, "Aren't they bring back new dinosaurs all the time?" she shrugged. "I thought that was what they did?"

"It is. Bringing back dinosaurs, cloned from the fossilized blood. Yeah," the genius acknowledged. "But this... It isn't that."

"What is it then?" Oliver asked.

"'The next step,' according to the P.R team," Felicity said the words with visible distaste. She sighed. "Before they... the genetic sequences for most of the dinosaurs were never really complete. They were just close enough, I guess, so they sort of filled in the gaps with genes from other species. Like frogs."

"That was why they were able to start breeding, right?" Sara asked her, sounding like she was trying to remember herself. "Cause the type of frog they used can change its sex?"

Both men blinked at her, though Sara snorted.

"How the hell does it do that?" Oliver demanded, eyes wide.

But then John's were, too.

"Some species can do that, how's not really important, but yes," Felicity confirmed, before plowing on. "They used amphibian D.N.A. From frogs. I'm sure they still have some of the original video in some sort of ride though the Science Center there. But basically many of the frogs' key attributes were spliced in—to fill the gaps in the sequences. It's probably why none of them look a lot like birds. Why they look like lizards, instead. They were made to."

"And now, what?" Sara shook her head, sounding suspicious as she asked. "The crazy scientists are putting something scarier into the mix?"
Felicity winced. "You could say that."

"What?" Oliver asked her.

Their genius sighed again, thought about it, then said, "Here, let me just play the video for you..." she hit a few keys, then leaned back and tried to hold the laptop up for them to see as the recording loaded on the screen.

Oliver stopped her, "We can see it fine from here," he told her, his free hand moving to gently push the device back down onto her lap before she could strain herself, his other hand never leaving her shoulder.

Felicity blinked at him, but her eyes went back to the screen as a redheaded woman appeared there.

"Hello," the woman smiled for the camera. "My name is Claire Dearing, as the operation's manager here at Jurassic World, I would like to thank you on behalf of everyone here for your interest in our newest and most exciting assets."

As she went on, different images began to play across the screen—some of them dinosaurs, obviously real photos from in the park itself, and others images either taken under bright lab lights or generated by computer.

"Our D.N.A excavators discover new species every year, and Asset Development works very hard to stay ahead of the game."

The various images of different dinosaurs, one after the other, kept playing as she continued.

"But twenty years ago, de-extinction was right up there with magic. These days the public wants more. Wants them bigger, and better—more teeth. Which is where our advances in gene splicing have opened up the next exciting frontier."

The spiraling images of D.N.A appeared then. John recognized what they were, though he couldn't really identify anything about them.
"We've learned more in the past decade than a century of digging up bones... as our latest asset for introduction is demonstrates."

The D.N.A image seemed to span out into the blueprint of what looked like a monster. And that was just the scientifically sketched representation of it.

"The Indominus Rex," it was a man's voice that went on, and all three of them heard Felicity's soft gasp of surprise, but she didn't stop the video or say anything as the man kept talking. "The world's first genetically modified hybrid. Designed in the lab with the Tyrannosaurus as the frame base. But she will be bigger than her base genome."

The video returned to the red-haired woman then. "Every time Jurassic World has unveiled a new asset, attendance has spiked. Every time, the eyes of the world have returned here. Eager for each and every new innovation and wonder. Certainly nothing less can be expected of the Indominus Rex..." she trailed off a moment, the implication clear as this was intended for people with money to burn, probably trying to lure them with advertising just like they did with sports games all the time now. "Once again all of us here at Jurassic World thank you for your interest. If you do want to be part of history in the making, we will be delighted to answer any further inquiries and welcome you to come see everything Jurassic World can offer you. My contact details are to follow..."

Felicity hit a key that paused the video on her smile, probably cutting off more sucking up via the worldwide web.

"So..." Sara said then. "They've basically made some kind of Godzilla?"

John blinked at her, and snorted, "Hopefully it's not that big. That thing was bigger than the skyscrapers in all the movies, wasn't it?"

"The design estimates it'll be about fifty feet: ten feet bigger than the T-Rex," Felicity answered, otherwise ignoring the monster movie questions.

Oliver stepped around the side of his couch then, hand still on her shoulder the whole time as he sat down next to her, catching her gaze as she looked at him. "You don't have to go, Felicity."

She closed her eyes, sighing deeply as she leaned back into the sofa. "Oliver..."
"You don't," the vigilante insisted. "The deal Masrani made with me means we don't even need his stocks. He has to help me buy back Queen Consolidated, and all I have to do is make you head of Applied Sciences, which I should've done already anyway—"

"Oliver—"

"And listen to him until I can pay him pack," Q.C's C.E.O finished firmly. "There was nothing in my contract about going to his damn island."

"That the two deals go together was left unsaid, but one doesn't really work without the other," Felicity told him, forcing her eyes open again to look at him tiredly while their other two teammates watched from behind the couch.

Where exactly Roy was John didn't know, come to think of it. The newest addition to their team was only around about half the time in general so far. Safe to assume he'd show up with the younger Queen. Roy had already made it clear he was going if Thea was, and probably if she wasn't, too, considering he'd been fond of Felicity from their first meeting down in their team's base, too. And no matter how nervous his super-strength and super-healing made both Oliver and Sara, John couldn't say he didn't appreciate the idea of having backup with that kind of strength going up against the monsters of Felicity's nightmares.

"If Mister Masrani doesn't have to give me his stocks in Q.C, he can throw in with Stellmoor, leaving us back where we started. They won't sell, then, and he won't have to help you buy."

"You said he wouldn't do that," Oliver remind her.

"I don't know what he'd do if we deliberately double-crossed him on this..." she trailed off, closing her eyes again. "I don't think he'd throw in with Isabel, 'cause Lyn really doesn't like her, but he owns enough of Stellmoor's stock to have her replaced with someone he's willing to work with, too."

Oliver thought about that for barely a second before he tried again, "No matter what he says, this monster he's made wasn't in the deal. He can't—"

"So he'll fully expect me to say I don't want to see it, the T-Rex or the raptors." Felicity interrupted. "That's what he said, remember? I get three passes."
The vigilante hissed something under his breath that didn't make any sense to his bodyguard, so he was probably swearing in some language other than English again.

Felicity sighed before he could say anything. "Except now I can't pass," she sighed, shaking her head. "Not if ARGUS wants to see them."

"No." Oliver immediately snapped, eyes shooting back to hers as he continued. "No. You are not making any allowances for ARGUS, Felicity. That's not happening."

"But—"

"Lyla will be with us, obviously," John interrupted quickly, because he agreed with the archer, and hoped her fears never found any foundation in facts. "But Oliver's right, Felicity. She's not going to ask you to put yourself through something like that."

Lyla wouldn't want to anyway. But if Waller really had marked Felicity Smoak as hands-off for all ARGUS agents—something he should probably mention to the team, or at least Oliver, at some point—then none of them should say anything to her either. Though they'd all probably want her help getting into the labs' computer systems—systems she designed—much more than seeing any of the island's monsters up close and personal. ARGUS was shady, and so were their agents. Even Lyla, because she had to be. But shady didn't mean stupid.

Felicity looked over at him again, visibly evaluating what he'd said, to see if in her own big brain it could be true. After a moment she obviously decided it could be, because she relaxed a little. Then she smiled slightly at him, "Are you sure you don't want to go as just another friend, Digg? With Lyla coming, too?"

John snorted. "We'll both be working, Felicity."

"And sharing a room every night," Sara shot him a smirk.

He didn't deny it, instead reassuring the genius, "We'll be fine." Then he looked at the archer, who was still studying their tech. "So I'll give Lyla the all-clear?"

Oliver frowned again right away. "Anything on there about who she's bringing with her?" he asked.
And all three of them frowned when their tech specialist winced once again.

"Um, yeah, about that... there's not all that much on the regular ARGUS agents. A lot of them are former military, like Digg and Lyla. But the um, task force that's gonna be there for back up is... a lot more colorful."

"What's colorful mean?" Sara asked before either of the men could make themselves say it. Not that she sounded like she wanted to know the answer anymore than they did—not with Felicity wincing at it even when she was being careful not to move her shoulder.

"Um...Bronze Tiger? An-And that guy that was trying to blow up the city a little while back. Shrapnel. And..." Felicity trailed off even more hesitantly, wincing as she looked over at Diggle. "And Deadshot, Digg."

John stared at her for a long moment, not wanting to believe he'd heard her right. Then he turned away, heading for the other side of the room as he pulled his phone off his belt again. "Excuse me."

Lyla answered on the first ring. "Michaels."

"Deadshot?" he ground the man's alias out, and his girlfriend sighed. "Deadshot, Lyla?"

"It's a complicated world, Johnny."

"Lyla, I can't believe you're on board with this. Those men are murderers!"

"And what's the number of bodies between Oliver Queen and Sara Lance?" she replied, like it was anywhere near the same thing.

From her it was like a punch to the gut, but John shook his head. "What they do, what I do, is completely different."

"Not really, Johnny," Lyla shot back, just a little less heatedly. She sounded almost sad as she asked
him, "Don't you see that?"

John shook his head, "What I see is you letting the man who killed my brother roam completely free."

"It's not freedom." She denied it just as firmly. "It's work. When they're not out on missions they're in cells. Serving time. And all of them are a long way off from earning pardons."

"It's still wrong." He snapped.

Before he could say anymore his phone was pulled from his hand. When he spun around he wasn't surprised to see Oliver standing there with it.

"Lyla, this is Oliver. Why does Waller want Taskforce-X involved if she's already sending in ARGUS agents?" the vigilante listened a long moment, then shook his head. "Not good enough." He listened for only a second, barely long enough for her to even try to get a few words in, before he said, "All the people I care about are going to be on that island, Lyla, but there's never enough people there for me to feel secure in the fact that your boss won't blow it up anyway."

John stared at him, unable to imagine how the vigilante's mind could've made that leap just from the involvement of some taskforce made up of criminals by what might well be the government's most powerful black-ops division.

"If you really believe that, Agent Michaels, then you don't know your boss half as well as I do," Oliver told her. "My mother's coordinating extensive media coverage with Masrani for while we're there. Along with arranging for all the kids from Starling City's orphanages to be visiting in the same timeframe. I've already had press release put together to explain that to the world, along with every ARGUS secret I know, if we don't make it off that island." He listened a moment longer, then shook his head. "We'll have to agree to disagree on that. I'll give you back to Digg now, see you at the airport."

John accepted the phone back automatically, still staring at the other man as he turned away and walked back towards the couch. Then he made himself shake his head and put the phone back by his ear. "What the hell was that about?"

Lyla sighed, "I don't know what your boss's problem is with Waller, Johnny. But he can't do that."
Looking over at the couch where Oliver was sitting down next to Felicity again, with Sara on her other side just like last night, the three of them talking too softly for him to hear from the other side of the billionaire’s big bedroom, John shook his head. "Pretty sure he can," he told her, frown deepening. "What bothers me more is that you think he might actually have to."

"Johnny, what he's threatening to do could destroy ARGUS—"

"If your boss blows all of us up, you won't be around to care either."

Lyla sighed again. "Waller won't do that," she tried to tell him. Sounding much too much like she was trying to convince herself, too.

"Yeah? Wouldn't think she'd want to cut criminals like Bronze Tiger loose either."

"Or vigilantes like the Arrow and the Canary?"

"Not the same thing and you know it," John told her, waiting through her weighted silence a moment later as she decided to drop the argument: well able to imagine her expression as she worked through the logical thought process in her head.

"Fine," Lyla said a moment later, sounding resigned. "I'll pass the message on and meet you at the airport. Har—Michaels, out." And she hung up on him

John sighed as he put his phone back on his belt again. Things had been going so well between them, but stuff like this—his job versus hers—would always be a problem when they clashed. Though the jobs themselves being the problem, rather than just the complete lack of personal time, was new.

More importantly, Oliver Queen apparently knew a lot more about ARGUS and Amanda Waller than his bodyguard had realized. How that'd happened would undoubtedly always be stuck right next to how he'd managed to join the Russian mob, and everything else he'd done, while supposedly stuck on a deserted island...

"Is she still coming?" Felicity's hesitant voice made him look back towards her.
“Yeah,” John sighed, walking back towards them. “Yeah, she’ll meet us at the airport. Then he looked at the archer, “What’s this Taskforce-X? Besides a bunch of criminals like the guy that murdered my brother?”

Surprisingly, the archer didn’t need any more pushing to answer himself. “Supposedly criminals working off their time, supposedly.” Oliver shook his head. “Easily expendable assets in reality.”

That made sense with what his ex-wife had said; more sense than what she’d said.

“And blowing up the island?”

“She has the drones to do it,” Oliver told her. “Used to send agents, or sometimes mercenaries with rocket launchers around the world, but that was easier to stop then a drone.” He shook his head. “Don’t know for sure, but I wouldn’t be surprised if she’s used more than a few already.”

“But blowing up the island?” Sara repeated the soldiers skeptical question with far less skepticism in her voice. “There’s, what? Something like twenty thousand people there every day?”

“She’d do it, if she thought it was necessary.” Oliver looked away. “Ends justifying means is who Amanda Waller is.”

Coming from the semi-reformed vigilante once known as the murderous Hood, that statement was downright terrifying.

“Great,” Felicity sighed. “So now on top of worrying about something eating me, we might be blown up, too?”

“No.” Oliver told her firmly, shaking his head from side to side. “That threat should be enough to make Waller think long and hard about any of her easy answers.” He sighed. “Honestly, I’m not sure she would do it. But I’m not gonna take that chance, either. There’s a file back at the Foundry—”

“The one that’s named ‘Felicity do not open this?’ In capital letters?” the blonde cut in, raising one eyebrow at him while the other two members snorted. “Nope. I hadn’t noticed it at all... Or at least not more than a couple hundred times.”
"Yeah. That one," Oliver confirmed, meeting her stare for stare.

After a moment, Felicity added. "I didn't open it."

"I know," the vigilante nodded again. "Can you—"

"Make it so your threat's real?" Felicity cut in, then immediately nodded. "Yeah, but..." she hesitated, then asked, "Are you sure you want me to?"

"Absolutely."

The conversation coming back around to that made John frown as he realized a real problem he had with it, "Oliver, exposing ARGUS—"

"There's nothing about Lyla on there, John," the vigilante reassured him. "Nothing about any specific ARGUS agents other than Waller. And some choices she's made." He shook his head. "Lyla might need to find a new job, but that'd be the worst she'd have to worry about if this did come out."

"She won't have to worry about it if she's coming to the island with us," Sara pointed out. "Not if this is only coming out if we die there because of her boss." She cocked her head to the side, then asked their typing tech genius. "Can you really make it that specific? I mean, what if the dinosaurs just get out and kill us all?"

"I can make it that specific," Felicity answered with a grimace. "And 'just' does not belong in that sentence."

"Sorry," Sara replied.

The other blonde was silent a long moment, save for her too-fast-to-follow typing. Her next words were obviously directed at Oliver. "Did you really have to put my name on the file?" she complained, her nose wrinkling in annoyance as she typed on. "I mean, there was no way I could not notice that."

"That was the point," the archer responded evenly. "I wanted to be sure you knew it was there—"
"Then why not just tell me?" she asked, but he kept going right over the question.

"—but that you wouldn't find it on your own and open it."

"*Telling me* that still would've worked," Felicity griped, shaking her head. "You could have password protected it, too. Believe me, I would've gotten the message, even if your password was stupidly easy." The blonde shook her head, and went on without waiting for a reply. "Or, you know, you could've *not left it on my computers*."

"They were mine first," Oliver reminded her, visibly amused. When she stopped typing to actually turn and glare at him, he added, "But I wanted you to know it was there."

She went back to typing. Doing whatever it was she needed to do to make the vigilante's threat against a U.S federal agency feasible. Frowning all the while. "Do you have any idea how annoying that damn file was when we were looking for you last summer?" she asked after a few minutes. "It was like a glowing neon sign saying: *This might be where I am now, but I don't want you to read it so if you have any respect for me you won't.*"

Watching at the vigilante watch her now, John thought it was likely that the younger man hadn't even thought about the file full of government secrets he apparently had saved on his computer. Not in relation to his returning to the island or anything thereafter. He'd probably only changed the name some time after she'd joined up, and then put it out of his mind. Something the former soldier should bring up later, or at least point out to Felicity that that wasn't the sort of thing they wanted anyone to be able to access easily. At the very least she could undoubtedly encrypt it a lot better than Oliver could have.

"And I never opened the damn thing," Felicity added after another second of silence broken only by her typing. Just wanting to get that point—and her annoyance—across.

"She's got a point, Ollie," Sara said with a smirk. "It's like you wanted to drive her nuts with it."

Shaking his head, John asked the tech genius, "Why didn't you just show it to me? If it only said you couldn't open it?"

"I thought about that," Felicity admitted, not surprisingly. "It felt like that'd be cheating."
Oliver sighed then. "I wasn't trying to taunt you with it, Felicity," he told her gently. "I just wanted to make sure you had some leverage against ARGUS if anything happened to me."

Felicity scoffed. "Then the name should've been, 'Don't open unless I disappear against my will,' or something like that. Not 'Felicity don't open this," she shook her head. "If I thought you'd died, I would've made myself delete the file, you know."

The vigilante looked surprised. "Why?"

"Because it wouldn't exactly be respectful of your wishes if I opened it then, when you specifically didn't want me to, would it?"

"But..." Oliver trailed off, frown deeper now.

John and Sara both watched him, and the Canary wasn't bothering to hide her amusement anymore than John was. Though he didn't have a full-blown smirk across his face.

After a moment, however, Felicity sighed. "I'm not sure if knowing now that it's about ARGUS helps or not," she shook her head as she stopped typing and sat back in her seat to look up at the archer again. "Done."

"What?" Oliver blinked at her. "Already?"

"Yes, already," the genius rolled her eyes, "I'm going to choose not to be offended by the doubt I just heard there."

"Not doubt," Oliver told her quickly. "I'm just... amazed you could do it that fast." He hesitated a moment, then asked, "Are you sure ARGUS won't—"

"I encrypted it with a 256-bit A.E.S key—and you have no idea what that is, but basically it's next to impossible to crack without the key. Which is in my head and not based on anything that anyone could ever guess."
"So it's secure," John nodded, relieved despite everything he'd had thrown at him about Lyla's employer today.

"Yes. Very," Felicity reassured him with a little smile. "There's a lot more thrown in there, obviously but bottom line is no one's getting in without my permission. Unless the release is trigged, which won't happen as long as any one of us check in every six to twelve hours."

"How can any of us check in?" Sara asked. "Don't we need the password?"

"No, your phone will confirm your identity biometrically every time the program sends out a check-in call. Like I said, one of us should answer every six hours, but we really have twelve hours. And as long as one of us checks in—"

"The files will stay secure," Oliver interrupted, giving her a smile. "Good job, Felicity. Remarkable."

John raised an eyebrow as she reddened and looked down, but no one said anything as the tech started talking again.

"Thanks you for remarking on it..." Felicity replied so softly John could barely hear her, but that was probably because the words were really for Oliver. After a moment she took a deep breath and continued explaining dutifully, "So it's secure. If ARGUS tries to hack the original file or the system I've set up to secure and release it if necessary, they'll have a heck of a time trying. We'll get a warning it's happening either way—and they'll only get one warning about the program itself before it'll happen if we don't stop it."

"What if they just blow the club up?" Sara asked, shrugging when all three frowned at her, and raising an eyebrow at the archer. "What? You think she'd blow up a whole island packed with thousands of people, but she won't blow up a nightclub? Especially when she could blow it up during the day, when no one should be there?"

Oliver frowned. "I don't think she'd do that," he shook his head. "Like Felicity said, she'd want to know they got the file for sure."

"So she'd send someone in," John nodded, then directed his own question at Felicity. "Why wouldn't they just kill the WI-FI or something like that?"
"That'd work if it was still just on the Foundry computer," Felicity replied.

And the archer's frown deepened. "What? Felicity—"

"I told you, no one is getting into it without seeing the inside of my head first," their computer genius insisted, shaking her head then. "Even if it wasn't heavily encrypted, they'd have to get into one of my dark nets first. And that's even harder."

"If they can't find it, how are they going to get that warning?" Sara asked.

"There's still a folder at the Foundry. That's just not the primary setup." Felicity answered, going on quickly. "Like I said, only one of us has to answer when the system checks in each six hours, and we have up till the next check-in to do it. Not 'do it,' I mean—you know what I mean. So it won't blow up ARGUS automatically, even if they blow us up. Okay?" she only looked a little less sure of herself as she directed the last word, a question, at their leader.

Oliver looked back at her for a moment, then nodded. "Okay."

"What about the thing that the Clock-King used?" Sara asked, shrugging when all three frowned at her. "It could break into any network, right? Not's just bank vaults; that's how it got into yours?"

Felicity sighed, but nodded. "Yeah, I..." she sighed again and shook her head. "It won't work now. Not without triggering the publication."

"So even if ARGUS has one of their own stored away somewhere it won't help them," Oliver nodded in approval again.

John couldn't leave it at that though: he'd been there when their supposedly secure network had been blowing up all around them, after the mentioned villain made their computers suicidal. "You sure no one will be able to—"

"I'm sure, John. Tockman wouldn't have been able to get anywhere with my firewalls without the skeleton key, and he made me startup the system almost from scratch anyway."
"But you've only had a few days—"

"I didn't sleep much last night." Felicity hurried on before any of the frowning threesome could say anymore. "There's not that many people that function on my level with computers, Digg. And most of those that might'd never consider working for any government agency; they want to beat the system, not join in," the blonde reassured him. "Trust me, okay?"

To that he could really only nod.

"And it's tied to both *Jurassic World*'s systems and media coverage, too," Felicity continued tiredly. "So even if we all somehow suffer the cruel and unusual fate of being cut off from all tech it won't automatically attack ARGUS. If a hurricane hits, or anything like that, the timer will reset and pause until there's some indication we should be able to check in. Systems coming back online on the island, for example."

Oliver blinked, "Doesn't that defeat the purpose? If ARGUS hits the island with a drone—"

"Explosions are an exception. If there's anything about explosions and massive losses of life, it'll keep counting down."

John raised an eyebrow at her, "How—"

"The park tracks all of its monsters. And its guests. And the weather—basically they do a lot of digital position tracking. An alert on their computers will give ARGUS a reprieve."

They all knew she meant if a dinosaur got out and started attacking people, but no one wanted to let her dwell on the hopefully very unlikely possibility of history repeating itself. So Sara spoke up again as soon as the other blonde stopped. "I've gotta ask. I don't doubt you're probably in the top ten when it comes to this stuff, but why were you even working in I.T?" she shook her head. "I mean, I get you not wanting to take a job from Masrani, even one that wasn't on dino-island, but wasn't tech support kind of beneath you?"

"I assume you don't mean tech support for the vigilante? You mean at Q.C?" Felicity waited for Sara's nod, then looked away as she answered. "It was boring, but..." She closed her laptop and started to put it away. "But it was predictable, too. Safe."
And Oliver was frowning again, "Felicity..."

"No." Her blue eyes were stern when they turned to him. "You do not get to apologize for bringing me onto the team, Oliver. My choice, remember?"

"But why were you in a boring old I.T job to start with?" Sara pressed.

It was only as she said it—keeping after the subject like a dog with a bone—that the ex-soldier realized it really didn't make sense. Given how good they all knew Felicity Smoak was with computers, she should've been a lot higher up at Q.C, at least. Or working for the government. Something a lot harder than tech support at a big company that only needed a minimal staff for that most of the time.

After a hesitation that looked painful, Felicity sighed. "Back in college I did some stupid stuff..." she trailed off, but then made herself finish with wince. "I was never caught, but my... someone I knew was. It was... an eye-opener."

So she chose a simple, easy job to stay away from both Masrani and anything illegal... but that didn't keep her from helping them even after she found out what Oliver Queen was really up to. Then again, she'd had more than a few weeks working with them—supposedly just trying to help find Oliver's stepfather but helping them out anyway—to figure out in her own way that fighting for their home, saving their city, wasn't something she wanted to turn her back on. It was a conversation John Diggle and Felicity Smoak had had more than once following the Undertaking, but apparently it wasn't something their vigilante himself had put much thought into after they brought him back from the island.

Then again, Oliver's own concerns about whether or not the genius would still be regularly working with them—after he'd agreed to go back to being the vigilante—had probably had more than a little to do with why he'd decided to make her become his Executive Assistant, too. As much as the no-longer-new C.E.O clearly hadn't considered that through from Felicity's perspective, from Oliver's it was more than just having someone he could completely trust in the role. The former soldier suspected it was also meant to keep the genius close if the archer did do something stupid enough to make even her walk out of the team ever after everything else that they'd gotten through at this point. Which only made sense; John and Oliver worked through a lot with sparring every day, but he'd already had to walk away once himself. The early friction between the vigilante and his tech-specialist had exploded very quickly when Oliver planned to go after someone Felicity didn't think deserved to die. It had been a learning experience for both of them, but Oliver especially. And, maybe, something he'd planned ahead for coming back.

"Felicity..." Oliver didn't sound her name out like he sometime would when his emotions were running high, he sighed it like he didn't know what to say next.

The pair of them locked gazed for several seconds before Sara spoke up, breaking up their staring match. "We should head for the airport soon."

Oliver blinked, then shrugged. "It's not like his plane's gonna leave without us, Sara." He raised an eyebrow at her. "But if you want to go tell Thea to hurry up, be my guest."

Sara snorted, "Thanks, but I'll leave your little sister to you." She paused, then added. "But that reminds me, I should probably tell you guys that I invited Sin to come, too."

"What?" Oliver stared for only a few seconds. "Why?"

"'Cause Roy and Thea are gonna be there, too, and she can keep your sister in line a lot more than we can?" the ex-assassin tried, before shrugging. "And all of her close friends are flying off to a tropical island when she's never been farther from Starling City than this mansion."

"This isn't a vacation, Sara."

"Not for us, but it can be for them."

"No it—"

"I already told Lyn," Felicity interrupted before the two could get going. "And Sin was on her way over here a little while ago."

"Does she even have a passport?" Digg asked, since that was both unlikely and kind of important.

"She will. Once she give it her," the blonde with glasses indicated the other blonde.

Oliver only groaned and shook his head when Sara obediently pulled two little passport booklets—
both of them probably fakes—out of her coat to show them off, then pocketed them again.

John shook his head, too. Honestly he was surprised the billionaire hadn't already tried to sneak out of his family's castle without his family. Hadn't just met them at the airport or had them picked up along the way, instead of not putting up any real fight about his mother and sister tagging along for all of this. Then again, he wasn't sure he'd be able to talk Moira and Thea Queen out of it anything, either.

It wasn't like Oliver hadn't tried to convince his sister her club needed her and his mother's campaign needed her. He had. Last night.

Thea Queen's response was that her club was doing just fine: and it already got a lot more attention from her than it ever did from her brother.

Moira Queen hadn't been so sure of her campaign, though she'd clearly wanted to go herself. But after a quick conference call with Walter and her campaign manager—while her children were arguing most of the car ride back to the mansion—she'd announced that taking a few days for a family vacation was judged to be a good thing. Especially if it won her family, and herself, the support of one of the most powerful businessmen in the world.

So Oliver had apparently given up on trying to not let them come... not something John could say he ever would've expected, but he couldn't say the younger man wouldn't be wasting every breath on continuing that fight, either. Adding on one more non-essential civilian barely made any difference at this point.

Knock-knock.

John didn't need to open the library door to know who was there: Raisa, the housekeeper, was the only one he knew that could actually knock politely. He nodded as he held the door open for her, and watched her report to the man who's diapers she'd probably changed at one point.

"Mister Oliver," Raisa nodded to him. "Missus Queen would like to leave for the airport soon?"

Oliver immediately nodded. "We're all ready to go, Raisa. Once Thea's ready, we can leave any time."
The housekeeper nodded back again. "Miss Thea's bag's have already been brought to the car, sir. She and Missus Queen should be down shortly. Mister Merlyn phoned; he and Miss Lance were leaving for the airport ten minutes ago. And Mister Harper and Miss Burke are waiting in the foyer."

Oliver nodded again. "We'll wait with them out front then. Thank you, Raisa."

"Of course, Mister Oliver," the housekeeper bowed her head this time, but didn't leave right away like every expected. She hesitated for a very obvious moment.

Making Oliver look back at her, "Raisa?"

"Vi budetye ostorozhni, da? So deenozavrov?"

"Da," the billionaire replied, making the switch to Russian as easily as he had for every conversation in Moscow. "Konyechno. Vam ne bespokoit'sya, Raisa."

"Nyet. Bood'chto boodyet," Raisa offered a little smile that looked almost sad. "I vse zhe mi boodyem bespokoit'sya."

Oliver's face was stuck between a wince and a smile for a second, then he nodded. "Spasibo, Raisa."

The housekeeper gave him her motherly smile, bowed her head and left.

The rest of them followed her out, and they reached the foyer just in time to see Oliver's mother all but herding her daughter down the stairs. Roy was already standing at the ground level, too, their other friend that'd somehow ended up close with Sara also standing there. Both of them watching the mother-daughter byplay with unhidden amusement as two of the mansion's staff—John thought they were footmen but he'd never actually asked their job—hurried to grab the two massive suitcases the heiress' boyfriend had already carried down for her.

"You know," Sin drawled, not even trying to hide her humor. "I don't think the dinosaurs will care if you're wearing the latest fashions or pretty jewels."

"Sin!" Thea grinned widely, darting around her mother to reach her friend and seize her in a hug.
"What are you doing here?" Then she noticed the considerably smaller suitcase Roy was stealing from the other teen and her grin widened even more. "You're coming, too?"

"That's what the blondes said," the other teenager confirmed, nodding her head towards Sara and Felicity, before giving them an almost shy smile. "Thanks for inviting me, by the way."

"You're welcome," Felicity answered before anyone—like Missus Queen or Oliver himself—could object. "It'll be nice to know that at least some people are enjoying themselves." She frowned as she finished, and added. "Just promise me that if anything scary happens you won't hold it against me?"

Sin blinked at her, "Uh, sure? Promise?" she glanced at Thea as she finished, but the other teenager was busy looking between her brother and the blonde he and Sara were both still hovering around too much for John to even try it.

"Okay then," Felicity nodded, and that was that.

Of course with this group that was never quite the case. 'That' was never just 'that' when there was a multi-billion dollar business and the still very high-profile family involved.

"It might not be the best idea to invite too many more people," Missus Queen cautioned as she reached the first floor herself at a more sedate, stately pace than her daughter. Her voice was all soft concern as she glanced worriedly towards her son and added, "We do after all need Mister Masrani's help."

"That's the only reason we're going in the first place," Oliver ground out, not even looking at her as he answered.

John didn't need to wonder why, of course, but it was still kind of hard to watch. From Felicity and Sara's winces they didn't like it all that much either.

But the billionaire had made it clear to both his remaining family members that he did not want them tagging along for this trip, and both of them had ignored him. Both completely unwilling to be left behind. Thea was confident that her nightclub could spare her for a few short days. And Moira's mayoral campaign could apparently spare her, too, especially since she was working up some sort of P.R stunt to mix in with every other insane thing in this trip.
Oliver didn't want either one of them there at all, but with Thea that feeling was based mostly in the protectiveness of her big brother, and just a little bit in the fact that the vigilante thought of this as a 'work' trip that might involve arrows if they became necessary. With his mother, on the other hand, there was similar protective instincts and caution, but there was also that fact that he just didn't trust her. No, more than that: he didn't just not trust her, he held an active sense of distrust towards. Understandably.

Which was why he wasn't looking at her now, and after noticing that she wasn't looking at him either. The C.E.O's frown was aimed at empty air a bit to his mother's right before he turned back to focusing on Felicity. Missus Queen's eyes shot out towards the waiting car even more quickly. So neither one noticed the unhappy look that Thea directed between them.

John didn't like watching it, but there wasn't much more he could do other than be there for his friend and keep playing his part. The difficult place Oliver's mother had put him—had put all of them—in with her secrets and lies wasn't something any outsider could fix. Only those inside the little family could, and they had to be willing to work towards it and want to do it in the first place.

Missus Queen spoke up again before her daughter could decide to say anything. "We should leave now. We've kept the Masrani's waiting too long as it is." Instead of waiting for any response then, she headed straight out the door with her head held high. She was both secretive and deceitful, to be sure, but the woman really did have style.

"What about Tommy and Laurel?" Thea asked through her frown. "Aren't they coming, too?"

"Yeah," Oliver answered. "They're meeting us at the airport." He gently started steering Felicity out after his mother, with everyone else following as he added, "Along with the rest of our security detail."

Yeah, probably a wise idea to get that out there now, not at the airport later. John headed for the seat by the limousine's wheel while Ricky—Missus Queen's driver—was helping load the trunk. He'd happily give the whole car up once everyone was at the airport, but he'd rather be behind the wheel on the way there. And it was a good place to hide now if the youngest Queen got it in her head that her brother's head-of-security was the one she should be mad at here.

"What?" Thea demanded as she followed her brother out, Roy and Sin both keeping close to her. "What security detail?"

"Mister Diggle carries only a few guns, Thea, and he's just one man." The C.E.O answered his sister matter-of-factly. He waited till he'd climbed into the limo—last, with Felicity deliberately stuck
between him and Sara again—before he finished. "And with what happened there the last time Felicity was there, we'd rather be safe than sorry. So some additional security could be helpful."

The heiress had nothing to say to that, as her mother murmured what sounded like a calm approval.

As he shifted the limousine out of park, John barely heard Felicity’s quiet—maybe meant to be mumbled just to herself—response: "As long as they're not all wearing red shirts."

He heard Roy soft snort of amusement as he started down the drive, and the bodyguard didn't bother suppressing his own grin in the ensuing silence as they were all probably looking at her. Again.

"What?" Oliver finally asked her, and as usual he sounded much more bemused than incredulous.

"Nothing," the tech genius tried to say.

"I believe she was referring to the ill-fated security officers from the original Star Trek television series," Missus Queen probably surprised everyone in the car by saying, then she added. "And no, dear, they should be dressed similarly to Mister Diggle I would imagine."

"Good to know," Felicity replied, only a little hesitantly.

"I thought all the guys in charge wore red," Roy put in.

John didn't let himself snort this time as he finally reached the front gate, which had already been triggered when the gate guard saw the departing limousine's approach, as per usual, but he did have to grin again.

"Not in the original series," Sara told him. "And they went back to it for the new movies, too."

Sin chuckled as soon as the older woman finished speaking, "I'm still kinda surprised you like Star Trek so much."

"What's not to like?" the Canary replied lightly.
The other vigilante in the backseat was noticeably silent. Then again, even if he had ever watched any of Star Trek, his pseudo-bodyguard didn't think the pop culture stuck much more before the island than it did afterwards.

After that little bit of surreal conversation the backseat was mostly quiet for the rest of the ride to the airport. Absolute silence only broken up by small chitchat mostly between the two teenage girls that clearly couldn't sit in silence for a twenty-five minute car ride.

Missus Queen, from what he'd seen of her, would usually make an effort to break the uncomfortable atmosphere, but she must've had too much on her mind. That or she was worried that her son might up and decide to really put his foot down and forbid her from coming before they were all on the plane if she didn't keep quiet.

When he pulled up to the curb at the airport, more than one porter quickly descended on limousine's luggage and John handed the keys to the vehicle off to Ricky without a second thought. He only gave the curbside area two long glances before he remembered that the ARGUS agents, Lyla included, wouldn't be waiting for them out here. So he quickly got to work accepting the boarding passes and directing the group—more herding all the extras, really, while Oliver took the lead—towards the T.S.A pre-checked screening area and on through it.

Oliver only stopped when they reached the first nice looking seating area after the airport's security checkpoint. "Huh, thought they'd wait here." He looked over at his bodyguard. "Did Lyla say where they'd meet us?"

"Just at the airport," John acknowledged, still looking around himself. "Wait here, I'll see if I can find them."

"Who are we waiting for?"

He heard Oliver's mother's question, but trusted her son to handle it as he started looking around for his undoubtedly unhappy girlfriend and the ARGUS agents that should be with her. He found her, sort of, only a few minutes later.

"Your employer is insane," Lyla's voice came from his right, drawing his eyes back to the narrow, shadowed alcove he'd walked right by because it was too small for him to ever fit into. But not too small for his girlfriend. Though that real anger in her voice made her sound more like the woman he hadn't wanted to divorce. Hadn't wanted to, but when she'd served him the divorce papers just before
he was going to deploy for his third tour in the 'Stan, he couldn't not sign them. He'd never been able
to deny her anything, even if what'd she'd wanted was to become his ex-wife. But that didn't mean
he had to back down now, not if what his friend said was true.

"Thought that a time or two myself," John admitted as he met her eyes. "Gotta cut your friends some
slack though, right?"

"Your friend just threatened to compromise my entire outfit!" Lyla snarled it so softly the snarl was
almost all muted. "What the hell does he even know?"

"Wouldn't know. He doesn't talk much about his past. Doesn't talk about it at all really." John
answered evenly, understanding why she was so upset and knowing she'd calm down soon anyway.
That she was only showing this much of her aggravation because he was the one she was talking to
as it was.

Lyla sighed as her innate professionalism began to reassert itself. "Well, according to Waller he could
do it."

"Only if she blows us all up," he reminded her, before glancing at the fit men in suits that were all
watching their conversation from a respectful distance. "Those your guys?"

"Yeah," she sighed again, shaking her head. Then cocked her head to the side. "Where's my bag?"

"Grabbed 'em all at the curb."

Lyla nodded again then turned slightly to gesture her men over, introducing them as they got closer.
"Johnny, these are Jonathan Turner, Rayner Nash, Mark Shaw and Erkin Aycan. Gentlemen, this is
John Diggle."

"Good to meet you," John made himself reply with a nod, before he started back the way he'd just
come from. "We should get going."

Lyla fell in step with him silent, and her men followed behind her without any words either.
After only a few steps the bodyguard had to look at his ex-wife-turned-girlfriend again. "Meant to ask you," he said it quietly. "What was with all the theatrics this morning? You do know where I live."

"House calls are boring, and we could use all some more fun in our lives," Lyla replied just as softly.

He waited a moment, then pressed, "And?"

She sighed, "And, we couldn't be sure Masrani wasn't having all of you watched. This was all put together pretty last minute. Didn't want him to know we approached you and not the other way around."

"Uh-huh..." John accepted that, then glanced at her again. "Fun, huh?"

Lyla's lips quirked into that little almost-smile that told him she'd already lost her grip on her earlier outrage. "Well, like I said, ARGUS has a standing reservation there. For very important assets." She shook her head. "We should've done stuff like that when were married."

"And take time out from our busy schedule of driving each other crazy?" John shot back, and was rewarded with a whole smile just as they reached the seating area he'd left the others at, only to blink as he saw that almost all of the others were gone. "Where's... everyone else?" he asked the two that were sitting there. Oliver and Roy, who were both sitting in the chairs they'd been ignoring earlier, and looking like they expected to be there a while.

"Getting manicures, apparently," Oliver replied.

The bodyguard blinked at him. "What?"

"Missus Masrani found us," Roy explained. "And she wanted to drag Felicity to the airport's salon for a manicure. Wouldn't take 'no' for an answer. All the other chicks thought it was the greatest idea ever, but we were allowed to wait here. Thank god." He was frowning as he finished. "Why does the airport even have a salon?"

"Same reason it has restaurants, bars and cafes all the over the place, and all the stores," Lyla answered him with an amused smirk. "Some people are stuck here for a long time. Gotta give 'em something to do, and charge 'em for it." She gestured off to the right behind them. "The one down
"Yup," Oliver nodded. "Good to see you again, Lyla."

Instead of saying anything angrily about what he'd said against ARGUS, the agent only nodded. "You too, Oliver." She waived the other four ARGUS agents towards the nearby seats, then looked back at her boyfriend. "I think I'll get a manicure, too."

"Really?" John blinked at her.

The former soldier turned secret-agent/spy shrugged. "Can't be the only 'chick' that didn't." She pretended not to notice Roy's wince when she said it, turning towards the sparkly sign he'd gestured at before. "Back in a bit."

John watched her go, unable to wipe the slight surprise from his face the whole time until he saw his two teammates' smirks and made himself drop into the seat on Oliver's other side. "Manicures?"

"Think Masrani's wife is trying to give Felicity another chance to say she doesn't really want to go," Oliver told him, and actually judging from what they'd seen of the businessman's wife that didn't sound too surprising.

"If they go to a bar next I'm going, too," Roy told them. "Don't care if Mrs. M doesn't want you there or not," he finished with a nod to the archer.

"Can you even get drunk anymore?" Oliver asked him, sounding actually curious. Then again, it was a good question.

"Don't know, haven't tried," his protégé shrugged.

"Probably not a great idea," John agreed.

Roy rolled his eyes. "I can always order a soda."
"So, how'd it go with Lyla?"

The bodyguard just looked at his employer for a moment.

"That bad?"

John shook his head. "You did threaten to compromise... the whole outfit."

"Only if they blow us all up." Oliver shrugged. "And if you have the bad luck to have to work with ARGUS a few more times, you'll understand why."

"Yeah," his bodyguard sighed. "That's what I'm afraid of."

"Not getting eaten by dinosaurs or blown up?" Roy raised an eyebrow at him this time, then shrugged when the older man only looked right back. "Bird Lady filled me in."

John blinked at him. "I'd pay you to call her that to her face."

"Yeah, right," the former gangbanger scoffed. "Whatever the hell they pumped me full of made me even more of a hot head and a heck of a lot stronger. Not stupid."

"That or you're learning," Oliver commented with not quite the same almost-smile Felicity could always win out of him so easily. "You shouldn't call Felicity 'blondie,' either though."

Roy blinked at him, then frowned. "She doesn't seem to mind."

"She does." Oliver stated.

John just raised an eyebrow again when the teenager looked at him next. "Had problems with any tech recently?" He nodded as surprised realization struck the kid's face. "That'd be her."

"Huh..." Roy thought about it a moment, then shook his head. "So how much longer does getting nails painted take, anyway?"
"For more than half-a-dozen women?" Oliver shrugged. "No idea."

"Looked like they were almost done," Tommy told them as he arrived and dropped into another nearby seat. "'Course then Laurel sat down, too." His raised eyebrow seemed to say more than the younger brunet's. "Who's idea was that, anyway?"

"Missus Masrani," Oliver answered, not anymore thrown by his arrival than his bodyguard had been.

Roy might've tensed a little bit, but it was hard to tell when he looked ready for a fight most of the time anyway.

"We were waiting for you two, anyway. What kept you? Thought you left for the airport before us?"

"Laurel wanted to call her dad before we actually got on the plane," Tommy nodded when his friend winced. "Yeah. Didn't go that well."

The vigilante hesitated for a solid second before he hazarded, "Are we waiting for him now, too?"

"No thank you," the other C.E.O shook his head and rolled his eyes at the same time. "Laurel said she talked him out of that, and I'm happy to believe her."

"And it'd take him at least an hour to get here," John observed, smirking slightly as both billionaires winced all over again. "Though his badge'd probably get him through security faster."

"Good thing they're done then," Roy said with a smirk, indicating the large group coming out of the lucky salon just then. "Guess one pair of hands goes a lot faster than all the others?"

None of the older men had anything to say to that as they got to their feet to wait for the finally assembled party.

"There, isn't that much better?" the woman Masrani had married was even more beautiful when she was smiling straight at you, and she knew it, too. Though none of them said anything as she showed
them the freshly-painted nails on one hand that could probably model for rings and bracelets or something equally glamorous, though her undoubtedly beyond expensive wedding ring was the only jewelry she was wearing apart from the pearls in her ears. "Thank you for your patience, gentlemen. It just doesn't look as good if you try to apply the polish while in flight."

"They look lovely, Missus—"

"Call me 'Lyn,' dear," she reminded him.

"Yes, Lyn. Thank you," Oliver nodded, still smiling politely. "You said Mister Masrani was waiting for us?"

That made her sigh, but then she nodded. "Yes, I suppose we should get on with it, shouldn't we?"

John stepped spoke up then, "Missus Masrani—"

"Mister Diggle," she cut him off with a warm smile. "Please, you must call me 'Lyn,' as well."

"Thank you, ma'am," John nodded his thanks, a little surprised by how friendly the woman was being towards him: the head bodyguard. Especially in front of so many people. But then again if this was a friend Felicity had kept in touch with long-distance, she'd probably heard at least a little about him and Oliver at some point. "You met—"

"Lyla, yes, we had a nice chat already," Missus Masrani's friendly smile turned towards the other brunette for only a moment before coming back to him. "Your friends call you 'Digg,' I believe?"

Yup, Felicity definitely had told her at least that much. And he almost wanted to do nothing more than nod to that and continue as the simple head of security, but just from what he'd seen so far the protective older woman's opinion really did matter to Felicity, and her influence over her husband was undeniable.

"Yes, ma'am," John nodded a little more deeply then, giving her a little, professional smile. "'Diggle' or 'Digg,' whichever you prefer."
"Thank you, Digg," 'Lyn' nodded back to him.

Lyla spoke up then, "Lyn, these are my men," she indicated the other four ARGUS agents. "I know that's five more passengers than you were expec—"

"Oh don't be silly, Lyla, it won't be a problem at all. It's a very big plane," Lyn said with a smile that somehow didn't seem to be getting old or tired at all, though it slipped into a slightly sympathetic look as she turned her attention back to Felicity then. "Which as Oliver already pointed out, we really should be getting to, I'm afraid. Unless of course—"

"I'm going, Lyn," Felicity cut her off, for what sounded like it wasn't the first time today. "I'm not going to change my mind."

The older woman sighed. "Very well then. If you're sure," she agreed before turning towards a nearby gate. "This way."

"Why an airport gate?" Missus Queen asked her as they followed her towards it. "The private airfields are much more... well, private."

And cheaper probably, too, John thought. Though that wasn't the sort of thing billionaires paid attention to.

"Because it's still February, Moira, and it's very cold outside," Lyn laughed.

"I haven't had a chance to check in with the island's security force about the change in plans, Missus—Lyn," John told her as they were walking down the ramp.

"Oh, you can call them I suppose from the plane," she answered, not sounding very concerned. "They shouldn't give you any trouble."

No. They certainly hadn't so far.

But John kept at it anyway, because so much about all of this was weird. "Five additional bodyguards might be—"
"Many things, but Simon won't say anything against it, I promise, and he certainly won't let anyone from *Jurassic World* object either." The lady interrupted so graciously it could barely be called an interruption. "Any and all security Felicity and her friends feel they need is of course welcome. I promise, Simon will not say a thing against it."

"He won't?" Lyla asked, not hiding her surprise. But she hadn't been there last night, and who knew how much ARGUS already knew. Or didn't.

"Oh no," the other brunette waived all such concerns off. "He's been trying to get her to return for more than half her life, you know." Lyn rolled her eyes as she led them over to a gate. "He's so happy she's finally agreed she could probably bring half of Starling City with her and he wouldn't mind. Though I'm not sure we could fit them all at once. On the island, never mind the plane."

And when they board the Masrani's jet a minute later, the man himself didn't seem bothered by waiting at all. No, Simon Masrani was sitting in one of the ridiculously expensive—and comfortable—looking seats without seeming to have a care in the world as he talked with a Bluetooth device in his ear and both his hands folded behind his head. "Come now, Zara, there is no need to be so dramatic. We'll only be a few days early..." He was saying into as they followed his wife aboard. "We'll only be a few days early, nothing to fret about..."

John didn't want to force Felicity to sit with the man anymore than anyone else did, but the planes setup seemed pretty open so the best she could do was picked the farthest seat away from him if she was so inclined.

The man only noticed they'd all arrived after his wife sat down next to him, the raised eyebrow she shot him clearly a command to wrap up the conversation. He directed a smile towards all of them, still listing to whoever was on the other side of the phone even as he gestured to invite them to sit down. "...Yes, yes. I'm sure there won't be too many more than that, Zara. Tell Claire she has not a thing to worry about. Not a thing. We're all quite capable of enjoying ourselves for a few days... Well they're here now, so we should be taking off shortly, I'm sure..." At another look from his wife while he was listening again, the man said quickly. "Yes, that sounds about right. Just make sure the suites area ready, the night staff can no doubt take care of the rest..."

Felicity flinched even as she was sitting down in one of the seats across from the couple, with the two vigilantes taking up the flanking position they'd been favoring lately before the bodyguard could even try to take one of the seats. "We're getting in at night?" she said it like she wasn't sure if she should dislike that or not.

"It's a relatively long flight, to Costa Rica, and we have to take helicopters to the island itself. Then
"Yes, yes," her husband was nodding along again with whatever the worried person on the other side of phone was saying. "Do tell Claire not to worry. Of course she can call me if—no, no, certainly it would be no trouble..." Masrani paused another long moment, then said. "Perfect. The suites and dinner—Yes, that should do it. Excellent work. Now we're about to take off... You need not meet us.... Of course. Very well, we'll see you in a few hours... Thank you, Zara."

"Everything's ready then?" Missus Masrani asked him once he'd finally hung up by tapping his Bluetooth off.

"Oh certainly, my heart, certainly." Masrani nodded, before smiling at his guests again: all of them now seated. "Good, good. We're all set to go then, are we not?" He clapped his hands together, his smile widening.

"We are, Mister—"

"Simon," the C.E.O corrected once again. "Really, Moira, I might start to think you do not like me."

"I'm sorry, Simon," Missus Queen nodded her head into almost a bow. "Thank you again for this wonderful opportunity."

"No thanks are necessary at all," Masrani insisted, shaking his head from side to side. "It is entirely my pleasure..." he trailed off the lights dimmed just enough to be noticeable, right before the intercom clicked on.

"Flight check is complete, Mister Masrani," a man's voice reported. "Are we ready to take off?"

How exactly the man's timing could be so impeccable was anyone's guess. Though John was sure it had more to do with the plane being already prepared to leave at any time as soon as they boarded.

Instead of answering, the billionaire looked pointed at Felicity, spreading his hands in askance when she didn't say anything. "Well, my dear? Are you ready?"
Felicity sighed. "As I'll ever be..."

Chapter End Notes

OK. I lied last time. They're not to the island yet. But they're almost there! I promise the plane won't crash before they get to Costa Rica... which is where they'll have to hop on either a helicopter, because I can't see a big international jet landing anywhere on that island and being able to take off again and trying to send them there on a boat just seems like another whole chapter I could trap myself in. Maybe it doesn't have to be as big as I'm thinking, and maybe smaller planes could fly to the island, but we only saw a boat and a helicopter going there in the movie, so I'll be sticking to that. Still, they're almost there!

Almost all of the Russian was straight from Google Translator, and the translations weren't listed in the chapter itself because Digg doesn't speak Russian: just English and Arabic as far as we know. But, if you're curious what Oliver and Raisa were saying, here it is:

Translations:
"Vi budetye ostorrozhi, da? So deenozavrov?" = You will be careful, yes? With the dinosaurs?
"Nyet. Bood'chto boodyet... I vse zhe mi boodyem bespokoit'sya." = No. Be whatever will be... And still we will worry.
"Spasibo, Raisa." = Thank you, Raisa."

Again, almost all of that was from Google Translator. The only other website I used was a list of Russian proverbs. I don't speak Russian myself so that's the best I can do. Obviously this was all written phonetically. Mostly because my kindle can still read it aloud to me that way when I'm editing the chapter, but also because it makes more sense to me for dialogue especially to be written phonetically. You're supposed to be hearing it, not seeing it, after all... sorry if that bothers anyone. Though if YOU speak Russian and any of it was truly terrible, please feel free (and very welcome) to correct me.

Thanks.

Many, many apologies for the wait. I really wasn't trying to take so long on this story, but it seems to have its own mind right now, and I'm hesitant to fight against it. Hope the chapter was at least enjoyable, and I'd love to hear any ideas/suggestions about events going forward. All of you have, of course, been great anyway! Thank you! :-)
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The Island of Clouds & Monsters.

Oliver Queen's P.O.V.

Oliver finally let himself give into the protective instincts that’d never really shifted out of overdrive since this whole fiasco began and wrapped his arm around Felicity’s slender shoulders. He’d been holding himself back since he’d woken up as the airplane began its descent into Liberia International Airport, to find his mother watching him and the blonde that’d only dozed off herself after he’d held her for more than an hour into the flight. He hadn't pulled away then, when Felicity was just waking up herself, but giving her some space as they got off the plane had made sense since his mother wasn't the only one watching them.

Sara had taken over, looping her arm with the other blonde's and chattering lightly away in a way that reminded him of Laurel's little sister before The Gambit. Putting Felicity at ease and making Laurel look wistful until they'd climbed aboard the Jurassic World Airbus that'd been waiting for them following a short drive through the Costa Rican city to a smaller airport that was just a bit closer to their island destination. But the busy city with its countless white-washed buildings glimmering in the afternoon sun wasn't what Felicity was afraid of at all. The helicopter they'd ride the rest of the way to the island that haunted her nightmares was another thing entirely.

Somehow she stiffened for a second. Oliver wouldn’t have thought it possible, since she’d been sitting there so still already: her spine ramrod straight and her face frozen as she stared out the window towards their destination. But before he could wonder if he’d made a mistake; her small form melted back into his hold.

Her eyes were still locked on the horizon. Still waiting, still dreading, the coming sight of the island she’d agreed to set foot on again only because it’d help him. The island that’d undoubtedly haunted her nightmares for years, like Lian Yu had for him. Like it always would.

Oliver could hope that Felicity would find the same thing he had: that the island in his mind was a lot scarier than the real thing. Except he’d been able to beat most of the men that'd been the monsters on his island, whereas Felicity and all the poor people trapped on that island when the dinosaurs got loose could've really only run and hidden from them.

The main difference between the islands that’d traumatized them, however, was the time they’d spent there. Oliver had simply spent so much time on Lian Yu that he couldn’t help but have a few good
memories from it, too. Not many, but enough to lighten the dark load of all the other painful memories that’d been born there.

And he’d already gone back. More than once. That first time, thanks to Amanda Waller, had definitely been the hardest. Oliver didn’t think he’d ever forget that first familiar sight from the plane an ARGUS agent had dumped him back there again to make him handle Reiter, Shadowspire and the situation they’d developed on Lian Yu sometime after Waller’s people had fished him out of the water following that final fight with Slade. He’d never forget that moment of stunned recognition: how surprised he was to see Lian Yu again, looking not all that different from the air then it had when he was floating towards it on a life-raft. Followed by the horrified but resigned realization that the Director of ARGUS was making him go back. And he hadn't even known what new horrors were waiting him there, or the worse one that they’d find in truly evil magic.

In the end, Oliver couldn’t deny it’d helped him—evil magical artifacts aside—though he’d never tell Waller that. He would, however, hope that the same would be true for Felicity. That Masrani was right, and making her face her fears was the right thing to do. Not that she’d be doing it alone.

And he really did hope that this all played out as little more than a vacation. Where they could all enjoy a few days in the tropical sun, watch some monsters with all the other gaping tourists, and then go home again. That wasn’t too much to ask, was it?

Oliver grimaced at his own thoughts, because considering the complications added by ARGUS wanting to know how to make dinosaurs, it probably was. And what exactly Waller wanted with dinosaurs wasn't something he was sure he wanted an answer to. Ordering Fyers to shoot down a plane to take out one criminal wasn't even the worst of everything he knew to blame them for. A biological attack that killed thousands of innocent people was worse than just a plain-load of innocent people, after all, and no matter Waller had said about the general Oliver would always hold her accountable for not stopping it. For not preventing Akio's death, and every other innocent life lost that day. That was largely why he'd had to leave that threat looming over the director's mind; because he knew Amanda Waller was a very dangerous thing to do, but letting her send him to another nightmarish island with everyone he cared about this time without some sort of insurance wasn't something he could do. But at least they already knew what the monsters on this island were. With dinosaurs stomping around larger than life, and those very monsters being what ARGUS was interested in, he could hope that there wasn't anything worse like the Alpha-Omega virus or the Khushu Idol hidden in the shadows of this jungle.

“You know I have flown this flight path numerous times, my heart,” Masrani’s grumble was meant for his wife, but the quiet words weren’t too hard to hear inside the well-insulated helicopter.

Especially when no one else was talking. All eyes, after all, were peering out the windows for the first sight of this famous island. Well, not all; several of the ARGUS agents appeared to be catching some shut-eye while they could.
“Yes, I know,” Evelyn allowed, and the way she was looking out the window herself—something about the exact stillness of her flawless face—made Oliver pretty sure she was fighting the urge to roll her eyes. “And if we were flying in one of the park’s EC120’s with your instructor Felicity and I might’ve been willing to consider it. But you were the one that wanted everyone aboard the same flight, my love, and you have no training or experience in handling an EC175 at all.”

“Ah, it can’t be that different,” Masrani protested lightly.

Oliver wasn’t the only one there that winced, and likely also wasn’t the only one that made a mental note to never allow the older man to pilot any aircraft he himself was aboard. While it was true that different kinds of helicopters did have some similarities—they were all helicopters—the differences themselves were more than a little important. Masrani’s completely confident disregard of the fact that those differences were more than just the number of seats the helicopter might hold for passengers was disturbing.

“And, darling,” the man’s wife added, tone still light but pointed. “You still have a few more flying hours to complete before poor Craig can sign off on your pilot’s license anyway.”

Craig, the flying instructor. Masrani’s seventh instructor, Oliver recalled, and again he wasn’t the only one grimacing at the implication of why the man’s wife might call his flight instructor ‘poor Craig.’ To which the eccentric billionaire himself insisted the man was just being ‘dramatic.’ Though he really shouldn’t throw that descriptor around, from what Oliver had seen Masrani himself was the one that was more than a bit dramatic, which was why he fit the description of ‘eccentric billionaire’ better than any other rich man Oliver had ever met—and he’d met many.

So there was some new relief, in the back of his mind, that Lyla Michaels was here for this. Oliver had no training in helicopters himself, only airplanes, courtesy of ARGUS. Digg, on the other hand, was licensed to handle the same smaller crafts that Masrani was apparently ‘almost’ licensed in. But his ex-wife became an experienced pilot back in the army—even trusted to handle multiple aircrafts as needed—and had added a few more licenses to her resume afterwards, while working with ARGUS. So that she was now here playing bodyguard for Felicity, both capable of getting them off the island if needed and undoubtedly more than willing to do so as long as John was with them, put him a little more at ease with all of this. At least it meant he might not have to commandeering a boat, which was one of the other backup plans he and Digg had already discussed.

Oliver tuned back into what the couple was saying when he saw both the pilot herself—along with Digg and several of the ARGUS agents—wince again.

“—yes, yes, Craig will be waiting for us at the southern landing platform,” Masrani said, clearly
responding to something his wife had asked him with mild discontent. “He said I can’t practice flying at night with passengers until I actually have my license,” the man snorted in disgust at the safety-oriented standards. “But for whatever reason there isn’t another pilot on hand—”

“We didn’t give the operations manager much notice, dear,” Lyn pointed out. “Till shortly before we were leaving, we weren’t aware ourselves that a second helicopter would be necessary.”

“I’m a pilot,” Lyla admitted at last, breaking into the couple’s narrow world focus.

Both Masrani’s blinked at her.

Then Lyn flashed a delighted smile at her, “Are you really?”

“Went through W.O.F.T,” Lyla confirmed evenly. “Before I joined the 160th SOAR.”

“Wonderful!” the older woman exclaimed, so clearly as delighted as her husband was disgruntled that it was almost funny.

Oliver probably would’ve been hiding a smile if he wasn’t still wincing from the other billionaire’s blasé attitude about the ability to fly an aircraft. Any aircraft.

The two teenage girls were both giggling a few seats away, Thea hiding her amusement by at least looking in the opposite direction but Masrani didn’t seem to notice that anymore than he spotted the speculative look that Oliver’s mother had shot at the man’s wife. Spotting that speculation on his mother's face again made Oliver contemplate the charming woman that could’ve been a beauty queen in any contest she’d ever deigned to enter.

Evelyn Masrani was without a doubt one of the most beautiful women he’d ever seen: one of those rare few in the world that was even more beautiful in person than they were on the cover of a glossy, airbrushed magazine. That she was closer to his mother’s age than his own didn’t detract from Oliver’s appreciation of that fact, anymore than it likely took away from anyone else’s. Briefly studying her now, he thought she might look a little paler than she had previously, but it’d been a long flight here and he couldn't hold her worry for Felicity against her at all. But a bit pale or not, ‘Lyn’ wasn’t only a trophy wife to the seventh—or maybe sixth—wealthiest man in the world. Simon Masrani adored his wife so much that it was impossible not to see, even during that first meeting over dinner with the pair.
However discrete his father had been with his mistresses over the years, Oliver had known about them from an early age. His memories of seeing his mother's quiet tears weren't half as many as the loud arguments they sometimes had behind closed doors, but he'd always known. If he had to put much thought into it, Oliver might have to admit those memories might have a lot to do with why he wasn't able to commit to Laurel years ago and why he wasn't pursuing Felicity now. No matter what Sara said.

There had never been stories about the Masrani couple though. Nothing about the older businessman straying or playing around after he'd settled down a few years back whatsoever. How happy they were together, even while lighthearted squabbling seemed to turn into slightly more heated arguments when it came to Felicity and this trip in general, he doubted that was the case most of the time. Each of the pair catered too much to each other, even while arguing, for that to be the case. They trusted and respected each other as much as they loved one another, and Oliver didn't think he should be too surprised to find that that was a pleasant thing to see.

What'd impressed his mom, however, he knew was the strong spine behind all Lyn's beauty and charm, however, was even more remarkable. Oliver didn’t doubt it was largely what had his mother so impressed by the woman, though it was really a trait he thought—no matter how much he couldn’t stand speaking with her anymore than he had to these days—his mother and ‘Lyn’ Masrani shared. The strength of will that could shape the world, that could take anything and everything the world threw at them with head held high, was what’d always made his mother a little intimidating, even to him. Even after the last six years of his life.

Lyn Masrani wasn't just strong willed though. She was as easily charming as her husband, maybe even more so. It could be that it just looked that way to the archer because he’d been watching her handle the older man so deftly through all their interactions, but Oliver didn't think so. From reining the eager businessman in as needed back at dinner, to making him change his mind with a quiet comment of disagreement several times on the airplane. Thus far, the only time the two had seemed to strongly disagree about anything was whether or not the other C.E.O could fly them from the airport in Costa Rica to his island by helicopter. And Felicity putting her foot down on whether or not she’d be getting aboard the helicopter had put a quick end to that—save for the continued argument that was almost too mild to even be called that.

Oliver had to smile a little as he remembered that moment of the Felicity they all knew and loved shining through. More in that obviously right stubbornness than the panda flat shod foot she'd put down, though those pandas were a part of her, too. A part he realized now he hadn't seen her wearing in a long time. Not since he came back to Starling City and made her become his E.A, which to her mindset seemed to required high heels, skirts and dresses at all times. Something he had noticed, of course—how could he not?—but it hadn't occurred to him till now that that wardrobe requirement she'd set for herself meant she wasn't wearing her panda flats anymore. At least not until she'd gotten shot and Sara had convinced her that heels weren't a requirement while she was still healing, which she would be for this entire quote-unquote 'vacation...'
Oliver forced himself not to think too much about that right now, not wanting to risk Felicity noticing his frown and getting the wrong impression from it regarding anything at all. But they hadn’t reached their destination yet, so he instead he refocused his thoughts on Evelyn ‘Lyn’ Masrani. Since his other line or thought—regarding the mindset of the woman’s husband on flying—would just bring his frown right back.

It was obvious right away why Felicity had been so relieved to hear the older woman would be coming to dinner with her husband. She hadn’t tried to hide that relief, not even a little bit. But if Evelyn Masrani had always been so determined to be such a good friend to Felicity—much like a protective older sister, almost—then it was easy to understand. And, disregarding every other reason any ordinary person should like or at least admire the woman, that protectiveness she showed for Felicity would’ve won Oliver over even if she was the exact opposite in every other way.

“There, you see, dear?” Lyn turned her smile on her husband. “The second group will only have to wait for the Craig to clear the helipad after our arrival. I’m sure there’s more than one helicopter on hand, yes?”

That had to be true. Since Masrani had been wanting to use that fact as an excuse to fly at least one of the choppers himself before it was shot down by wife and a text from his flight instructor—his ‘dramatic’ seventh flight instructor, from what the couple had said the night before. So they all already knew that there were more helicopters available.

For a moment it looked like the man wanted to argue some more about it, but then he only sighed and shook his head, returning his wife’s smile with a small one of his own. “Of course, my heart.”

Felicity shifted in his hold, just barely turning her head away from the window for the first time since they’d taken off. She didn’t say anything, but her brow had folded just a little bit in what Oliver recognized as her not often seen expression for confusion as she glanced between the two Masranis. Her surprised briefly taking the place of some of all that dread that’d been in her eyes with each step she'd made herself take since they’d arrived in Costa Rica.

Oliver couldn’t imagine what it was that’d surprised her so much—not enough to warrant looking away from the window for the first time since they’d taken off. From what he’d seen, this give and take; a cheerful, charming sort of tug-of-war, was the standard M.O for the wealthy couple. But then again he’d only met them about twenty-four hours ago.

Before he could say anything, Masrani was speaking again. “Ah!” the man exclaimed with a wide grin. “There it is!”
Surprise and confusion disappeared as fear again reared its ugly head; making Felicity’s back go far too straight even as she struggled to keep her shoulders stiff so that she wasn’t shrinking at the same time. That fear—long held from childhood—made her want to do both, but the brave woman he’d come to know would only allow herself the one that could be called courage.

Oliver tightened his hold ever so slightly, sheltering her just a little as she tried so hard to be brave—and he saw Sara catching her hand again at the same time—even while all of them looked out the window that’d held all the genius's attention the whole flight till just a minute before.

He hadn’t been looking out at the wide expanse of blue if he could help it. Once upon a time, all the water that made up most of the world had held no more fear for him then all the rest of it, but a stormy night had change that. Somewhat. He didn’t fear the ocean, per say—years stuck on an island surrounded by it and many horrors much worse had guaranteed that—but he didn’t like it either.

What surprised Oliver the most was that it didn’t look a lot like Lian Yu.

It was an island, of course. Like Lian Yu, there was water all around it. But there were a lot of islands in the world, so in the end that wasn’t that much of a similarity.

The sharpness of the place the Chinese called ‘Purgatory’ wasn’t anywhere to be seen here. The mountainside here was definitely an easier slope than the ones of the island that still sometimes haunted him. In the place he hadn't wanted to call 'home,' and never would, the sharp cliff-lined mountains cut high into the sky. Here it looked like greenery could cling to just about all of the slopes.

The colors were completely different. Maybe they’d be a lot closer during the day, but somehow the shades still appeared different. Or maybe it was the texture? The trees here looked almost soft as they reached for the sky, swaying in the island's easy breeze.

Somehow Oliver was sure the average greenery here would be of at least a slightly lighter shade here, but there was still a lot of it, so the hood he’d inherited from Shado would still blend in if it was needed. Far more so than it did in Starling City, as camouflage went; and he managed there. But there weren’t monsters bigger than buildings back home…

The water was dark. It was almost at that time when flying by sight alone was all but impossible even over land, and over water measuring the horizon unaided was downright dangerous. So he couldn’t guess what shade of blue it’d be, not when the dark blue they’d been flying over had been getting increasingly blacker in these hours after the sun had really already set. But just like they could make out the shape and texture of the island, they could see the water around it in the general sense.
It was sedate—calm, easy waves lapping at the shorelines. The tide that’d carried him away from the *Queen’s Gambit* had all but thrown the life raft up on the beach: far enough up on the sand that the waves hadn’t then pulled him back out to sea in his sleep while he was passed out after spending days in the sun and too many hours trying to hand paddle towards the first land he’d seen. And that same tide had always been a real risk: rough and ripping with a powerful undertow that’d drag you down to the sharks if you weren't cautious. There might be things a lot bigger than great whites lurking in those calm depths, but that thought only made the peaceful appearance all the more surprising.

“I believe this is the same approach you made with John Hammond and the scientists when you flew down the first time, is it not, Felicity?” Masrani’s question startled the blonde, but Oliver deliberately didn’t react when she flinched further into his embrace, keeping his hold steady while Sara squeezed her hand.

Felicity made herself look at the businessman. “I-I think so?” the blonde swallowed, struggling not to let her nerves show. “It… It looks different in the dark?”

“Yes, I suppose it does,” Masrani allowed with a shrug, turning towards the window to start gesturing as he explained, his words clearly meant for all of them to here. “Most of our visitors come in by boat now, as you know. Some cruise lines stop here for a day or two, of course, but the majority of our visitors arrive on our own ferry lines. Thousands come over from Costa Rica day, with at least one boat every half hour from eight o’clock in the morning until the final boat back at nine o’clock in the evening. The Costa Rican government, of course, makes every effort to ensure the process is quite reliable—the tourism is well worth it for them.”

That made sense to Oliver. In a way that a lot of the nonsense thrown at him in the business world never had—that was really what he didn’t like about all of it. Since trying to take over and run *Queen Consolidated*, it’d seemed to him that everything was all pretense and lies wrapped in expectations that couldn’t be met. Or shouldn’t be. The idea that a local government would help a major tourist attraction because that tourism would benefit that government and its people made perfect sense.

Unfortunately there was undoubtedly a lot more to it than that. There’d undoubtedly been plenty of bribes to make sure everything went through at the start—back before the place became part of Felicity’s nightmares when it was under the direction of its founder, John Hammond, never mind when Simon Masrani wanted to engineer its rebirth. A lifetime of luxury bought and paid for had taught Oliver well that money makes things happen even when it shouldn’t. *Especially* when it shouldn’t.

That made sense to him.
Just like his time among the Bratva, with Anatoly’s ever helpful direction, had taught him how things like intimidation and corruption so deeply rooted it actually was the government worked.

Oliver could work with all of that. He could stand strong and stare straight as needed, he could sign checks and give orders. And he could more than hold his own in an actual fight.

It was everything else that didn’t make sense. That public relations meant he should smile politely and otherwise ignore the paparazzi and the rest of the media, save for when his company had something that needed to be said. That it also meant working with local politicians and law enforcement—even when working with them first meant figuring out what side of the law they were on and not necessarily putting an arrow in them if it was the wrong one.

Not that Q.C’s P.R knew that was even an option, of course, but it was a very hard one to hold himself back from sometimes. If not for Felicity, sometimes helped by Digg, Tommy and Sara, he didn't doubt he would've already slipped more times than he should have by now. Because even though the Hood had failed to stop the Undertaking, there were still times—and there were still people—that an arrow made a lot more sense for than any business deal could.

But Queen Consolidated needed some of those deals, and Starling City needed Queen Consolidated—it’s largest employer by far, even after everything that'd happened—a lot more than a vigilante. That was why they were here now.

The sight of some impressive waterfalls—lit up by the facility they were undoubtedly landing at to ensure that nighttime went as safely and smoothly as possible—startled the vigilante out of his thoughts just before the first ripple of turbulence hit.

Fwoom...

“This part’s always a bit bumpy,” Masrani spoke up after Thea and Sin both tried to choke off their startled little screams. “Or so I’m told. The smaller helicopters can land much nearer to the Innovations Center now. But this is where you landed before, is it not, my dear?”

Fwoom...

The question was again directed at Felicity, who had to swallow after the helicopter gave another abrupt lurch, before she could make herself answer him. “Yes,” she said, and that was it.
Oliver couldn’t stop himself from frowning anymore than he could’ve made his arm not tighten aground her a little more. Trying to silently reassure her that she was safe, because he knew better than to try and convince her of it out loud.

*Fwoom...*

“Yes, well,” Masrani went on after another moment’s silence that was interrupted by yet another jolt. “As I said, I don’t normally fly in here. The landing at the main helipad is much smoother. But—”

*Fwoom...*

“—this is quite normal turbulence, I’m told. Something to do with air pockets, I believe,” he paused as another burst of said ‘turbulence’ might’ve made him bite his tongue.

*Fwoom...*

“In-Gen’s Security Forces and the park’s Asset Containment Units both operate out of this area, and these large helicopters aren’t so unusual for them but there hasn’t been—”

*Fwoom...*

“—one helicopter crash on the island yet. So there’s nothing to worry about.”

“Don’t think my stomach agrees with you,” Thea’s friend, Sin, complained as she curled over her lap.

“Tuck your head between your knees, dear,” Lyn attentively advised her. “I know it sounds stupid, but it really will help.”

“Thanks,” the teen grumbled.

*Fwoom—*
“Oh thank god,” Thea breathed almost too softly for her brother to hear, though he could commiserate with both her and her friend, as could everyone here probably. Except maybe for the park’s owner, who already had his seatbelt unbuckled and was clapping his hands together as he stood.

“Oh, there we are,” Masrani enthused while all the rest of them were waiting for it to feel like their stomachs could stop jumping now that they were on the ground again. “Now we need only hop aboard the J.W—”

“Dear, couldn’t the monorail be sent out for us instead?” Lyn cut her husband off, shooting a concerned glance towards the teenager that was still folded flexibly over her own lap. Then at Felicity who wasn’t even trying to look like she wasn’t hiding in his arm anymore. “I know it doesn’t typically run now, but surely the Operations Center could have it over here without too much difficulty?”

“Of course,” Masrani immediately nodded. “Of course, of course. I’ll give Zara a call right now.” He had his cell in hand and pressed to his ear before he was all the way out of the helicopter.

And everyone else slowly started to follow him.

Oliver waited for Felicity to move first. Waiting with her while just about everyone else—save for Lyn, who was watching her just as carefully as he was—before she started to try and stand. He let her struggle for only a few seconds while she fumbled with un-buckling her seatbelt and then trying to find her feet before he stood himself and pulled her with him. He had to let her go to climb down from the helicopter before her, then he reached up to help both her and Lyn down while Digg, Sara and Lyla all took up flanking positions around them. The other ARGUS agents weren’t nearly so obvious about it—though the way they were all carefully studying their surroundings could still be seen to fit with their cover as supposed bodyguards for this insane vacation.

Then again, all of them knew that were actual monsters out there. And no matter what anyone said, the dinosaurs definitely qualified as monsters. Sure, they might not be evil, but the ones that were several stories tall and with sharp teeth bigger than his whole torso were monsters by comparison to any average human. The risk was real enough, after all, to justify a full military installation—even if the Costa Rican government was willing to make Masrani fund the private security force that kept the visitors safe and all the dinosaurs contained here on their island.

All the relevant safety factors aside, the genuine and understandable fear that Felicity couldn’t hide
would make Oliver call the things monsters. He hoped the arm he wrapped back around her as soon as she was out of the helicopter helped her feel a little better. Truthfully, he wasn’t sure what he’d do without any weapons on hand if something bigger than a human threat shot out of the shadows her eyes kept darting between like she thought something really could be hiding there. He hadn’t wanted to leave his bow behind back home, but even a private plane had to deal with Customs—and while that might not mean much coming to a country that probably bent over backwards for Masrani, being caught coming back home to a city where his bow and very identifiable green arrows would be a problem if anyone started asking any questions at all…

Ro-o-o-o-oar!

The primal sound seemed to echo in his eardrum, and Oliver wasn't the only one who tensed. His eyes weren't the only ones that immediately looked in the direction it'd come from—further inland on the island, of course, but far enough off that even the survival instincts that Lian Yu and everything else that'd followed The Gambit's destruction could recognize it wasn't an immediate danger no matter how big the predator that made the sound had to be. That was why he tensed for only a second, till he heard the sound fading, like almost everyone else.

Except Felicity.

She didn't stiffen; she turned into a stone statue in his arms. Tight and tense as all the blood fled from her face in the same instant he was starting to relax. Behind her glasses her eyes were bigger than he'd ever seen them, her pupils dilating too wide for it to be just because even all the lights around where the helicopter had landed couldn't hide the fact that the sun had long since set. If she was scared before, that undoubtedly familiar sound had rendered her downright terrified now.

And before Oliver could react past closing his other arm around her, the damn thing did it again.

Ro-o-o-o-oar!

"Ah, it must be time for Rexy's final meal of the night," Masrani theorized, sounding like the thing that was scaring Felicity so much was perfectly normal. Delightful, even.

It sent a rush or red hot anger through Oliver's veins before his brain made the connection, which was why he didn't snap at the other man as he went on.

"Our ride is on its way as we speak. The station's just over there."
Digg spoke up then. "Rexy?" he asked carefully, his eyes also on their frightened friend as all of them followed the park's owner up the steps that led to what was obviously one of the monorail's platform, since there was a big sign that said: *Monorail Loading Zone.* "As in—"

"The T-Rex, of course," Marani cut in with nod, shrugging slightly as he came to a stop on the station platform.

Oliver was deliberately trying to just focus on keep a gentle but firm, and hopefully comforting arm around Felicity. Knowing better than to say anything about what all of them—or at least Felicity's friends here—now knew. That that ominous, soul shaking sound was being made by the same kind of monster like the one that'd almost killed her when she was just a little girl.

"As I said, our ride shall be here shortly. Just a few minutes to get here from the main station."

Masrani went on, his light tone not sounding quite right for what he'd seen of the man so far.

Combined with the quick glance he sent Felicity's way, Oliver realized the old man was doing the same thing he was. Trying to help her, even if his words weren't really enough of a distraction to make any of them forget that loud, long sound.

"Though Zara did say they might have to reroute it around the few lines that are still running this late."

"Between the hotel and the main station, I assume?" his wife asked him.

Masrani nodded. "Until ten. And I believe the food shipments may be running now. They used to take them out in the early morning instead, but the predators were getting excited then, and waking too many guests up at the hotel. Something like that, Claire said a while back."

Personally Oliver would think they'd give kids nightmares roaring now, too, but he might be bias because Felicity still felt like she was made of marble rather than flesh and blood. Though she had made herself follow the park owner as he'd walked them over here. The vigilante hadn't even needed to carry her up the stairs, though he'd wanted to—not because she'd stumbled but because the almost mechanical way she'd made herself climb each step hadn't made him feel any better than the too little, too fast breaths she was still taking right now did.

"You named the T-Rex 'Rexy'?" the girl that somehow called both Thea and Sara her friends spoke
up then, her earlier stomach upset already forgotten. She now sounded almost amused, though she, too, was glancing at Felicity occasionally.

"Not very original, I know," Masrani nodded. "But when the team we sent to retake the island found one of the old park's trackers still on her and working..." He shrugged again. "Well, we couldn't really ignore that John Hammond had named her that—in honor of one of the gentlemen who died, I believe."

A cold knot curled up in Oliver's own stomach, and he saw the same realization freeze all his friends faces at the same time. But before any of them could actually make themselves ask if he meant that the monster they heard out there was actually the same one that'd escaped the first *Jurassic Park*, the one they were all worried spoke up instead.

"Mister Muldoon..." Felicity's voice was almost too soft to hear.

But maybe Masrani was actually paying attention to her because he looked at her at the same time that Oliver did. "Pardon, my dear?"

The blonde visibly steeled herself with a swallow, still not making any effort to move out of Oliver's gentle, protective hold as she made herself speak up. "Mister Muldoon. He-He was the head game warden for the park then. He called her that... Or, well, Doctor Malcolm said he did. Before he..." she swallowed again, then made herself finish. "He and Doctor Sadler came looking for us in a jeep when we didn't come back from the tour. That was how they figured out what'd happened—that she'd gotten out. That was when they found Doctor Malcolm an-and Mister Genarro."

Oliver hated how far off her still over-dilated eyes looked. The bright, happy blues he was used to seeing barely a frame for her fear in the present and especially in her own mind. He tightened his hold as much as he dared.

Felicity leaned into him a little more for a brief second, then she actually looked at him, too dark, too wide eyes meeting his own with a tremulous smile.

"Yes, well," Masrani sounded slightly more subdued as he went on a moment later. "It seemed only right not to rename her after the fact."

"Mister Masrani!" a man's voice called from behind them, and they all turned to see a somewhat bulky man bounding up the steps at an easy jog. "Welcome back, boss!"
"Thank you," the park's owner replied with a nod.

Suddenly he looked like the same stern businessman that'd shot Isabel down at the dinner table the night before.

Oliver blinked as he realized he had recognized a definite change there that surprised him. Because it made him remember that the man who was acting as their host was truly playing that part with them, rather than that of the world-renown businessman that'd made even Isabel Rochev wary. This stranger didn't seem to find the sterner man he was facing strange, so it was very likely that this was the man most of his employees were more used to.

And Oliver wasn't exactly sure what he should think about that. He knew that there were more elaborate masks than the grease paint he wore under his hood. That there were ones made of expectations and deception, that he didn't wear half as well as his mother did. But seeing the older, much more successful businessman slip such an act on so effortlessly did make him wonder whether he wanted to or not.

"Vic Hoskins, with In-Gen," the man introduced himself with a friendly grin that looked more than a little fake.

"I know who you are," Masrani answered evenly.

Hoskins nodded like that didn't surprise him, still wearing that fake-looking grin. "Heard you'd be here a bit earlier than expected," he went on, spreading his hands. "Hoped you might have some time to—"

"I have already committed myself to the island's routine inspection at the end of the week, Mister Hoskins," Masrani interrupted sternly. "Your project, like everyone else's, can certainly wait till then."

"Of course, of course," the man agreed, raising his hand for a second in a feigned gesture of surrender, but they dropped back to his side right away as he went on. "But if you could authorize a field test before—"

"Absolutely not."
This time the flat, steely interruption made the man blink. "Sir, we need to—"

"Your program was to test the creatures intelligence, as I understand it." Masrani cut him off again, voice still steadily stern in that made all of his guests wonder where the happy-go-lucky man they'd flown in with had gone. "While the handlers have had some successes, there have been far more failures, yes?"

Hoskins grimaced and sighed, "Only 'cause the handlers have to spend all their time with the animals right now, and even the gents we pulled from the military aren't all that great at sending in regular reports."

"Every incident report Mister Grady has filed has crossed my desk, I assure you," Masrani shook his head. "And there have been far too many, as each incident could have resulted in lives lost far too easily."

The man held his hands up again, "Sir, no one can deny the animals are dangerous, but—"

"No, they cannot," Masrani cut him off again, nodding firmly. "But this is not the time for this conversation." He gave one firm shake of his head then. "I intend to both look into your project personally, and speak with Mister Grady as well, at the end of the week. Now, I have guests."

Hoskins looked at them, hiding his frown with a smile just a blink too late. "Okay, boss." The smile he directed at the group in general couldn't have looked more forced. "Sorry to interrupt. Have a nice night, everyone."

"Thank you," Masrani returned, nodding again just as a faint vibration through the platform warned them of their transportation's arrival. "And here is our ride."

Or maybe it wasn't all of employees that made him stern and standoffish like this. Maybe it was just the ones that he didn't particularly like. He very clearly hadn't had the time of night for Isabel, which was understandable given his decision to supposedly help them stop her from destroying Q.C. And, of course, the yet unexplained animosity between Isabel Rochev and Missus Masrani. Oliver could see that being the case, as he didn't particularly care for this man from In-Gen himself, but he thought that might be because Hoskins reminded him a lot of Conklin. Reiter's second had left a sour taste in his mouth from the moment he'd met, and that first impression had proven accurate more than once long before the man had started trying to have him killed. Then again, it could also be the way Felicity had all but cringed into the archer's hold when the new man had looked at her.
A glance down the rail that led out of the nearly completely encased station, to see a sleek silvery machine that looked a lot like a train came speeding towards them, slowing to a stop just as it entered the station itself.

"All aboard," Masrani encouraged as soon as the doors opened. His eyes stayed on Hoskins' till the In-Gen man had started back down the stairs. The slight downturn to the edges of his mouth told them he probably would've kept watching longer, but when no one wanted to board before him—other than some of the ARGUS agents posing as bodyguards securing the train—he led them on with a grin that had to be at least a little fake but not in the same way as his employee's had been. Inside the pleasantly cool, well-lit interior, he turned towards the front but deliberately didn't go all the way there himself, instead waiving the rest of the forward.

Oliver didn't let himself breathe a sigh of relief as soon as he and Felicity had taken their seats. He'd wanted to because watching the park owner interact with his too-eager and not particularly likable employee had apparently distracted her from her fear for the moment. He kept his arm around her anyway, and nodded his approval as he saw Sara walk by to stand in front of them, holding onto one of the handrails, while Digg and Lyla took the seats immediately behind them. Ensuring that Felicity was surrounded by people that should make her feel better.

Even Roy had sent her a concerned glance more than once, but he followed Thea's lead: sitting with her and Sin further back. The kid really could keep his sister safe, after all.

And at this point Oliver was starting to wonder if their protectiveness would ever start to feel like too much to their tech genius. So far it hadn't, but while that'd be out-of-character for her normally she was here to face her greatest fears. As she'd started to relax on the platform—at least enough to start trembling then—he couldn't help but hope she'd start to feel secure enough soon to act more like herself. Like all the others, he'd keep doing everything he could to protect her either way, but her own fears were something only she could fight.

"Please stand clear of the doors," an automated voice came from all around them, continuing as said doors closed with almost no sound at all. "And make use of the handrails when not seated. The monorail will now depart. Thank you."

Lyn spoke up as the train took off. "I thought you were going to shut that project down?" she asked her husband with a frown. "At least that crazy idea?"

"You know it's never as simple as that, my heart," Masrani told her quietly, before he turned a grin on them all. "During the day, the monorail leaves each station every twenty minutes at least. More often when it's busy, I believe the noon shuttles can complete the full circuit in under an hour..."
"That's the Express, dear," his wife interjected when he trailed off. "And this isn't part of the same system exactly. Remember, the monorail from the south station takes everyone to the main station or the hotels, where they may board the island circuit at their leisure."

"That's right," Masrani nodded his agreement. "Yes, and we shall be getting off at the hotels, of course. I believe Zara shall be greeting us there." At the look from his wife he added, "It was either her or Claire, my heart, and I did tell them it wasn't necessary."

Lyn shook her head, and she might've rolled her eyes as she looked away but Oliver couldn't be sure.

"Is this our stop?" Laurel asked suddenly, making the couple and everyone else glance outside even as the monorail didn't even slow down at what was obviously another station.

"No, that was the Botanical Gardens," Masrani told them.

"Gardens?" Roy questioned skeptically.

"Dinosaurs weren't the only life forms destroyed by the impact of the Chicxulub Asteroid, my friend," Masrani told him, shaking his head. "There were plenty of plants wiped out as well. Our geneticists have been working with several paleobotanists, including Doctor Sattler-Degler, to bring back as many of the plants that existed at the same time as the dinosaurs as possible. They reached two-thousand plants just last month."

Ro-o-o-o-oar!

Felicity, having relaxed a little at the talk of something other than dinosaurs, stiffened again in his arms, but she noticeably didn't let herself sink down into her seat.

The sound was slightly muffled; undoubtedly as a result of the train's not quite complete sound-proofing. But they were also, obviously, headed towards it.

Oliver found himself frowning again at the realization that wasn't really a surprise.
"Huh, it doesn't sound that much like a lion," Sara spoke up before he could think of anything to say that might make their friend feel better. She shrugged when almost everyone—some of the ARGUS agents being the only exceptions—looked at her curiously. "I thought it would. Kinda."

"No, it does not." Masrani laughed lightly, pausing a moment to risk a quick glance towards Felicity's still tense form before going on. "I've been told many of the sounds our dinosaurs make quite frustrate modern zoomusicologists. I believe the current creatures' sounds being compared to the Tyrannosaurus are: elephants, alligators, tigers, whales and canines."

"Okay, the alligator and tiger I get," Thea interjected, wrinkling her nose, "But why would they compare them to elephants or whales?"

"Size?" Sin suggested with a shrug.

"Why would they compare the dinosaurs to any other animals like that?" Roy interjected with an equally confused frown.

The park's owner only laughed again. "I never quite understood the comparisons myself, though I do believe it is merely meant to be another comparison, such as those regarding their lifespan. Or size, as Miss Porter said. If you are truly curious, there is an exhibit regarding the various studies in the Innovation Center, of course."

"Alligators are supposed to be the only original descendents of dinosaurs left in the world, are they not?" Moira asked, looking more curious than confused. "Before your scientists began bringing them back, of course."

"Of course," Masrani nodded. "And yes, though there's a fairly popular theory that many birds may also have prehistoric ancestor as well."

"That doesn't make any sense either," Roy grumbled, almost too softly for everyone to hear him, but not quite.

Ro-o-o-o-oar!
The same roar echoing across the island—and closer yet again—made Felicity's back go ramrod straight again, too, but Oliver liked to think it hadn't scared her quite as much this time. At least this time she relaxed—or hid—almost immediately into his side.

"It's not gonna do that all night, is it?" Thea asked, frowning at Masrani, though she shot Felicity a concerned glance as she waited for his reply.

"No, no, certainly not," the other businessman reassured them. "As I said, she's likely anticipating her final meal of the evening, which should arrive shortly."

Lyn seemed surprised again. "I thought they were nocturnal predators?" she asked her husband.

"Judging by their behavior when allowed to roam free—on the other island, Isla Sorna—yes, that seems to be the case," Masrani shrugged. "However we can't have our guests kept up all night, and I'm told none of our predators mind their feeding routines anymore."

That meant they did at one point, in Oliver's mind at least, but as long as they stayed in their cages that shouldn't matter...

Masrani glanced at his watch before nodding, "Yes, I believe her last feeding is in just a few minutes. She should settle down shortly afterwards."

Oliver felt Felicity shudder ever so slightly in his hold, and he tightened his arm around her shoulders without even thinking about it. Thinking that the older man had better be right about that thing not roaring all night long. Because he already had plenty of reasons for wanting to get all of them on another helicopter headed straight off this island, and they'd just gotten here. If the man wanted them to stay any number of days here, if he really wanted Felicity to have any chance of overcoming her 'childhood fears' at all, then they were going to need to sleep safely, and soundly, at night.

Oliver didn't mind holding her at all, but the way she was almost hiding in his hold wasn't like the brilliant, bold woman he'd come to know. Not that he didn't understand. Long held fears, no matter how old, could be almost impossible to shake off once they'd seized you in their paralyzing hold again. All the relevant factors regarding how dangerous all of these dinosaurs might be based on size alone only made it more understandable.

They really were monsters. Oliver couldn't deny that in his mind. Not when Felicity's fears made her unable to even try to move away from him. Yeah, she was still walking on her own earlier—still
taking every step herself—but those steps were mechanical. Each one made because it had to be
done. Even when she wasn’t tensing up or trying to make herself relax again after she’d tensed, she
couldn’t completely hide her genuine fear as her eyes kept darting towards every shadow was
quickly making him hate this place and all its monsters.

"Ah, here we are," Masrani gestured ahead of them, and they all turned to look at what their ride was
carrying them towards. A gigantic pair of wooden doors that seemed to be framed on either side by
stone pillars and a bunch of flaming torches.

"Weren't those in King Kong?" Roy chuckled, his words once again not quite quiet enough to
escape the ears of everyone on board. Not that he likely cared. Even before his words earned him an
amused snort from Felicity, and one that actually turned into a little smile that the teen was
understandably proud of causing, and probably had a lot to do with why Masrani was smiling
through his protests, too.

"No, they weren't," the billionaire laughed. "However, they were made of reclaimed wood from the
original park's gates."

The doors, at least, didn't seem to frighten Felicity more. Though Roy's comment may have had
more than a little to do with that, so Oliver shot him a small smile as the doors opened ahead of them
and the train passed underneath the iconic sign.

"Welcome to Jurassic World," Masrani declared as they did so.

RO-O-O-O-OAR!

Felicity's flinch might not have been quite as pronounced this time, even though the damn dinosaur
sounded even closer.

But then they were rounding another bend in the track that brought them in sigh of what was
obviously there destination. The hotels would be around all the other buildings that made up the
islands tourist trap of a town—or a city. All around a massive manmade lagoon that he remembered
was where the aquarium for the park’s biggest predator. A marine dinosaur bigger than the largest
whales out there, that was fed full-size great white sharks. It looked like the track might be headed
straight for that wall that not hazard-free area, but someone clearly thought better of that because the
track split two ways just before they got there: their ride taking them off towards the right and starting
to slow only moments later. Enough so that they didn't speed straight by all of the recognizable signs
—Hilton, Starbucks, Pandora, and many, many more—as they slowed to a stop at the next station.
"Here we are," Masrani said as he stood up, offering a hand to help his wife up while he looked at the platform they were stopping at and nodded just as their ride did in fact stop. "And there's Zara."

"Thank you for visiting Jurassic World," the automated voice declared while their transport was still holding them captive because the doors hadn't opened just yet. "We hope you have a safe and enjoyable stay with us and invite you to stay with us here at the Hilton Isla Nublar Resort, the only resort with a footprint in the Jurassic era. There's no other resort like it on Earth."

Oliver rolled his eyes even as he stood, helping Felicity to her feet and then wrapping his arm around her again. Ignoring his mother and sister's eyes this time because it didn't matter now. He'd take all of their questions later—or at least Thea's—if he was able to help Felicity feel even a little safe right now.

"Mister and Missus Masrani, welcome back," the lone woman on the otherwise empty platform greeted them all with a wide smile and a noticeable English accent. "And welcome to Jurassic World, everyone!"

"Thank you, Zara," Masrani replied with a nod, already headed for the nearby stairs. "I trust our rooms are ready for us?"

"Of course, sir," the Englishwoman nodded. "And a late dinner will be served in just under an hour at the Pterodactyl Terrace, unless you'd like it later?"

"No, no," the C.E.O waived the suggestion off. "An hour will be fine, I'm sure. These are our rides?" he indicated the cars at the foot of the stairs they were headed down. One long limousine with the driver already opening the nearest door for them, and on either side an S.U.V with a man wearing what was probably the park's security uniform waiting to drive them.

"Yes, sir," Zara confirmed again. "Miss Dearing would like—"

"To take the night off as she had planned and more than deserves," Masrani interrupted firmly. "As I already said, I am here several days early and have no plans to get to business just yet."

"Of-Of course, sir," the Englishwoman agreed, forcing a professional smile to hide her discontent. "I understand there are several additional security guards accompanying our guests?"
"Yes," Lyla spoke up then, and gestured to the front S.U.V. "Those ours?"

"Yes, ma'am," 'Zara' blinked at her, but she was nodding at the same time. "Our head of security has prepared a briefing packet for you." She shifted to offer one of the portfolio's she was carrying to the lead ARGUS agent, who accepted it but tucked it under her arm instead of opening.

"And when will I be meeting him?"

The Englishwoman didn't blink this time, "Mister Hoskins can—"

"Never mind, already met him," Lyla cut her off, sending a frown towards Masrani. "He's in charge of the park security?"

"Yes," the C.E.O's bland expression was almost a statement all its own after the short conversation they'd witnessed only minutes ago. "Mister Hoskins is responsible for In-Gen's Security Forces, specifically. You may like to meet with him at some point if you have any interest in what measures we have in place for extraordinary circumstances. For now, however," he caught Zara's worried gaze then. "I believe Miss Michaels and Mister Diggle would be more interested in meeting with the head of Asset Containment, as well as Miss Dearing, as she is our operations manager."

Zara didn't bat an eye this time, "Of course," she nodded to him first, before offering Lyla a nervous smile. "Would this evening at dinner do?"

The ARGUS supervisory agent nodded. "I will need to speak to Mister Hoskins at some point, too. First thing in the morning, if possible?"

Oliver didn't need to stop his eyes from narrowing, because he wasn't surprised. If In-Gen's Security Forces were the military-like mercenaries who's based they'd just landed at, then it was very likely they were exactly who ARGUS was worried about storming in if they set off the wrong alarms. Making the man come here to meet with her now would likely make him as unhelpful as he was willing be when Masrani was practically bending over backwards for them. So Lyla would meet with him in the morning instead, and hopefully be able to wrap up whatever the hell ARGUS wanted here soon, and with the rest of them none the wiser.

"Of course," Zara agreed again, then quickly added. "Your security I.D's are inside the packet as well. You will need them to access some of the park's security features if needed, though the party's
V.I.P badges have also been granted across the board access, as you insisted, Mister Masrani."

Awful trusting of the man, but then those badges probably had the same tracking chips in them that
the wristbands most people would be wearing around the park would, too. And Masrani did seem
determined to make sure they had no cause for complaint at all here, though each time that fact
became clear Oliver had to wonder why exactly the man was so invested in this. Helping Felicity
overcome her fears was something he could respect, as was honoring a dead friend's last wishes, but
somehow Oliver still found himself wondering if there was more to all of this...

"Very good," the park's owner was busy approving again.

"Thank you," Lyla nodded back to her, before she looked at her men. "Shaw, you're up front with
me. Turner, Nash and Aycan, take the rear." Then she looked at Diggle and raised an eyebrow.
"Mister Diggle?"

"I'll be in the limo, Miss Michaels," Digg responded professionally, then he started to walk around to
the other side of the long vehicle while the ARGUS agents headed for their S.U.Vs.

"Excellent," Masrani enthused, looking honestly pleased. "Well, everyone in then," he indicated the
open door of the stretch limo to the group at large, before refocusing on Zara again. "Will you be
riding with us, Zara?"

"Yes, sir," the Englishwoman nodded again, going on to explain, "I still have the V.I.P access
material to go through."

"Of course," the C.E.O agreed as he watched the teenagers climb into the limousine, before he
gestured for all the ladies to go first after them.

Oliver's mother waived the assistant ahead of her, but went ahead when Lyn was clearly waiting for
her to go. The Masrani's surprised him a bit by climbing in next, leaving the backseat for Oliver,
Felicity and Sara without a word on the matter. But then maybe they hoped that not having to sit
sideways or backwards would help Felicity feel better, just like being surrounded by her protective
friends might.

Whether it worked or not, Felicity still noticed the effort and offered a small 'thank you' to all of the
limousine's occupants as the door was shut behind them. Receiving nods from all around while the
driver climbed in up front, Digg taking the front passengers seat. Then they were off. Driving
through the small city's streets at a speed that was almost slow enough to make it more worthwhile to walk, the vehicles detouring from the streets that were still crowded with people even in the evening hours, but sometimes slowly rolling down others, undoubtedly more wary of the sheer number of children around more than anything else, though even the adults couldn't entirely be trusted to keep to the crosswalks and walkways when it was obvious that very few vehicles were actually allowed to be driving around this part of the island.

"This is our Main Street, it continues all the way around the lake," Zara informed them, obviously slipping into the role of tour guide after a few hesitant glances at her employer to be sure he didn't want the role for himself. "At present we have thirty-seven different shops here, as well as twelve sit-down restaurants and eight cafés. Three of the monorails twelve standard stops are here, as well as the entrances to nine of our most popular exhibits."

"Thank you, Zara," Masrani spoke up again as she paused, "But there is no need for that now, we can certainly start with a tour tomorrow morning. I'm sure you included all of the necessary information in the portfolios?" he asked, gesturing to the leather-bound folders she was still clutching tightly as if afraid of dropping them.

"Yes, sir, of course," the Englishwoman immediately agreed again, visibly forcing herself to relax enough to loosen her hold a little as she handed out the indicated folder.

Oliver intercepted them, taking the whole stack from her with one hand and a nod of thank you. Passing them out more readily than the deferential woman was likely to feel comfortable doing, he somehow doubted this was usually part of her job description but didn't care enough to ask.

"Thank you, Mister Queen," Zara returned his nod, before forcing a smile for the whole car as she went on. "By lucky chance, all of the top-tier suites happened to be available at this time," she looked towards Masrani. "We've readied them all, of course, and the Hammond Suite—"

"Is where Felicity will be staying," the park's owner interrupted firmly, making his employee blink again, but also managing to rouse Felicity at last.

"What?" the blonde blinked at him, too, before shaking her head so fast her ponytail softly whipped the size of Oliver's neck even as she stopped to talk. "No, that's really not—"

"I insist," Masrani said firmly, holding her eyes for a moment, "Though you will no doubt feel the need to share. How many rooms does the suite have again, Zara?"
"Four bedrooms, sir."

"There, you see?" Masrani told their tech genius, "Evelyn and I have no need to keep four bedrooms all to ourselves. And remember this trip is for you, my dear." He reminded her, and for almost half a second it looked like Felicity wanted to argue with that, but she held back with a sigh.

Oliver, meanwhile, was again finding himself starting to like Simon Masrani a little more. It would've made perfect sense for the businessman and his wife to take what was undoubtedly the best of the hotel's suite. He could've merely offered one of the additional bedrooms to Felicity, and all but obliged her to take it. Instead, he was putting her in complete control of the space, and that was something the vigilante could see helping Felicity feel at least a little better, so he respected the action. Even if it would've been easier and expected for him to insist on taking the third bedroom. Instead, he raised an eyebrow at Sara.

The Canary rolled her eyes in returned, but followed it up with flashing a smile at their friend. "So?" she teased lightly. "Who here are the three you least despise?"

Felicity frowned at her, "I don't..." then she trailed off, rolling her own eyes. "Would you like to stay with me, Sara?"

"Love to," the ex-assassin agreed, grinning.

Felicity hesitated for a very noticeable second before she glanced up at him, a clear question in her eyes.

One that Oliver would've liked nothing more than to agree to, to take charge of this responsibility she didn't want. But he knew that Masrani was right to give her this authority, complete control of at least where she'd be sleeping. So he waited for her to ask.

"So you and Sara, an—"

"Oops, forgot that hadn't come up already," Sara cut in, still grinning, though anyone who knew her well could see it was at least a little bit forced. "Ollie and I broke up, so he can take the third room. Unless you're already sick of him?"

They all watched Felicity's brow furrow in consternation. "You did?" she glanced between them as
she said it, starting to pull away a little from his comforting hold as she looked between them in confusion.

Oliver only let her go so far, and he was glad when she didn't try to go farther.

"News to me, too, Smoaky," Tommy told her, though unlike Laurel that news wasn't making him frown as he watched the exchange. He was grinning as easily as Sara was. "But they're not at each other's throats, so you're probably safe with them still."

The hidden meaning didn't escape their genius, and she nodded slowly. But she didn't relax back into his embrace all the way. Like somehow the realization that Sara didn't mind sharing her boyfriend because he wasn't her boyfriend anymore made their friend more self conscious again. And Oliver hated to see it, even though he had been thinking only a few minutes ago that he hoped to see her starling to come out of her fearful shell soon. This wasn't what he'd been thinking of at the time, not at all. She wasn't trying to escape the arm he still had around her shoulders, but she wasn't as comfortable there as she'd been barely a few seconds ago either.

Instead of focusing on that, however, Felicity looked towards the front seat. "Digg, are you..."

"Yeah, Michaels and I'll take the fourth room," Diggle agreed when she trailed off. Normally the bodyguard would comment from the front seat at this point, if not a while earlier. But this was still a business vacation for the company they were all working to save, and it wasn't just their team here, so he was playing the part of professional bodyguard to the hilt and staying stoically silent from the front passenger's seat. "We can divide the extra guards between the other suites, too."

Oliver didn't let himself smirk at the idea. He was sure that the ARGUS agents wouldn't like it, but they were here posing as security for this group's safety. So they wouldn't be able to complain. And this way they'd be able to keep eyes on Agent Michael's crew.

Felicity nodded her agreement as she looked at the woman that'd been waiting to welcome them to the park. "How many suites are there?"

"Four, miss. The Hammond Suite, the Masrani Suite, the Grant Suite, and the Muldoon Suite. There are, of course, several other suites throughout the resort but these are the four that make up the top floor of the Hilton tower."

It was easy to see Felicity did the math very quickly in her head when the numbers were mentioned,
but the names gave her pause. "We don't need four, do we? Not if they all have four bedrooms."

"Perhaps not, however it is better we take the whole floor than not," Masrani told her helpfully. "I think we will take our namesake this time. Seems silly to say it, but I've never actually stayed there myself," he told them, chuckling lightly. "Perhaps Moira and Thea shall stay with us?"

"We would be delighted," the Queen matriarch agreed calmly.

"And another pair of guards, I suppose," Masrani nodded. "I'm afraid I only caught Mister Diggle and Miss Michaels names."

"That leaves the rest of the kids with us," Tommy observed, with a nod towards Roy and Sin, then a shrug. "And the last suite empty, like Smoaky said, if the other guards are staying with us."

"Perhaps the Muldoon Suite may be given over to your guards when they are off-duty?" Masrani suggested with a shrug. "Seems a shame to make them pair up when we have plenty of room."

Which completely destroyed the plan to not give the ARGUS agents anywhere to meet privately, but at least the role they were playing would force some of them to stay with them at all times. Oliver doubted that'd keep them from causing at least some trouble, but then again if they kept the group to tied up Lyla could insist on calling in more men. And considering the fact that he was pretty sure there was already another ARGUS group here, or there soon would be—and who was in that group—giving them any reason to make more trouble wasn't a great idea.

RO-O-O-O-OAR!

This was definitely the loudest they'd heard, and while Oliver didn't think the car shook he couldn't be sure because Felicity definitely was again.

"Is that thing ever gonna stop?" Digg complained, breaking his stern professional silence. Drawing a surprised blink from the Englishwoman, who answered while both Masrani's were also watching Felicity with concerned frowns.

"Yes, I believe her last meal is at half past eight. We do apologize for her, of course," Zara offered with a sympathetic smile that didn't focus on anyone at all. Her eyes kept coming back to her employers, but she was careful to keep continually scanning all their faces to be sure she was
covering all of them. "You tend to get used to that after a while. There's no escaping the sound outside, of course, particularly with the Tyrannosaurus Rex Kingdom located right across the lake, on the northwest bank. Inside the buildings, however, you shouldn't be able to hear her unless you open the windows or go outside."

"So we're gonna be staying close to that thing?" Roy asked with a frown, ignoring the looks that earned him. Mainly from the Queen matriarch, who looked torn between disapproval for his complaint and some shared concern for Felicity.

And Zara, of course, who seemed surprised by the complaint more than anything. "Not precisely," she hastened to reassure them after one whole blink. "The resort is located on the opposite side of the lake. But you needn't worry about the sound keeping you up. We had all of the suites and rooms well-insulated, even the glass is sound proof."

Oliver felt Felicity relax just a little next to him at that, so he tried to stop frowning at the other woman that was trying so hard to please them all when they really couldn't be pleased to be here. Though her earlier 'you get used to it' comment hadn't appeased him at all.

The silences between the forced conversations were starting to feel awkward, so it was a relief when the limousine came to a stop in front of what was obviously the resort's main entrance. One of the bellhops outside opening the door as soon as they'd stopped, and Sara was quick to hop right out, her enthusiasm and smile almost disguising the quick scan she gave the area.

Felicity wasn't smiling or hopping as she followed the former assassin out of the car, but she still slid a little across the seat to do so, accepting the helping hand that the bellhop offered to help with a smile that was small but not shaky.

Oliver watched her for just a second after the driver had opened his door before he turned to climb out, quickly rounding the back of the car as everyone else piled out. Digg was already waiting with Felicity, just like Sara, and the rest of the group had all gathered with them, while their ARGUS 'guards' forming a perimeter around them. It was easy to offer his arm to Felicity again, even though she hesitated for half a second before she accepted it this time.

What was harder was after they'd all followed Zara inside, into the elevator that brought them to the top floor and to their rooms. Because once they'd made it to the premier 'Hammond Suite,' he had to let her go on alone to her own bedroom at least, and he hated how hard it was for her to close the door.

Whether they could hear the monsters or not in here, all of them knew that they were still out there.
Felicity especially.

Oliver could only hope she wasn't still hearing that monster in her mind, past or present, like he was...

Chapter End Notes

Okay, this chapter took forever to write. Sorry about that. I wasn't really sure where I wanted to stop. I actually alternated between skipping over several parts of this scene. In the course of writing this A/n the first time, I changed my mind again and went back to add the whole last third of the chapter. *Shakes head* And I'm still not sure if I like it or not, so it's one of those ones that may definitely change later. I'll let you know if I do go back, but at this point I'm really trying to go forward here, so bear with me...

At least they've made it to the island now! That's good, right? Anyway, I did want to say two things:

First, on Lyla's pilot training/experience. I really did try to research this, but I'm not sure I wrapped my head fully around the facts regarding what could really happen. Lyla met Digg in Afghanistan while they were both part of the Special Forces, that's canon. And it makes sense to me that they'd have pilots over there working with them fairly closely, at least closely enough to be on hand when needed. Of course, that COULD mean they just fly in when needed, but I like the idea of Lyla being a skilled pilot, so I went with that brief background she mentioned. Unlike Digg, she apparently joined ARGUS after their divorce, instead of going back into the army, so it doesn't make sense for her to have become a pilot afterwards. Though it could make sense for her to pick up more skill sets in ARGUS... Anyway, I'm basically just winging it here, but if anyone who's reading this knows how she could actually be a qualified pilot for multiple planes going into this scenario (that'd still line up with canon) and makes more sense, please let me know...

My understanding thus far is:

WOFT = Warrant Office Flight Academy, the Army's flight school?
SOAR = US Army 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne), "abbreviated the 160th SOAR and also known as the Night Stalkers, is a special operations forces of the US Army that provides helicopter aviation support for general purpose forces and special operations forces. Its missions have included attack, assault, and reconnaissance, and are usually conducted at night, at high speeds, low altitudes, and on short notice..."

This kind of felt like one of those Wikipedia wormholes that I could get lost in for a long time, and it wasn't that important, but it's something that'll probably bother me later: thus this note. All that said, Oliver DID learn how to pilot planes well enough to not only handle small planes prior to his rescue, but also at least crash land a much bigger one at the end of S3, so ARROW canon would seem to be fairly liberal in exactly how long this might take.

And second: thank you all for both your patience and enthusiasm for this fic. Each and every comment has acted as significant motivation, and I hope the end result continues to be worth it as we keep going. Again, we've made it to the island at last, so hopefully some of the next few chapters will come easier. But all of your suggestions, ideas and questions always help... even if I haven't been great about answering the questions.
More to come soon! (Hopefully.)
Thanks for reading! :-D
~ Jess S
Chapter Notes

Author's Note: Surprise! I’m not dead. Real life combined with a whole bunch of writers blocks (and some stupidity on my part) kept me from making my target of Christmas OR New Years. Sorry, sorry, sorry! Really, a gazillion apologies to everyone who has waited so long for this update. It has been FAR too long and I really can’t apologize enough.

We’re still not to the point where all the action can just roll together—so many moving pieces that have to fit just right, it’s driving me a little bit crazy—but we’re definitely a lot closer!

Ideas, suggestions, and comments in general are always appreciated. Really, even if I didn’t respond—shame on me for that, of course—but even if I didn’t always answer when I did see your comments they always helped motivate me towards at least thinking about this fic again. So you kept the muses alive. Alive and crazy, yes, but alive! But enough of the pre-chapter comments, I’ll babble more late. Though, also, I apologize in advance if the start of this chapter gives you a case of the munchies. It got me a few times, too. Sorry.

And enjoy?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Truths & Terrors in the Night.

Felicity's P.O.V.

Felicity tried to resist it. She really did.

She could not for the life of her even try to work out like the others did. Yes, she could both recognize and absolutely admire the results. Watching those amazing workouts was something she never could’ve imagined enjoying anywhere near as much as she sometimes did. But enjoying watching her friends—and Oliver especially, she couldn't deny that even to herself—didn't mean she could come even close to motivating herself to attempt the same thing. Some sit-ups and jogging, sure—but the salmon ladder?

Oliver on the salmon ladder was like a work of art. A masterpiece in motion. No amount of goggling—or googling, for that matter—could help her understand what the absurd but beautiful exercise had to do with any kind of fish. And Sara's gentle, helpful offers of teaching her how to get started on it and any other number of impressive aerobics and exercises didn't help that much either. No, the salmon ladder was for her, personally, any more than swords, staffs and arrows were.
There were, however, no ladders here: not for salmon, not for outrageously sculpted bodies, or anything else. If her friends were already improvising ways to keep carving their beautiful bodies tonight, they were doing that in their own rooms where she couldn't see them. Mores the pity, but the lack of salmon ladders probably wasn’t problematic.

No, the problem was the plate of cookies that hadn't been here in her room before dinner. Apparently the V.I.P rooms came with not just mints on the pillow but tasty midnight snacks without you even needing to ask for them, too. Like a trap for those that preferred to avoid rather than resist the temptation of sugary goodness. Let alone gourmet sugary goodness. So, now Felicity was frowning at cookies. At least the little mint would be almost guilt free!

Felicity did not work out like her friends did. She'd probably die if she even tried, though what Sara said about starting with baby steps made sense. And according to Digg she had gotten better with some of the self-defense moves he’d taught her. That Sara actually had said "baby steps" and Digg had said "some" of those moves, however, only highlighted how much both of them were indulging her when it came to what most of them spent most of the free time they had doing again and again, in continuous cycles of agonizing, amazing art.

And the computer genius knew that. The closest she could come to exercising regularly was the stretches and sit-ups she tried to make herself do most mornings, along with jogging three to four times a week as long as she had the time, which since she started working full time for Oliver Queen wasn’t all that much. At least she had kept herself fairly flexible—a regular short yoga routine was easier to do on auto-pilot first thing in the morning than a run before the sun came up. She was still in shape; because her last trip to this island was a lifelong motivator towards making sure she’d always be capable of at least running. But it was still an accomplishment if she could manage just a few quick sets of sit-ups after her yoga.

So, if she wanted her belly to stay, if not flat, at least trim, then she should not be eating things like cookies. Especially right before bed in this room that hopefully really was completely sound-proof so that monster roaring wouldn't wake her up tonight. Even her mint chip ice cream was only for dire emotional emergencies.

But... they did look very good. Very, very good. And there was even a nice note with them, helpfully reassuring her that they were completely nut-free. Because the Masranis, of course, were well aware of her allergy. Lyn was better about that thing at restaurants and the like than Felicity herself ever could be.

"I really shouldn't," Felicity tried to tell herself again, still struggling to frown at the baked goodness. After a moment she managed to make herself look away, heading towards the closed balcony doors. Hesitating for only a moment when her hand was on the handle, but Masrani had reassured her that the monster king (or queen, technically) really only roared when it was expecting food.
She couldn't just hide in her room the whole time she was here. Her end of the bargain, after all, was to actually try to get over her more than understandable fears. Why everyone seemed to think that facing the things that'd traumatized her was a good way to do it she didn’t know, but it was still mostly why she was here. Or at least, she was sure it was the only reason Oliver and everyone else hadn’t put up more of a stink about her doing this for them.

Saving *Queen Consolidated* and their home had to be worth it.

The view from the balconies on the hotel's highest floor was, of course, magnificent. It was undoubtedly beautiful further down, too. It did resemble the chaotic green jungle she remembered, but only just. Which made sense: according to the map the old Visitor's Center was further north. And not even open to public viewing at all, so at least they couldn’t make her go back there… or so she hoped.

Lyn had told her, back before the island first opened, that Masrani didn’t even want that site open to the public. Yes, they’d recycled the wood from the first set of gates—it was the electricity that'd failed, after all, not the wooden doors that those electrical fences shouldn't have ever let the monster near. But out of respect for everything that occurred there, most of that original site remained untouched and gathering dust for years now.

Looking around at this the true tropical paradise before her now, Felicity could almost convince herself that she wasn't back on the island she'd sworn to never go near again. Almost.

The big, beautiful pool of water that everything had been constructed around was a change from the green fields that'd stretched from one side of the first Visitor's Center and off to where many of the herbivores freely roamed. The trees that did nothing to bar the way for predators on the other side's back then were still mostly the same types growing here now. But Simon Masrani had created a real resort here. Almost a small city. At night you couldn't see all the big signs that told you where to find different kinds of monsters, they were hidden in the darkness and supposedly contained on the opposite sides of far more advanced fences. Fences controlled by a system that Felicity had designed herself, so she knew no one would be able to put everyone in danger by taking it down again...

"*I guess that means the power's off.*" Doctor Grant had said after a stick thrown at the big electrical lines failed to produce any burst of sparks.

Felicity remembered frowning at the idea. The power being off last night was what'd led to all of this. What'd let that gigantic monster loose and free to attack them....

"Ahhhhh!" the scientist's startled scream forced her violently from her thoughts.

Felicity had started screaming at the same time as Lex and Tim. And when he'd just as suddenly
stopped shaking and screaming to turn back to them with a grin, she'd completely agreed with her friend. It had nothing to do with girl power or stupid boy humor. Just the thought of really being on their own and trapped with no way out was even worse than the possibility that all of the monsters were roaming free within the outer wall's borders...

But the sound of the T-Rex roaring again, some distance off but echoing all around them, had been more than enough to get them all started on their way up that wall.

Felicity swallowed, forcibly shaking the unhappy memory off. For all that those traumatic events had built several friendships she knew she'd always be able to count on, the memories were still not ones she could look back on fondly...

All those lights glimmers around the manmade bay were somewhat reassuring. Lights meant the power was on. If they had power for so many lights, obviously there could be nothing wrong with the fences. Those systems had no less than three back-ups each, at least for all the predators. There perimeter fences for the herbivores weren't quite so over-the-top, but each one still had the internal tracking chips that should knock it out if it ever did manage to escape their zones. And if that didn't work, Masrani had what amounted to a private army here on the island twenty-four-seven just to deal with them should the worst happen.

Which it wasn't. All the lights, along with the faint music drifting out of the numerous places that still provided entertainment at night, assured her of that. It was almost enough to convince herself that she was actually here on a vacation.

Almost.

That the door-opening, problem-solving Velociraptors were even farther away than the abandoned relic of a Visitor's Center they'd once hunted her and her friends through was much more reassuring. She'd still rather be a whole ocean or two away them, but it did help that Masrani recognized how scary-smart the raptors were. Especially since the only way they could ever get out of their pen was if they were let out. And even then there were several perimeter walls in between them and the resort area...

Felicity turned away from the view and walked back inside, shutting the door behind her. And this time when she took another look at those cookies and her resolve finally crumbled. "Oh, what the hell. One couldn't hurt," she told herself, and carefully picked out a cookie that wasn’t the biggest or the smallest as she decided, "I'll give the rest to the others tomorrow."

That was fair, and even if they had plates full of cookies in their rooms, too, it wasn’t like they couldn’t afford to eat some extra carbs every now and again. They’d probably burn it all off in one day anyway.
So Felicity took a bite, and moaned as the chocolate chips seemed to magically melt in her mouth. The rich flavor wasn't exactly what she'd expected, but then again she hadn't tried to bake since that last time she and her mom had almost burned their home down back before her freshman year at M.I.T. Chips Ahoy had nothing on homemade, and these were undoubtedly made by some amazing gourmet chef who really knew what they were doing. They certainly tasted like it. There was a flavor that she couldn't quite place, but it was all part of that rich, melty taste and easily overpower by the chocolate that was making a mini heaven in her mouth.

Felicity sat down as she swallowed, savoring all the sweetly blending flavors coating her tongue. Before she could take another bite of heaven, however, a strange itching at the back of her throat made her frown and rub her neck. She glanced at the plate a short distance away again, at the sign right next to it with the words written in elegant but clear cursive:

\textit{Nut-Free.}

But her tongue was already starting to itch, too.

And her throat wasn't just itchy: it was already starting to swell. To swell \textit{closed…}

"Dam-uh-it..." Felicity gasped, and started coughing as her body tried to forcefully keep her airway open. She dropped the deadly cookie and shot to her feet again in the same motion, coughing lightly as she hurried across the room towards the table she'd set her purse down on.

She hadn't had to use her Epi-pen since that last allergy attack in college. Not the one with the pot brownie; the one after that when she'd agreed to try a new Thai restaurant at Masrani's insistence and forgotten to warn the waiter about her allergy even though she was ordering one of the items that was supposed to be nut-free just like those cookies. Both Masranis had been horrified and all apologies as they rushed her to the hospital even after Lyn had snatched the Epi-pen from her hand and stabbed it into her thigh. That was why she hadn't been surprised to see that sign, but why would someone...

“Fo-us!” Felicity tried to snap to herself, though the word was a half-choked out waste of air it made her think past her worries for now. It did help her concentrate as her hands started trembling.

The first outer pocket was empty, but \textit{there} it was when she tried the one on the other side. She gasped as it slipped from her shaking fingers, falling to the carpeted floor. She followed, dropping to her knees without a conscious thought while her hands went after it.
But someone else got there first.

And Felicity found herself staring, wide-eyed into the dark eyes of an only vaguely familiar woman. Before she could try to form a coherent thought, let alone say something the stranger had uncapped the epi-pen and speared it straight through the skirt of her dress and into her thigh.

"Tha-ank ooo," she tried to croak out, but the room was getting darker, because her eyelids were so very, very heavy…

Oh god, this couldn’t be happening again!

That was the only coherent thought she could remember from those moments of flight. When she and Lex had half-carried, half-dragged Timmy down the hallway that was supposed to represent safety for them all, but didn’t. It didn’t feel fast enough, but it was far faster than Timmy could limp along on his own right now, and they couldn’t leave him behind.

The kitchen door looked thick, it was made of metal and it was the closest one to the dining room via the hallway they’d run into. Maybe those were the reasons Lex steered them there, one of the reasons or all of them. Or maybe it was just a place to steer them.

Clang!

Felicity was relieved when she could close that door behind them, but that feeling faded fast when she didn’t see any way to lock it as her friend flicked the lights off.

“Come on!” Lex snapped, barely loud enough for her friend to hear her as she kept pulling Timmy along the few steps it took Felicity to catch up after she shut the door.

It still sounded much, much too loud.

Just like their steps were much too loud on the hard floor— stamp-stamp, stamp-stamp, stamp-stamp! Their panicked breaths were far too loud in the hot humid air, too—huff, gasp, huff, gasp, huff, gasp!

Was this new monster half-blind like the other one? If it was, did that mean it might have some sort of super-hearing and already know they were here? Was it listening to their steps? Their breaths? Their heartbeats?

Tha-Thump! Tha-Thump! Tha-Thump!

Felicity’s was pounding in her ears as they scrambled across the kitchen and finally ducked down behind the farthest side of the first counter. She looked around, wide-eyes scouring for any kind of escape or hiding place. The open door to the clearly melting freezer was tempting, but if they ran in there they’d be stuck inside an even smaller room with those monsters still out here on the other side of just one more door that couldn’t be locked from the inside.

Ca-Clack, Ca-Clack…
Too late. That sound was far too close. Maybe a little ways down the hall now, or right outside the door. No time to hide. It was already here.

**Huff… Huff… Huff… Huff…**

Its breaths were a lot louder than theirs, resounding through the kitchen door like it wasn’t even there. Not scared at all, just full of deadly purpose. It was on the hunt. On the hunt for them…

**Cli-Click…**

Shit, was that the door opening?

“Timmy…” Lex suddenly hissed even more softly than before, but it was still too loud. “What is it?”

Why was she talking?

His reply was as immediate as it was terrifying. “Velociraptor.”

**Huff… Huff…**

Felicity wanted to tell them to shut up, but she’d have to make her own mouth move to do that and right now she wasn’t sure she knew where it was. And now she couldn’t think about it because all her mind kept spinning through were the sounds on the other side of that door and what she remembered the nice game warden saying about these particular monsters.

**Purr-er-er… Purr-er-er…**

‘They’re lethal at eight months, and I do mean **lethal,**’ the nice Englishman had emphasized when Doctor Grant asked him about the creatures. ‘I’ve hunted most things that can hunt you, but the way these things move… Cheetah speed. Fifty, sixty miles an hour if they ever got out in the open. And they’re astonishing jumpers…’

Out in the hallway or here in the kitchen—**anywhere** other than the cage they’d been systematically trying to break out of before—probably counted as ‘out in the open.’

Oh, God…

Felicity couldn’t look, because that optimistic tiny toddler that still survived somewhere inside her hoped that if she couldn’t see the monster it couldn’t see her either. But it was also because she knew what those specific sounds meant anyway.

Somehow, it’d **opened** the door that couldn’t be locked. Because of course it had.

**Purr-er-er… Purr-er-er…**

‘They show extreme intelligence. Even problem-solving intelligence,’ Muldoon had said, sounding equal parts wary and impressed by what he was saying as he sounded an alarm he’d obviously already sounded before. ‘Especially the Big One. We bred eight originally, but when she came in she took over the pride and killed all but two of the others. That one, when she looks at you, you can see she’s working things out.’

Mister Hammond’s assurances that his warden was just an alarmist and prone to predicting the worst instead of hoping for the best hadn’t been very reassuring around those things then. But it’d helped a little that the monsters were still stuck in their electrified cages.
They weren’t anymore.

Now the power was out, and so were they. Only one so far, but if they hunted like a pride of lionesses, the other two couldn’t be too far away…

**KUN! KUN!**

**KUN! KUN! Raaan-an-an…**

Felicity wasn’t covering her ears like Lex and Tim, though the sounds the monster was making were echoing off of all the kitchen cabinets and appliances were painfully loud on her eardrums, too. But she couldn’t move…

And that was before she realized there were two of them now.

*Oh God…*

**Grah!**

**Gra-ah-ah-ah… Purr-er…**

Definitely two—were they talking to each other?

Wait was Lex actually going to get up—no, she ducked back as soon as she’d been able to see over, not quite able to bite back her gasp.

*Dammit, they were all going to die.*

“**F-Follow me,**” Lex ordered the two of them, almost too softly for Felicity to hear from where she was frozen on Timmy’s other side.

*But when the shaking boy grabbed her hand and gave and pulled, somehow Felicity kept following along…*

Then Felicity was prying her eyes apart, and she wasn't in the kitchen anymore... she was in bed? Not *her* bed...

"You’re awake," a feminine voice observed as its owner came closer. “Good.”

Felicity blinked up at her, struggling to think through the dull ache that’d taken up residence in her head as she remembered where she was and what'd happened. Her own personal hell on earth. Cookies that lied about being nut-free.

Her headache felt strange though... shouldn’t it ache *more?*

But that thought only made Felicity blink again as she realized that she wasn’t choking, and her
throat didn’t even feel itchy anymore, even though she wasn’t at whatever this resort had for a hospital. It was all very strange, yet somehow recognizing her rescuer seemed so much more important than figuring out why her allergic reaction symptoms’ were so strangely mild. Because this stranger had saved her life, and Felicity knew she’d seen her somewhere before.

Her brow furrowed as she stared at the other woman, and finally she managed to place her. It took only that solid second of staring—and noticing the dark armor the woman wore, along with the sword and other weapons—for it all to click into place.

Felicity knew she should probably be terrified, but this woman had just saved her. And her perspective wasn’t exactly steady here. In this place again, now no farther away than what amounted to only so many footsteps from the monsters that’d haunted her nightmares for more than half her life. Compared to that, any human being just couldn’t measure up in the fear factor. Even if she was a member of a decidedly dangerous, not nice group like the League of Assassins. That and, here and now, Felicity was just too tired to be afraid.

"You saved me?" she remembered, swallowing as she finished, just confirming again that her throat wasn't scratchy even though her airway had been trying to close up last thing she remembered.

The other woman's nod looked almost deep enough to be called more of a bow. "I am Nyssa. Daughter of Ra's al Ghul. Heir to the Demon."

Well, Felicity knew all of that. It hadn't been easy to find footage of the assassins when they'd been in Starling City a few weeks ago; poisoning Laurel and kidnapping the ex-Missus Lance to try and make Sara return to the League. It hadn't been easy, but Felicity had done it. She'd managed to find some. Like this very scary woman's arrival at the airport, which had led her on to the ARGUS alert that'd triggered the fight in the first place. But her brain was too tired tonight to trigger any kind of babbling about that, which was good. So after a moment she made herself answer, "Felicity Smoak. M.I.T class of 2009."

Because if they were stating the accomplishment they were most proud of she had to say that. It wasn't like she would willingly say Oliver Queen's E.A with any real pride in her voice. And while her work with Team Arrow ranked right up at the top of what mattered most to her, it wasn't like she had a title or codename there...

Wait, why didn't she have a codename? So what if she didn't wear a mask, she still talked to everybody while they were wearing masks! She was part of the team, so she should have another name, too, shouldn’t she?
"It is an honor to meet you," the assassin's voice forced her from her thoughts, which she could only hope she hadn't been saying out loud because she was honestly too tired to tell.

For a second Felicity thought about worrying if she'd missed her brain-to-mouth filter failing—again—but in the end it didn't really matter, did it?

"I am glad I arrived in time to be of assistance," the assassin added.

"Me too. You... You saved me..." Felicity found herself saying again, just to fit it together inside her lightly aching head. And swallowed again when her throat still felt only a little achy. Like she might be fighting a sore throat, rather than recovering from a recent encounter with the food group she shouldn't ever touch with a thirty-foot pole if that pole might ever go anywhere near her tongue. "Thank you."

"You are most welcome."

After another moment of staring, and wondering why she only had a headache and a slightly sore throat on top of her still seemingly ever-hurting shoulder, Felicity struggled to sit up. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't..." she trailed off uncertainly when the other woman's hands on her uninjured shoulder helped her sit up, and frowned when she gently held her in place there.

"You need more rest," the raven-haired woman told her. "But first you must drink this." She reached for a glass of water on the bedside table and offered it to her.

Felicity blinked, then frowned at the glass. "I'm not—"

"As you said, Felicity Smoak of M.I.T," the assassin interrupted her. "I did save your life already tonight. And I'm sure you know at least enough about me to be certain I have no need to resort to poisons in order to kill you."

Felicity swallowed, still surprised by how easily she could. "Not sure why you'd want to kill me. Or save me," she admitted.

The raven-haired woman had cocked her head to the side as she listened to her words, but immediately replied when the blonde stopped. "I am not here to kill you. You have my word, as the daughter of Ra's al Ghul."
“Well, no, you saved me—thank you, for that—but…” Felicity hesitated, and then sighed. “It’s still a relief to hear you say that. Even if it does mean I have to see the dinosaurs again. Not that I’m complaining—about the not dying part, I mean.” She held her hands up as she finished, but one went automatically to rub at her throat as she finished, still surprised by just how 'fine' she felt right now.

It almost looked like the warrior was fighting a smile, but Felicity's beyond tired subconscious might just be making the mistake of comparing Sara's ex-girlfriend too much to her own great fighters. Though that'd still make her thoughts towards Sara's ex-girlfriend far more charitably inclined than they could ever be to Oliver's ex; though that true psycho was thankfully still in prison the last time she'd checked.

"You should not desire death, my friend," the ninja warrior woman told her, voice so soft that for a second it was almost hard to remember that she was born and raised to be the deadly warrior she was. "And I cannot apologize for being unable to help you avoid your fears, for no true friend would prevent you from facing fears which you are poised to overcome."

"Over..." Felicity blinked as her mind went back over all that and stopped on the words that were more important. "Wait, friend? Are we friends now? I mean not that I—"

"If you would do me the honor," the other woman definitely did bow her head this time, staying that way for a second before she looked up, dark eyes meeting blue ones again straight away. "If not, I yet owe you a debt."

"Owe me a..." the genius trailed off, trying to think it through even as she shook her head.

"Please, drink," the assassin prompted her again. "And I will explain what I can."

This time Felicity hesitantly accepted the glass that was pressed into her hand, slowly raising it to her lips to drink what tasted like fresh water that washed down her throat, soothing the slight soreness that remained. Sensing that the other woman wouldn't want to talk until she drank it all, she finished it as quickly as she could then turned to put the glass back where the much more dangerous woman had gotten it before she looked back at her. "You don't owe me anything, ma'am," she told her after only a second more of hesitation. Because it was true, even if it maybe wasn't the sort of thing you should tell a decidedly deadly person that'd just saved your life. "If anything, I owe you now."

"I disagree." The assassin shook her head firmly. "You saved Sara. And there is nothing I could owe you which I value more."
"Sara’s my friend," Felicity told her.

"She is. And she is my Beloved," the assassin's dark eyes caught and held her own. "Her desire to leave the League did not diminish my love for her. It was her spirit that first captured mine, and her heart that will always hold my own."

"But you didn't want to let her go," Felicity swallowed as she finished, not sure she should've said anything since it was hardly something you questioned normal people on. Let alone scary people that killed for a living. Especially when she was alone with her in a place she already didn't feel safe.

"I did not." Nyssa brought her hands out in front of her, flexing her fingers for a second before she folded them together and nodded to the side of the bed. "May I sit?"

"Uh—sure? It's a big bed." Felicity agreed, because she couldn't really say 'no.'

It really was a big bed. And it wasn’t like it made a difference, sitting or standing, the woman she watched perch on the bed’s edge would always be a deadly warrior. If the assassin wanted her dead, she’d be dead, so what was the point worrying about it?

"Has Sara ever told you how we met?" Nyssa asked her.

Felicity blinked. "Uh, no?" the genius shook her head slowly again. "She doesn't seem too big on sharing her past. Oliver isn't either. Or Digg. Or me, really," she wrinkled her nose. "Actually I guess we're all not that big on sharing, which seems kind of sad now that I say it..."

"Some secrets are very hard to share," the assassin started speaking again as soon as her babble trailed off, her voice calm and matter-of-fact. "Some things we want to keep close, and others we just have to." She paused a moment, then continued slowly. "I found her adrift at sea. Looking back, it was not far from the island where your 'Arrow' was rescued."

"He's not—We're not—Actually, you know what, never mind, it's not really that important.″ Felicity shook her head again, thinking that really wasn't what she wanted to get into with Sara's ex. Not that she really wanted to get into anything with Sara's ex, but some lines had to be crazier to cross than others.
"When we pulled her from the water, she did not struggle and she did not beg. After too long under the sun without food or water, she did not have the strength for either." The assassin shook her head. "But her eyes met mine as soon as she was laid at my feet. And she thanked me."

Felicity frowned uncertainly, "For saving her?"

"No," Nyssa shook her head again. "Like you, I think she expected we were going to kill her, and she'd suffered so much up to that point that she simply did not care."

Felicity swallowed, hating the idea of her strong friend every having been brought so low, but she couldn’t doubt it was true. "But you didn't kill her either."

"I did not..." Nyssa agreed, going on: her voice soft in reminiscence. "There was a light in her. Even then. And I did not have it within me to see it crushed." Another slow head shake before she went on her dark eyes somehow brighter in their distance. "She was not part of our mission, but that was not the first time a new initiate was unexpectedly brought home with us. We took her in, nursed her back to health. Eventually she stood before my father, when he would weigh her value to the League. Her apprenticeship against her execution." She paused again, but this time it was so a small smile could steal across her lips. "She bore witness then to a demonstration of his power. One that'd inspired terror in all those that I had seen come before her. But Sara... laughed."

There wasn't just disbelief in the other woman's voice as she said that, there was something like amazement, too. Delight, maybe joy—or all of the above. And that made Felicity smile too as the assassin went on.

"It was so innocent. So genuine," the assassin shook her head slowly. "That's the moment I fell in love with her, I think."

"It must've been hard to let her go," Felicity replied softly, not really looking at the other woman as she went on. Her mind going back to her own moments’ of heartbreak. "It's hard enough when they're taken from you, when there was no choice involved. But when someone you love chooses to leave you... it hurts."

"Yes, it does," the assassin answered just as softly, her voice forcing the other woman back to the present because thinking about anything else when there was someone as deadly as her in the room was probably a bad idea. "And I have always been a warrior. Trained to fight. Taught that suffering is optional even when pain is not. I did not understand until Sara's breaths were failing that fighting my own pain meant prolonging the suffering for us both." Nyssa took a breath and released it slowly, in a way that looked almost meditative. "But what Sara showed me was nothing but truth. I have no
That seemed very sad to Felicity, but not necessarily wrong. After all, she couldn’t say she thought Sara was wrong to want to \textit{not kill people for a living}, but that wasn’t exactly something she could say to another woman who still did that. Especially someone like Nyssa al Ghul, who’d been born and raised to that life. Who’d known nothing else. But that she’d been able to let Sara go, to accept that she had to, because it was what was best for the one she loved. \textit{That} Felicity could certainly respect.

Felicity drew a slow breath, then stopped, her brow furrowing. It really did feel \textit{strange}. Very \textit{strange}…

She’d lost consciousness due to lack of air. She’d nearly suffocated. Anaphylactic shock, they called it. At the very least, her throat should still be on fire and though the injection had saved her life her leg should hurt right now. She should feel like crap. Especially with her shoulder—wait. Why didn’t her shoulder hurt more after all the convulsing she’d done on the floor?

“Is something wrong?” the assassin’s voice drew her out of her thoughts again.

“No, I—Yes,” Felicity frowned at her. “I feel… fine?” she shook her head, blinking because her shoulder still didn’t complain like it was only a few hours ago. She shifted it, experimentally, and blinked again. The stab of pain the last few days had taught her to expect \textit{wasn’t} there. Carefully, she pushed herself up, and was amazed at how easy that was, too. “My throat,” she brought her hand up to it, amazed at the fact that it didn’t feel swollen at all. Her lips, her face… All the unpleasant puffiness she would’ve expected she could use as an excuse to avoid any kind of camera for her whole stay, it wasn’t there. “My shoulder. I feel—”

“Much improved, I hope,” Nyssa interrupted then, giving her a small smile that somehow seemed friendly but stern. “The remedies of The League are not shared with many outside our ranks.”

Felicity could only blink at her. Once, twice, three times, then: “Remedies of—Wait, what? Why would you—”

“As I said, my friend,” the assassin cut her off again, some of that slightly stiff sternness seeming to melt a little. “I owe you a debt that I can never repay, but that does not mean I will not try.”
That made the bewildered blonde blink again, because after the last few days, and traveling back to this place she’d once sworn she’d never see again—and meant it—this had been a really long day. Even before she nearly died thanks to the midnight munchies. “Thank you,” she said again, swallowing again just to make sure her throat still felt strangely normal.

Not liked she’d almost been strangled. Not scratchy at all.

It was weird.

Never mind that a group called the League of Assassins apparently had some kind of miraculous medical remedies that the rest of the world could only dream about… that was weird, too. But it wasn’t like anyone would ever be able to take it from them or make them share it, so…

“You are most welcome, my friend.” Nyssa nodded again, her small smile seeming more kind then stern now.

Felicity swallowed again, and hesitated again, but then her not-at-all swollen tongue broke free. “You know Sara’s probably going to be in more dangerous situations, right? I mean, she’s—”

“Her chosen role as a champion of her home—your home—will likely bring her into peril again. Yes, I am aware,” the assassin agreed, sounding supremely nonchalant. “Yet that is her choice, and so long as she has her friends to help her, she will keep on fighting. And she will be happy.”

“Well, yeah, but…” Felicity shook her head. “I mean, are you going to be dropping in on anyone that happens to help her, even though you’re—”

“Of course not.” Again Nyssa interrupted her. Some of that earlier sadness was back. It was there in the small smile she offered again, too. “Nor would I offer my friendship to just anyone who happened to be in the right place at the right time. "But you are my Beloved’s true friend, Felicity Smoak. And so I would be honored and happy if I might call you mine as well.”

“…Okay?” Felicity answered slowly, wondering how exactly this had become her life.

It didn’t seem all that long ago that she’d been a boring I.T girl who spiced up her life with eclectic
nail polishes and cute shoes. And finding various ways to avoid interacting with one of the world’s wealthiest—and most stubborn—businessmen. Now she’d given in to Masrani and come all the way back to her own personal hell, to nearly die thanks to a cookie and be saved by an assassin that wanted to be her friend?

“Thank you?” she added, just as uncertainly as she’d agreed.

“No. Thank you,” Nyssa replied, bowing her head in that way that looked way too regal to be called a nod. Then she rose gracefully to her feet. “You will need to rest soon. First, however, you must ask my Beloved here to see you.” So saying she picked up Felicity’s phone from where it was on the bedside table, unplugging it from the charging cord that wasn’t nearly long enough to make it all the way to her on the big bed to place the device in her hands.

“What?” Felicity blinked at her again. “Why—”

“There is much that we must speak of, much that Sara and your other friends will want to know as well. But Sara must be told first.” Nyssa indicated her phone. “I would ask her myself, yet that request would alarm her needlessly, and perhaps lead to a confrontation that we would be best to avoid.”

Well, okay that was fair, Felicity supposed.

If Sara got a call from her super-assassin ex-girlfriend to meet her in Felicity’s room she might just come running herself. Even if she just came running alone, she might be too worried to use all that ninja-ness that the woman in front of Felicity now had probably taught her. They hadn’t known each other long, but it was long enough for the tech expert to know that stealth would be the last thing on Sara’s mind if she was worrying about stopping her ex from killing her friend.

And Oliver and Digg would notice if Sara was barging through the halls and into Felicity’s room, and they might not be the only ones. Team Arrow fighting with a ninja from the League of Assassins might raise more than a few eyebrows they didn’t want even twitching. Lyn was already watching them all, and none of the others were stupid. Far from it.

“Oh kay,” Felicity agreed, hesitantly again, but she still forced herself to open up her Sara’s contact number and send a quick text asking her to come by as soon as she could. The reply came so quickly that she half wondered if Sara was wearing her phone even in the middle of the night. “She’ll be here soon. She’s just down the hall.”
And of course, like Oliver, the Canary was probably still wide awake and working out. How easily she could climb the salmon ladder, after all, had to be from some regularly hard work-outs of her own.

“I know,” Nyssa nodded, standing from where she was sitting next to Felicity on the bed and moving towards the window that the blonde didn’t remember opening herself.

Actually, were those windows even supposed to open?

Sara probably didn’t keep them waiting more than a few minutes. Even not knowing why Felicity had called her, or that her ex-girlfriend was here, the woman that could kick-ass just as easily as Oliver could had been an unfailingly good friend to the other woman on the team since she’d arrived. Since she’d learned of the traumatic experiences Felicity had gone through on this very island, she’d been even more accommodating. So she wouldn’t keep her waiting more than a few minutes after answering the text so promptly. It was long enough for Felicity’s fast but still confused mind to keep thinking through.

Felicity was sure she should probably feel more suspicious and self-sacrificing than this. Normally she would. Normally, if someone had managed to capture her and she was waiting for Oliver or the others to come rescue her, she wouldn’t go out of her way to be helpful to her captors. Not since the Huntress held her at crossbow point, any way: she’d promised herself that.

She doubted she’d ever be able to last long against much—or even any—actual torture, but after her helping Helena Bertinelli had gotten a bunch of officers killed and Detective McKenna Hall badly wounded, she’d promised herself she’d have a sterner spine next time. She’d think things through and wouldn’t let her fear get someone else hurt. And she’d managed to keep her track record—and her conscious—at least mostly clear since then.

Not that it’d been easy for her to just give Frank Bertinelli up. He was nowhere near what any normal person could call a good man, but that didn’t mean Felicity had wanted to help his daughter kill him. And it’d had nothing to do with Oliver wanting to save Helena Bertinelli from herself. Not at all. No, it was just Felicity’s own conscious wanting to keep her hands clean even though she was already helping Oliver then and he sometimes had to kill bad people.

Okay, so maybe it did have something to do with Oliver not wanting the mobster dead. And maybe it also had a little to do with that scared little girl deep down inside of her that was still waiting for her daddy to come back to her.

But, when the Huntress had an arrow aimed at her, Felicity had barely been able to voice her
protests. She’d said them, with tear-tracks ruining her mascara, but that’d all been while her trembling fingers were tripping through the necessary steps to hack into the F.B.I only a little bit slower than she normally might’ve managed it. Then five U.S Marshals died, and one S.C.P.D detective wouldn’t walk again for months…

That’d never be a night she was proud of…

Just like another horrible night, just a few weeks back, when she’d let herself get captured by one of Starling City’s sickest psychos. That time she hadn’t even managed to say a single thing after that horrific instant when she’d realized that the madman who was holding the city hostage had caught her trying to stop him on her own.

Count Vertigo hadn’t been interested in her saying anything; he had liked the sound of his own voice too much to bother with actually talking to her. And he’d already known who was under the Hood—had seen Oliver’s face when the archer had considered killing him before—and just been biding his time till he found a way to trap him. That’d been her—the distressed damsel playing bait—but at least if Digg was right that confrontation wasn’t really her fault. Yes, it was her fault Oliver had had to come save her, had had to kill for her, but she hadn’t exposed him to one of his enemies.

Honestly Felicity had been more than a bit surprised when she’d actually been able to beg Oliver not to break his promise for her. Not to kill for her. She’d meant it, truly, but her tongue had been frozen for so long before that, the words coming out had been a surprise. A good surprise though. As ashamed as she’d been of herself for even getting into that situation and actually becoming both bait and the damsel in distress again, she had felt a little better when she’d at least been able to say that.

It hadn’t made a difference in the end, because Oliver had still had to kill the madman to save her, but it was important to her. Only her though. Regardless of all the reasons Oliver had agreed to try a new way that wouldn’t keep adding to the dreadful death toll that their city had already suffered. Even Tommy had said the bastard had gotten what he deserved.

Felicity wasn’t so sure, but uncertainty wasn’t what she typically argued about. Worried about, absolutely, but arguing took that degree of conviction that uncertainty by its very nature lacked.

By comparison to her earlier forays into the field, however, Felicity felt a whole lot better about her latest experience therein. Sure, being hurt sucked, but at least she’d have her own scar now. A real one, from the very real bullet she took for her friend. It felt right; it felt good—no matter what everyone else said, they couldn’t take that from her.

Tockman was the first enemy the team had faced that’d belonged in Felicity’s wheelhouse. The
worldwide web and all its amazing ways was the real world that only the tech savvy saw entirely. For Team Arrow, Felicity was supposed to cover it all as much as she could, and coming up short was not in her nature. It was what made her spot on the team, what made her so ‘irreplaceable’ as Digg had said. But only if she was good enough. And that was why she had to beat the Clock-King.

And she had. And that made everything worth it.

But that didn’t make the fact that her gunshot wound was almost already a scar any less bizarre. Just like the fact that she could breathe, and see, and her face wasn’t puffy. All of it was beyond weird in a wonderful way.

All of this had been going through Felicity’s mind as she kept watching the woman who’d saved their life while they waited for Sara to show up.

Nyssa al Ghul, meanwhile, had moved over the open balcony door. She was just standing there, as far as Felicity could tell. She didn’t seem to be looking out or looking in. So she must just be thinking, just like Felicity was.

It was a strange thought that she might be anything like Felicity, but she must be. For all her amazing fighting abilities and everything else that went with being a lifelong member of the League of Assassins: she was still a human woman who loved and wanted friends.

This woman who’d been killing people her whole life had just saved Felicity. This woman who was like a real-life Xena even more than Sara was, who’d just saved Felicity’s life because she wanted to be her friend. This woman who loved Sara enough to even let her go. That—all of that—had to count for something.

“You have more questions, my friend,” Nyssa’s voice was just as calm and even as it’d been all night. Tranquil in a way that Felicity wouldn’t have expected from an assassin. Though maybe she should expect a professional killer to not be easily fazed by anything at all. Whether it was the norm or not, of course, it’d undoubtedly made her an amazing teacher.

“I don’t, not really,” Felicity found herself answering when one elegant eyebrow arched over those eyes aimed her way. “I mean, none that I can really put into words. Which is kind of weird for me. I think I’m confused. And scared. Not because of you, ’cause you saved me and we’re friends now. It’s just, well, someone wants to kill me. And I really didn’t need that. Being back on this damn island is bad enough. And all the people here don’t help—they’re lined up like a bunch of buffets all over the place. If something happens and all the safety protocols don’t work and some of those monsters get out again—”
“Stop.” Nyssa’s voice was still calm, but it was also much too firm to ignore her command.

When had she moved back to standing beside the bed?

That command made Felicity’s mouth snap closed automatically. She had to open it again right away though, because she was short of breath. And she was breathing much too fast as she tried to not let her imagination run wild with the images of monstrous predators roaming free where they shouldn’t be. Again.


It took more than a minute for normal breathing to feel normal again. But it did, and then the assassin spoke again.

“This has been a very trying day for you. Returning to this place of terror from your childhood. Facing your fears is never easy, yet it must be done. So you’ve returned to see everything that’s changed. And, I don’t doubt, many things that have not?”

Felicity immediately nodded. “The same T-Rex is here,” she swallowed, closing her eyes and shaking her head once from side to side. “I knew it was. They caught it, when they retook the island. Somehow.”

“The embodiment of all your nightmares.”

“N-Not…Not all of them… but some, yeah,” Felicity swallowed again, then she somehow managed to force her eyes open. Meeting the calm, unexpectant gaze that was watching her so steadily somehow helped a little bit.

“Courage and bravery both are about finding the strength to overcome your fear, my friend. Sometimes the only way to do it, is to face it head on.”

“Ye-Yeah. I’m not very good at that. Or at all good at it, really,” the tech genius admitted easily. “Unless it’s on a computer screen, and even then I’m not—”
“You are here,” the other woman interrupted her again in that completely firm, no-nonsense tone. “You made yourself come back here, though you did not have to. Just like you took a wound for my Beloved that you did not have to.” The nod she made then looked like another little head bow. “You are far braver than you think, my friend.”

“I’m not,” Felicity protested, her head shake now halfhearted. “Not really. I’m terrified.”

“And yet you are here. That is bravery, Felicity Smoak, and it does count for a great deal.”

But Felicity shook her head again. “I’m really not brave,” she told the woman again with a sigh. “I won’t be able to sleep tonight. Not with all the monsters out there.”

“The creatures are caged, my friend,” Nyssa pointed out.

“I know. I helped redesign the whole system. Made it as secure as I could. But nothing’s perfect…” Felicity winced. "They were caged before, too. It didn’t help when one man’s greed was more important than everybody else.”

The assassin’s answer wasn’t so prompt this time, but it was still steady and full of that confident authority that had to be respected even if it came from being able to kill people. “Terrible things do happen. Every day. Everywhere. Yet dwelling upon them—on the past or the possible futures—will not help anyone. Least of all yourself.”

“I know,” Felicity sighed again.

“You do,” Nyssa’s response was again immediate. “Remember that.”

That made the blonde blink at her, and her brow furrowed.

Was that really the problem? Was that really all she had to do to stop feeling like a complete waste and trembling wreck about all of this?
“Felicity?” Sara’s voice came through the door before her rapid triple knock had even finished echoing through the room. “You wanted to see me?”

“Ye-Yeah, just a second!” Felicity called back, glancing towards the other woman she’d been chatting with like they were old friends already. Hoping she was right to trust this deadly assassin. Hoping that she wasn’t going to have to watch two lovers battle it out in her hotel room or something like that.

The nod that Nyssa al Ghul gave her this time was as firm and authoritative as her voice had been all night, but it was also just as calm and gentle. Again, it managed to make Felicity feel a little better, despite how little she felt like she could trust her own judgment now that she was back in this nightmare-full place disguised as a paradise.

Still, she made herself finally get up from her bed again, trying not to dwell on how easy it was now that her shoulder didn’t hurt and her throat wasn’t swelling shut either. It took her a long moment to cross the room, and she hesitated at the door to glance back at the other woman in the room.

Nyssa had moved to the sitting area now, and sat down there with her hands elegantly folded in her lap. She offered another nod that was somehow reassuring, though it also somehow looked like she might be the one in need of reassurance now, too.

Felicity didn’t know how to give it in this situation, so she just hoped for the best as she turned back to the door. When she opened it enough to look through and see the other blonde standing there she hesitated for another second, not sure what to say. Then she shook her head. “Try not to overreact, okay?”

Sara blinked at her as she stepped inside. “Overreact to wha…” she trailed off as soon as she spotted the dark haired woman sitting halfway across the room. “Nyssa…”

Somehow, the completely horror-struck look on the blonde’s face and the dread that even Felicity could hear in Sara’s voice didn’t faze the woman who loved her either. “Hello, Beloved.”

Or maybe it did. Maybe that added softness Felicity could hear was just from seeing Sara again, but maybe not.
For a very long moment the two warrior women only watched each other while Felicity tried to watch both of them at the same time, her eyes rapidly shooting back and forth from one to the other as fast as they could. Not wanting to miss anything. Somehow she still wasn’t sure who moved first.

Suddenly Sara was in front of her, one arm out to keep Felicity behind her and the other raised towards the assassin that’d just raised both her hands in what probably everyone recognized as a gesture of surrender.

“I am not here to harm you, Beloved,” Nyssa told her. “Nor do I intend harm to our friend. Nor any of your friends. Truly.”

Sara stayed where she was though, clearly not yet willing to let herself trust the woman she loved so much. “Then why are you here?”

The assassin shook her head. “You asked for my help.”

For some reason that made the Canary tense even more, something Felicity wouldn’t have believed she could do if she wasn’t seeing it right before her own eyes. “You mean—”

“She saved me, Sara,” Felicity suddenly found herself insisting, the words spilling out even as she was still staring at the back of the other blonde’s head. “I almost—I ate one of the cookies that was supposed to be nut-free but it wasn’t nut-free and I’m—”

“What cookies?” Sara snapped.

“Your friend has an allergy that is known,” the heir to the leader of the League of Assassins pointed out, before rolling her shoulders so smoothly that the tech expert couldn’t really call it a shrug. “You know how easily an enemy might exploit such a weakness.”

Sara’s head turned slightly to look at where the dark-haired woman indicated, and Felicity looked, too, to see that the not-nut-free cookies were still where they’d been before: right next to the note that lied about them being nut-free.

Evil, evil note. And even more evil cookies...
The familiar sight made Felicity swallow and sag a little, because what the assassin was saying hadn’t hit her before, not really. This wasn’t some mistake made by some unfortunate park employee who’d soon find themselves facing the wrath of only Simon Masrani if they were lucky. No. Nyssa—and Sara, too—clearly thought this had been deliberate.

Someone wanted her dead.

Dead.

Oh, God…

This wasn’t some criminal she was helping Team Arrow stop putting bomb around her neck because she was in the way.

This wasn’t some crazy woman threatening her to make her hack for them.

This wasn’t some psycho using her as bait for Oliver.

This wasn’t some deranged dying man that was trying to hurt her friends and only aiming her way, too, because she’d put herself in the way.

No. Someone actually wanted Felicity Smoak dead.

“Why?” Felicity couldn’t help but ask, shaking her head slowly as she tried to figure it out and found she just couldn’t get past the fact that someone wanted to kill her specifically. She wasn’t really seeing it as both of the other two women in the room looked at her then. She barely noticed when Sara swore under her breath and grabbed her shoulder to steer her into the nearest chair, which happened to be the loveseat on the other side of the coffee table from Nyssa. “Why-Why would someone want to kill me?”

“Felicity—” Sara started gently, but Nyssa interrupted her.

“You are one of your city’s protectors, Felicity Smoak,” the assassin told her: no-nonsense firmly again. “And so you have made enemies. Such is the way of things.”
“But I’m not…” Felicity shook her head again, her eyes staying locked on the warrior all the while. “I’m just the tech girl.”

“No you’re not,” Sara said immediately, but somehow the calm acceptance on the other assassin’s face was still more important.

“That your strengths are not of much use in direct combat is unimportant.” Nyssa told her, still all undeniable calm. “You use your abilities to protect the people of your city from those that would see them harmed.”

“You’ve gotta know how important you are, Felicity,” Sara insisted, and when she looked at the other blonde, her blue eyes were locked on her with a level of earnestness that couldn’t be clearer. “Without you, we’d be blind out there most of the time. I mean, it was one thing when Ollie was just going out on his own, but being able to keep track of each other and still cover all the ground we need to has saved our lives more than once. Our lives, and everyone we’ve been able to save, too. You saved my life just last week…” the Canary trailed off suddenly, and those blue eyes narrowed. “Wait, if you just had an allergic reaction…” she paused, then asked, “How’s your shoulder?”

Felicity swallowed reflexively again as soon as she was reminded of how short a time it’d been since the feeling of her throat closing off had actually happened. Next to that—and the fact that she could breathe and swallow normally now—the fact that her shoulder didn’t hurt much at all anymore was almost an afterthought. “I’m tired, but… I don’t know how—”

“It was the least I could do, Beloved.” Nyssa interrupted again then, though unsurprisingly her eyes were locked on her ex. “You know that.”

“Thank you,” Sara said, and it sounded automatic, even though Felicity was the one whose life had been saved and the one that’d been miraculously healed here.

“You are most welcome,” Nyssa replied, and it was just as simply, just as by rote, but somehow all the more right for it.

Felicity felt a little strange interjecting into that, but still she had to say it. “Thank you.”

Nyssa’s chuckle would’ve been surprising even without the warmth that was in it. “You already thanked me, Sayidat Mushriq,” the assassin nodded to her again, and some of that gentleness that
belonged more to Sara was still there in her small smile. It was still somehow like a ‘you’re welcome,’ but the way the Canary was staring at the Heir to the Demon made her friend wonder if it was more than that.

Then Felicity blinked as she realized she didn’t know what those last words had meant. “Sy-yeh-da Moosh-ree?” she tried to repeat what the assassin had said, but winced even before either woman blinked at her complete mangling of the pronunciation.

Nyssa, however, chuckled softly again, before lightly repeating the words more slowly: clearly sounding them out for her. “Sa-aye-idat Mush-rik. It means ‘bright one,’ in Arabic. A fitting epithet for you.”

“In more ways than one,” Sara agreed with a smile.

“Th-Thank you.” Felicity nodded slowly, blushing a little because it sounded like some sort of praise even before the other blonde added her agreement.

Especially combined with the way Sara had reacted to it. Was still reacting to it. The translation wasn’t really an explanation, but how else could Felicity really respond?

All she could think of to say right now was ‘thank you,’ again, and she’d just said that—many more times than once tonight—so it’d sound stupid no matter how sincere. Well, she could also think of a whole bunch of questions, of course, but her new friend probably wouldn’t want to answer most of them, and Sara should be the one asking questions here anyway…

Then again, maybe she wasn’t the only one that didn’t know what to say now.

The assassin was still sitting in the seat she’d taken before Sara had entered the room. She still looked completely calm, with her hands clasped in her lap and a relaxed posture clearly meant to reassure the other female warrior in the room. But then again, she was the one that’d trained Sara the most, so even Felicity knew that her relaxed posture and visible hands only meant that it might take her a whole second longer to draw a weapon if she wanted to.

But that painfully pure panic that’d instantly overtaken the Canary’s face when she saw her ex had since faded. Some of it it’d been replaced by that same confusion Felicity herself couldn’t quite shake, but that was understandable.
Finally—after at least a whole minute of the two warriors simply staring at each other while Felicity was again trying to watch them both at the same time—Sara sighed. “Nyssa, what are you doing here?”

The dark haired woman’s face stayed evenly composed, but something about her eyes reminded Felicity of the same smile and reminiscent tone of earlier. “You called me, Taer al-Usfar,” she reminded her softly. “You asked for my help, and so here I am.”

“She’s here to help,” Felicity interjected, glancing between the two women hopefully. Though even she couldn’t really say what she was hoping for here. “That’s what she said. And she saved me, remember? From the cookies—well, my allergies,” she added the last part quickly, because it’d just occurred to her that she should’ve probably started with that.

“The cookies. Right.” Sara looked at her again, her sharp eyes scanning the other blonde’s form. “Where did those come from?”

“I—well, I have an allergy—”

“To nuts, I know. Ollie told me. And Digg, Tommy and Roy all told me, too,” Sara interrupted, looking her over again, before looking around the room, her eyes stopping and narrowing on the plate of cookies next the little note that promised—lied—that they were nut-free. “Where did the cookies come from?”

“They—They were here,” Felicity replied shakily. “When I got back from dinner. Don’t you have some, too? In your room?”

“No.” Sara answered flatly, still frowning even as she looked back at her ex-girlfriend. “They’re not nut-free, but someone went through the effort of making sure you thought they were.” She sighed, shaking her head. “That’s pretty damning.”

“It is,” the still active member of the League of Assassins confirmed, then added like it was actually an afterthought, “Relatively well planned and executed. Peanut oil was added to their batter, I am told.”

“Told by who?” Sara insisted.
“An amateur,” Nyssa answered, again sounding like it really didn’t matter. “He has already come to regret his foray into our realm of expertise.”

“An amateur?” the Canary repeated, blinking once in surprise. “You mean it wasn’t someone with training. So it’s someone who works here?”

“Yes, he worked for the hotel, delivering room service and the like. Well placed for this task.” Nyssa nodded, then shrugged. “The best that our friend’s enemy could manage under Evelyn Masrani’s eagle eyes without employing a professional.”

“Enemy?” Felicity repeated the word, and it sounded like a second language from her tongue, because for her it was. “But I-I don’t understand,” she whisper-protested, hoping it didn’t sound too much like whimpering to anyone else. “Why would anyone want to kill me?”

It seemed like an important question to her at least. She, personally, didn't have any enemies... did she?

The look Sara shot her then was sad, but she said nothing as Nyssa chuckled darkly.

“When inciting the wrath of a wolf, my friend, it is wise to remember that she may bite.”

Felicity kept staring at the other two women, honestly baffled.

But Sara’s eyes narrowed. “She?” the Canary clarified, and the connection clearly came to her all too easily. “You mean Rochev hired the amateur?” she asked, but then immediately sighed. “But you can’t really tell us that, can you? Not if the League is—”

“Had Ra’s al Ghul accepted the contract, League Law would have protected our client’s identity, that is true,” Nyssa interrupted with a nod. Then she shook her head. “He did not. Nor was he inclined to.”

Felicity found herself sagging with relief right away, then trying to not feel too offended when she saw how surprised Sara looked at the news. Or what her friend said.
“He didn’t?” the other blonde blinked. “Why not?”

Really, the leader of a group of professional killers shouldn’t be interested in her at all, but that he didn’t want to kill her couldn’t be called a bad thing.

“My father does not accept all assassination contracts that come before him, Beloved,” Nyssa reminded her lightly. “You know that.”

“Well, yeah, but…” Sara’s brow furrowed as she shook her head. “You can’t tell me that he’s afraid of us.”

“Ra’s al Ghul fears nothing,” the Demon’s Heir replied as if by rote, the words as firm as any frequently spoken mantra. She was still sitting on the other sofa with such perfect posture it made Felicity straighten again as soon as she noticed it. Though the assassin, on the other hand, looked like she didn’t have a care in the world. Or at least no desire to draw a weapon, which was hopefully entirely true. Her gentler tone as she went on seemed to confirm that. “Yet his respect is not impossible to earn, even by warriors outside of the League.” She shook her head slowly, her eyes staying locked with Sara’s. “And the innocent lives lost to the madness of Al Sa-Her yet hold weight, Beloved. My father will not seek to harm Starling City’s protectors without cause.”

Sara started at the other assassin, who stared straight back.

Felicity had the feeling she was missing something big passing between those two steady pairs of eyes. But this League of Assassins apparently had laws like some sort of nation, and probably many more secrets than most... or at least equally as many very, very dangerous ones as any country around the world.

After what felt like a small eternity of more silent staring, Nyssa continued. “What’s more, Isabel Rochev has never earned the privilege of coming to the League directly, nor shall she with the company she keeps.”

That made Felicity blink again, because yeah she was pretty sure she hated Isabel Rochev at least as much as any other reasonable person the woman had ever met, but the assassin had only just said that her father respected Team Arrow. Hadn’t she?

“‘The company she keeps?’” Sara repeated, cocking her head to the side. “I couldn’t find any affiliations with HIVE, and I did look.”
Nyssa actually snorted. “No, Beloved. If the woman was one of Damian Darhk’s followers we would have dealt with her long before now. Or she would have considerably more security around her at all times.”

Sara nodded, all of that clearly making complete sense to her.

Felicity could really only follow the words and wonder at most of the names, but the fact that the Canary could accept her ex-girlfriend’s response so easily was somewhat reassuring. As was the fact that the bitch trying to destroy Oliver’s company wasn’t affiliated with either the League of Assassins or some of its actual enemies. Otherwise the businesswoman would probably be a lot more dangerous in the literal sense, not just the big business sense that Simon Masrani was helping them handle. Though she could understand why Sara would research that kind of thing, too. After all, if the woman was that much more dangerous they’d definitely want to know.

“Then who…” Sara started, trailing off uncertainly, but the assassin obliged her.

“The company that Rochev truly represents has had an accomplished assassin at their bidding for a several years now,” Nyssa explained. “A swordsman of considerable skill, known as Deathstroke.”

“And he’s an enemy of the League?” Sara asked hesitantly, her words careful. “Or does Ra’s want to recruit him?”

“Neither as of yet,” Nyssa answered immediately. “Nor shall he ever be recruited. While his skills are impressive even to us, the man has demonstrated on numerous occasions that he is not sane.”

“That hasn’t stopped the League before,” the Canary pointed out. “The training could even be called a cure for some people that the rest of the world would call crazy. You told me that.”

“I did. And it can be,” Nyssa nodded. “However, Deathstroke’s insanity is both unpredictable and far too fixed a constant for the League to risk recruiting him.”

“But he’s not an enemy of the League?” Sara tried again, and Felicity couldn’t help but worry that they really were straying into the area of these League secrets that they shouldn't know and wouldn't knowing them be dangerous?
The Heir to the Demon kept answering. “Not at this time,” the assassin shook her head. “His work has not yet conflicted with the League directly.”

“But Ra’s is keeping an eye on him anyway,” Sara nodded this time, and Nyssa nodded again too.

“As is only wise, Beloved.” The raven-haired woman hesitated, pursing her lips for a moment before soldiering on. “Regardless, Rochev sought the assistance of another now. It is possible that her employers do not wish to send Deathstroke to handle this.”

“Or it could just be they wanted the deft hand of a poisoner, even an amateur,” Sara shook her head. “Not a swordsman.”

“That, too, is a possibility,” Nyssa agreed. “One of my warriors is keeping her under observation for now to be certain.”

Making Felicity groan; because really, how was this her life?

“And Ra’s… allowed this?” Sara asked even more hesitantly then any of her uncertain questions before, sounding like she could barely believe she was asking it.

Felicity wasn’t sure if it was a good thing that she could barely believe it either.

“I am the Heir to the Demon, Beloved,” Nyssa’s smile looked different from before, though Felicity didn’t know her well enough to say if it was bitter or just more resigned. “As you insisted not long ago, I am not without some influence.” She looked at Felicity then, making her realize she hadn’t seen those dark eyes leave Sara since the other blonde entered the room till now. “Might we call for some tea, my friend?” she asked, and gestured to elegant little sitting area that each individual bedroom on the floor that Masrani called his own had. “You will yet need more rest before your health returns to you completely. However, as it is your life under threat you should not be excluded from our discussion.”

“Wait, her health will…” Sara trailed off again, looking at Felicity again, this time scrutinizing her even more closely.

The tech specialist thought they’d already covered the part about Nyssa al Ghul using some sort of League of Assassins magical cure—not unlike Oliver’s island herbs—on her. But the Canary clearly
had just realized something else that Felicity couldn’t hope to figure out.

Instead of saying anything to the other blonde as her eyes widened, Sara’s head snapped back around to the raven-haired beauty. “You—”

Again, Nyssa interrupted her. “As the Heir of Ra’s al Ghul I am also afforded some great privileges as well,” she answered, and there was a definite ring of finality in her tone.

A ring that Sara completely ignored. “But you’re only supposed to use that for—”

“It is a part of my arsenal, Ta-er al-Ufar,” the assassin cut her off again. “One which I may wield in any way I am pleased to.”

“But you—your father, he’ll—”

“Never know.” If Nyssa earlier words were firm, these ones were made from diamonds—or maybe something even harder. And when that dark gaze came back to meet Felicity’s again the computer expert had a hard time not meeting it instead of trying to hide behind Sara, but she managed it as the other woman went on. “If ever asked by any outside of your team, my friend: your shoulder wound was a shallow one and you heal fast. I arrived in time to warn you away from the cookies before you could eat one. Understand?”

“No,” Felicity answered honestly. “But I think I’m getting used to that sort of thing so I’ll go with it...” she sighed softly, then went on. “Can I thank you again? I feel like I should really thank you again.”

“You need not,” Nyssa’s voice was warmer again, but still hard as she said, “And after this you cannot. Remember, I brought you only a warning. Nothing more.”

“A warning and whoever tried to do this,” Sara gestured in the direction of the still yummy looking deathtrap halfway across the room.

“Information and a professional courtesy, Beloved. Nothing more, nothing less.”
Sara nodded slowly, then said something so softly that Felicity could only barely hear her, but it didn’t matter that she could because it definitely wasn’t a language she knew so it was probably Arabic.

Nyssa’s smile was warmer again as she gave another regal head bow. Her eyes, too, were warmer as they went back to Felicity, and it took one eyebrow going up for her to remember that she was supposed to say something.

“Oh, tea?” Felicity nodded quickly. “Sure. Um. I can order room ser—”

“I shall prepare it myself, my friend, and return shortly.” Nyssa told her, and nodded to Sara. “You might invite your other companions to join us? There are now three of them, I believe?”

“Yeah,” Sara sighed, “We’ll give them a call…”

Felicity winced, too, but obediently picked up her phone again when the other blonde glanced at her even as Nyssa headed towards the little kitchenette the room boasted hidden off in one little out-of-the-way area. Digg would probably take it all in stride, and Roy would hopefully follow his lead, because Oliver was not going to like this.

“Think we’ll call Digg and Roy over first,” Sara decided.

“Yeah, I’ll call Digg,” Felicity agreed, then frowned. “What about Lyla?”

“No,” Sara said immediately. “We’ll have to tell her something, but we don’t want to get the League mixed up in whatever the hell ARGUS is doing here, okay?”

“Okay,” Felicity agreed, then frowned as she looked around her for her phone. Where was—oh, right, it was still over by the bed. “Just a second.”

“I’ll text Roy,” the other blonde told her, her phone already in hand before Felicity was halfway to the bed.

The team’s tech expert felt a bit better once she had her phone in hand again. She didn’t like being
completely disconnected from the digital world, no matter where she was, and her phone helped solve that. At the very least if one of those monsters managed to bust out, she should get the alert the system was set to send her long before she heard the screams and saw stampedes of people followed by a vicious predator that was bigger than some buildings. Though, truth be told, she didn’t like not having her phone on her and fully charged all the time anyway.

“The hot-head’s on his way,” Sara spoke up a second later just as Felicity’s thumb started flying through a text, too.

**FELICITY:** Hey, Digg. R u awake?

It was barely a breath before his response came.

**DIGG:** Yup. U ok?

**FELICITY:** Yes. But we need to have a team meeting. Don’t tell Lyla yet. Sara already called Roy.

**DIGG:** OK. Want me to grab Oliver?

**FELICITY:** Yes please.

She was a little surprised the bodyguard was so willing to leave his ex-wife out, since things seemed to be warming up between the pair of them, so maybe they wouldn’t be just each other’s exes much longer. Or maybe they already were more than that. Still, Lyla wasn’t really a part of the team and despite his fondness for her, even Digg didn’t seem to think all that highly of ARGUS.

“He on his way, too?” Sara checked.

“Yes,” Felicity sighed. “And he’s gonna grab Oliver for us.”

“Great, one less headache,” the Canary said, then grimaced. “Or at least a slightly delayed one.”

The two blondes shared commiserating looks while Felicity went back to her seat nearest the door. Sara stayed standing, probably ready to put herself in between Nyssa and any of the guys when they came in here—and Felicity couldn’t really blame her. But she could really hope it wasn’t necessary.
Because even Nyssa al Ghul had noted that Evelyn Masrani was the one around here to be wary of, which all but confirmed Felicity's suspicions of the career Lyn had before her marriage to one of the richest men in the world. Whether she was also some sort of assassin or more of a spy hardly mattered, she wouldn't miss much either way.

Felicity had already seen the pieces coming together behind both Masranis' eyes: she could only hope that the whole they were forming wasn’t too close to the truth yet. She was a bit surprised, actually, that Lyn hadn’t checked on her already. But then, it’d been a very long day for her, too. She’d actually looked tired as they were leaving the restaurant earlier…

KNOCK. KNOCK.

Sara was already at the door by the time Roy’s fist pounded on it. Undoubtedly wanting to rescue the poor door before the Mirakuru-enhanced man could accidentally damage it. “Come on in, Roy. Digg and Ollie should be here in a minute.”

“…Okay,” the vigilante-in-training agreed, quickly crossing the room to drop into one of the seats across from Felicity. “There a reason we had to do this now? You know, instead of after everyone’s gotten some sleep?”

“Yeah. And you’ll find out with everyone else.”

“Okay, okay,” Roy shrugged, then turned to give Felicity a small smile. “How you doing, blondie?”

“Better,” Felicity answered honestly, then the doorknob turned and the door opened again, though Sara hadn’t been the one to open it. That fact made both blonde’s frown at the two men that were walking in now. “Why do you have a key to my room?”,

“Comes with being in charge of security, Felicity,” Digg replied immediately, while Oliver just came straight over to her.

“What’s wrong?”

“What?” Felicity blinked, then her tongue took off under that intense gaze, “Nothing, well not nothing, but I’m fine now so—”
“You’re fine now?” Oliver cut her off. “Was your shoulder—”

“I’m fine, Oliver, really,” Felicity managed to insist, then flinched. “I mean, I’m a little freaked out, but that’s nothing new. I’ve been freaked out about this place for years, and now I’m actually back here. That Isabel wants to kill me doesn’t—”

“Wait, what?” the archer interrupted her again. “What do you mean Isabel wants to kill you?”

“Felicity Smoak cannot answer that question,” Nyssa spoke up as she came into the room carrying the elegant wooden tray that’d been in the kitchenette, bearing an ornate little tea set. “I, however, can.”

All of the fighters had tensed at the sight of her—well, all of the men had, but Sara was tense as she put herself in between the other woman and the men that were surprised to see her. And Roy was just reacting to the way Oliver and Digg looked like they expected the assassin to attack at any minute.

“Don’t fight.” Felicity interjected before anything else could be said, sending her best pleading look all around. “Please. I don’t think I could take that tonight.”

Digg relaxed a little right away, though he didn’t move from where he was standing almost blocking her from Nyssa’s sight.

Either following the bodyguard’s lead or in response to her request, Roy made himself relax back into the other couch, too, though that was never easy for him ever since he was pumped full of the Japanese super-soldier drug.

Oliver, of course, was still glaring at the assassin, but his hands were doing the looking for an arrow thing instead of forming fists, so that wasn’t that bad. “Nyssa.”

“Good evening, Oliver Queen.” Nyssa responded as she rounded the couches, ignoring the way everyone else moved in response. Oliver and Digg moved so that she’d have to get by both Roy and Digg if she wanted to go one way around the table or through Oliver if she went over it, which seemed unlikely since she was setting the pretty tea set there. “We will be having tea shortly if you’d care to partake, it must steep for a short time.”
“Thank you, Nyssa,” Felicity made herself speak up again, ignoring the frown Oliver sent her way for drawing the assassin’s attention at all, like this wasn’t her room and the daughter of Ra’s al Ghul didn’t already know she was here.

“It is a pleasure.”

“Sara, what is she doing here?” Oliver demanded of his now ex-girlfriend, his tone only barely what one could call civil.

“She’s here to help, Ollie,” Sara told him firmly, looking around at all three tense men. “Really, guys. Relax.”

“We don’t need her help—”

“I do,” Felicity interrupted before the archer could get anymore than that out. “I need her help. So please don’t piss her off.”

That managed to not only shut the vigilante up for second; it got a blink out of him, too. Then, not expectedly, a scowl.

“What do you need the League of Assassins for, Felicity?” Digg asked a little more quickly than he usually would, probably hurrying to get the question out there before Oliver could come up with a much less diplomatic way to ask.

“‘Cause someone’s trying to kill me,” Felicity answered, then pointed at the evil plate halfway across the room with the lying note next to it. “And yes, I know, I shouldn’t eat them anyway, but that’s why I don’t buy them. Not that I’d buy ones that can kill me anyway, of course—”

“Uh, Blondie, all I see is some tasty looking cookies,” Roy observed with clear confusion, but the eyes of the two older men had both zeroed in on the note. "Not someone tryin' to kill you."

“They’re not nut-free?” Digg asked the obvious, but Oliver didn’t wait for an answer before he jumped to suspicious.
“How do we know she didn’t put them there?”

“Uh, ‘cause if she’d put them there to kill me she wouldn’t have saved me?” Felicity frowned at him, and quickly added. “And it’s not like she’d need to use my allergies to kill me.”

“Ollie, the League doesn’t play games like that,” Sara told him, holding his eyes when he frowned at her. She went on after a long moment of no blinking. “She saved Felicity, and her men have already caught the guy that Rochev hired to try this.”

“Ro—You think Isabel did this?” Oliver’s frown deepened into his full scowl.

“What? You don’t think she wouldn’t try to fight back when you’re finally starting to beat her?” Sara shot back, then gestured at Felicity. “She must’ve figured out that Felicity is why Masrani is coming to the rescue at Q.C. If she doesn’t make it off this island, maybe—”

“Oh if I die here, he’ll still follow through on the deal,” Felicity interrupted, shrugging when all of them frowned at her. “I’m just saying. Lyn would kill him if he didn’t.”

“That may be true,” Nyssa leaned forward a little to start pouring the tea into each of the little handleless teacups. “All the same, I do not believe anyone here wants to test the theory.”

“But you already caught whoever baked the nut-filled cookies, right?” Roy asked, accepting the cup of tea she handed him with a blink. “Uh, thanks?”

“We did.” Nyssa confirmed, leaning further across the table to put the next two cups in front of Digg and Felicity.

“Thank you,” Felicity found herself saying again, while the ex-soldier only offered a silent nod of gratitude.

Nyssa nodded, finally filling the last three cups on the tray and presenting them to Sara and Oliver, not even twitching when Sara accepted hers right away but Oliver frowned at her for a full second before finally taking it. Only then did she lean back in her seat next to Roy and pick up her own cup, bringing it to her lips for the first sip.
“Umm, this is good,” Felicity said as soon as she’d managed to swallow that first steaming sip.

“I’ve missed this,” Sara murmured after visibly savoring her long slow sip. Though the sadness in her eyes as they locked momentarily with her ex-girlfriend’s again indicated she meant more than the special tea. “Can’t exactly find it outside of Nanda Parbat.”

“No, you cannot.”

Oliver didn’t quite slam his cup down once it was empty, but there was a definite thud from the glass tabletop that made Felicity wince. “Where is he?” he demanded of Nyssa, frown deepening when she only took another sip of her tea. “The man that tried to poison Felicity.”

“This island provides a number of predators that are quite capable of eliminating evidence,” Nyssa finally answered, sounding like she was talking about the tropically perfect weather outside. “I believe the closest one is the giant in the lake that typically eats sharks.”

“Wait,” Felicity blinked at her. “You killed him?”

“No,” the assassin answered in a prompt way that somehow didn’t make her feel any better, even before Roy piped in again.

“So he’s still gonna be alive when he becomes the dino-shark-eater’s midnight snack?”

“To the best of my knowledge he was, yes,” Nyssa answered, still completely nonchalant.

“But-But there are alarms and-and cameras all around this place!” Felicity protested, trying to tell her stomach to stop turning at the same time.

“There are a large number of them, yes,” the assassin actually shrugged. “It presents an interesting challenge for us. And yourselves, should you choose to don your masks while you are here,” she indicated Oliver and Sara by raising her cup towards them, then brought it back to her lips for another sip.
Which was when Felicity noticed that neither vigilante looked particularly bothered by the fate of whoever had tried to kill her. It irritated her, because she really shouldn’t be the one that was the most bothered by the fact that the person who’d tried to murder her was going to be—or maybe already had been—murdered. But a glance around at Roy and even Diggle confirmed that they didn’t even look a little uncomfortable with the prospect of someone being fed to the dinosaur that Masrani had to have his scientists also clone Great Whites for in order to get around most of the environmental sanctions that should’ve kept him from feeding the sharks to his underwater dwelling monster.

“But-But shouldn’t we—”

“Don’t waste your time fretting about events you cannot change, my friend,” Nyssa cut her off, and that small, slightly sad smile was back on her face. “It was necessary, and it is done.”

Felicity swallowed, “But—”

“The man was no innocent. What’s more, he was an amateur who would hold himself to no honor or code.”

“He worked here?” Sara asked her ex-girlfriend, before looking at Felicity as soon as Nyssa had nodded confirmation. “That means he wasn’t playing a part to achieve his mission objective, Felicity. He worked here, and his job was to help the people who visit this island. Instead he accepted money to kill you, someone he’d never met.”

“And one whom he did not care to know anything about,” Nyssa added, shrugging when the tech genius frowned at her. “A success tonight would have made it easier for him to accept similar jobs in the future, yet failure does not preclude the possibility either. He was willing—more than willing—to attempt it, which means he would again.” The assassin shook her head slowly, her voice still steady and calm as she went on like she was trying to lead the far less violent woman to this terrible truth. “He did not care to know who you were or why someone wants you dead, Felicity Smoak. The money is all that mattered.”

What they were saying made some sort of sense. In a terribly twisted, violent and all too permanent sort of way. But it also seemed very unfair that she was the one trying to argue for what was right and wrong here when that meant defending the stranger that’d tried to kill her with her life-threatening allergy to nuts. Never mind the fact that it was the two assassins in the room telling her why it was okay for them to kill another assassin—even if he was an amateur.

“It is done, Felicity,” Nyssa said again, more authority than sadness in her voice again this time.
“And your conscious cannot change what has past. Do not let it weigh upon your heart.”

“But I…” Felicity trailed off, not sure why she should say to that. Because the assassin’s last point was definitely true: even if she didn’t think it was right for them to just kill the man that’d been hired to kill her, if it was already done it couldn’t be changed. And while she might make some headway with convincing Sara from not doing this sort of thing in the future, which was the main reason she might keep going with this argument if this was something Oliver had done, it wasn’t like she really had the slightest chance of convincing the future leader of the League of Assassins to give up assassinating people.

A warm, familiar hand on her shoulder drew her out of her thoughts then, and she looked up to find Oliver’s worried eyes locking with her own. “You okay?” he asked her softly, though everyone else could hear him.

Felicity swallowed, still finding it strange that she really could—only now she wanted to both thank and yell at the woman that’d saved her for it—so that made her nod slowly. “I’ll be okay, I think.”

She hoped so, at least.

She was pretty sure another monster would be swimming through her nightmares the next time she closed her eyes. But it wasn’t anyone in this room: just another dinosaur, and considering she was stuck in *Jurassic World* for at least the next several days, that would’ve been bound to happen anyway.

Oliver held her gaze a moment more, then nodded before looking back at Nyssa, though his reassuring grip on her shoulder didn’t even shift. “He told you that Isabel hired him?”

“No,” the assassin shook her head. “However, in so far as the League is aware, there is only one contract currently open for Miss Smoak. And we do make a point of monitoring such thing.”

Sure. Business one-oh-one for assassins, probably. How was this her life?

“How much?” Oliver demanded, making Felicity blink at him.

Was he actually asking how much Isabel Rochev was willing to pay for her murder? Did Felicity herself want to know the answer to that?
“Ra’s al Ghul has already prohibited the contract personally, Mister Queen,” Nyssa answered promptly. “No amount of money will discourage more professionals than that.”

Felicity was pretty sure she wasn’t the only one who blinked at that, though she couldn’t see any of the others since they were all looking at the assassin. But really, she couldn’t be the only one who was surprised by that. The scary leader of the League of Assassins not wanting to kill her was one thing, but actually protecting her? Why would he even care?

“Thank you, Nyssa,” Sara said it almost too softly for everyone else to hear.

The nod the assassin offered in response was more of a head bow again.

Felicity felt like she should say ‘thank you’ again herself, but the feeling of not wanting to intrude was stronger at the moment.

“That does not mean, however, that Miss Smoak is entirely safe,” Nyssa pointed out, and she still sounded like she was talking about whether or not they might see some rain clouds tomorrow. “If your deal with Masrani will be complete when your time on island is done, then this visit is the only window Isabel Rochev has to prevent it. And as I told Sara, she is not without considerably more effective means.”

Oliver’s frown had gotten deeper and deeper with each word. “What’d you—”

“You said he’s called ‘Deathstroke,’ right?” Sara cut in. “What do you know about him?”

“His identity as of yet remains unknown to us,” Nyssa replied, sounding thoughtful as she went on. “I am told he is a swordsman of considerable skill, however, and that he has demonstrated tremendous feats of strength on numerous occasions. Unnatural strength, the origins of which we have not yet discovered.”

“How long has the League been tracking him?” Oliver wanted to know.

“The first appearance we can credit to him with certainty was nearly three years ago, though he has becoming far more active over the last year than he was at any time prior.”
“ARGUS will probably have something on him, then,” Oliver looked at Diggle, who was already shaking his head.

“I’ll ask Lyla, but that might be a better question for Waller.”

Oliver nodded, though his hand moving away from her shoulder now told Felicity that he wasn’t comfortable with the idea. Mainly because that hand looked like he was subconsciously looking for an arrow again. “Let’s see what Lyla can tell us first,” he replied with a sigh. “Her people will need to know about the possibility of a serious threat anyway.”

“Roger that,” Digg nodded, crossing his arms. “What about Masrani? Do we tell him to up security, too?”

Yes, Felicity wanted to say. If only because that’d hopefully mean the assassins that were for some reason protecting her wouldn’t keep feeding people—bad people, but still people—to dinosaurs. But this wasn’t one of those conversations she was supposed to butt in on so she kept quiet.

“Not yet.” Oliver looked back at her then, and his eyes gentled. “At least one of us will have to be with you all the time, though. Okay?” Then he frowned again. “Unless you’d prefer—”

“Strangers with guns all around me?” Felicity shook her head. “No, not really. Thanks.”

Normally she might protest a little more at the idea of needing a babysitter. Or, okay, a lot more. But the truth was she wouldn’t mind the company when she was surrounded by her nightmares and back at this place that’d created them. And, you know, she thought she could probably take Isabitch in a catfight. Maybe. But if there was really the possibility of the bitch sending someone even the League of Assassins was wary of after her, she’d rather be glued to someone else’s side until that possibility wasn’t one anymore.

Suddenly a yawn broke free from her mouth, startling her so much it escaped the hand she threw up to catch it almost entirely. “Sorry,” Felicity tried to say, but had to say it through her hand as it all but turned into another yawn.

Sara chuckled, “First things first, I think we all could use some sleep.” She directed a raised eyebrow at Oliver then. “This room’s already been compromised—”
“She can stay with me,” the archer interrupted decisively, and it took Felicity a full second after that to realize they were talking about her, and by then he was already locking worried eyes with her again. “The balcony’s too easy an access point to the bedroom in my room, too, though, so I’ll have to pull the couch in.”

For some reason Roy snorted at that, and it looked like Digg might be hiding a grin behind one hand. How exactly was this funny?

Felicity tried to shake her head, but the bodyguard spoke up before she could get the protest out.

“Makes the most sense, Felicity. Unless you want to stay with me and Lyla?”

Oh. Right. Digg was mending fences and heating this up with Lyla. Roy was here with Thea. Sara should probably be the one to keep an eye on Nyssa. Tommy was with Laurel, even though neither one would be much help against assassins. That left only Oliver or his mother, and while Missus Queen still sometimes scared the hell out of her, she probably wouldn’t scare off professional—or even amateur—hitmen, whether she was willing to or not, all things considered.

Felicity swallowed again, but she couldn’t make herself look away from those serious blue eyes as she answered, “I-I could tell Mister Masrani and—”

“No,” Oliver cut her off, but was then interrupted himself.

“Evelyn Masrani may be of help, should Deathstroke truly become a threat,” Nyssa opined. “Her husband, however, can do little more than he has already done to make your visit to this island comfortable.”

Felicity blinked, because that seemed like pretty high praise for the billionaire’s wife, but then again she couldn’t say she was completely surprised either. Not given what she’d been able to learn about her friend’s life before she’d married one of the richest men in the world.

“Okay, well, we’ll grab your things and get them over to Ollie’s room then, okay?”

Felicity shook herself and struggled to stand, trying to tell herself she didn’t need to go straight to
bed. Her body, however, didn’t seem to agree. “No, I can—”

“You look like you’re gonna pass out any second now, Felicity,” Sara told her firmly. “The, uh, League remedy that Nyssa gave you may’ve healed you, but it burnt up a bunch of your strength to do it. You need to rest now.”

“She is right,” Nyssa put in unnecessarily.

Oliver looked torn between wanting to make her lay down right now or demanding to know what the two women were talking about, but Digg spoke up again before he could decide on either.

“We can all talk more in the morning,” the bodyguard pointed out. “I’ll read Lyla in on what’s happened.”

“You can stay with me, Nyssa,” Sara offered, almost shyly. “If you want?”

“Thank you,” the warrior bowed her head again.

“What about Thea?” Roy wondered aloud. “Or Tommy?”

The hot-head cared more about his girlfriend, of course, but Tommy was really the one that knew enough to know what questions to ask when he noticed something was amiss.

“In the morning,” Oliver sighed, and then offered her his hand. “Come on.”

Felicity accepted the helping hand automatically, too tired to argue. She couldn’t quite keep herself from glancing at Sara as she did so, though she relaxed a little more when the other blonde just gave her a warm smile.

“Might want to grab your P.J’s before you go. We’ll have to pack everything up again to move it, unless you locked your suitcase?”

Felicity blinked. “No, uh, I-I didn’t—”
“Then the hotel unpacked it,” Oliver nodded, turning his frowned towards the other blonde again. “It might not be—”

“Nyssa and I’ll check everything to make sure there’s no more surprises,” the Canary cut him off. “You guys get going. We’ll be over soon.”

“Thank you,” Felicity found herself saying quietly once more, and again she had to bring her free hand up to try and catch yet another yawn that followed. “I’m sorry I—”

“No apologies necessary.” Nyssa interrupted her this time.

There was a lot of interrupting tonight, wasn’t there?

But right now Felicity was too tired to care. Right now, she just wanted to make sure she didn’t end up with Oliver carrying her through the hallways or something like that. So she just followed, putting one foot firmly in front of the other, as he led her out of the room.

“What did Sara mean?” Oliver asked her softly once they were out in the hall, with Digg and Roy following after them once the vigilante-in-training had closed the door behind them. “About healing you with League remedies?”

Felicity bit her lip for a moment, then admitted, “I don’t know. My shoulder’s not hurt anymore. At all. And I should have a whole bunch of problems left over from my allergic reaction. I should be swollen up and—well, it’s not pretty.” She shook her head. “But when I woke up after the attack, I felt fine. I still feel fine. It’s weird.”

“You think they have something like the Mirakuru?” Roy wondered, a hopeful note in his voice as he asked her, “How’s your anger management, Blondie?”

She had to frown again at that, but all she could say was, “I feel fine.”

“No, I’ve seen what Mirakuru does to people,” Oliver shot his protégé’s idea down. “You reacted the same way. Violently angry, out of control until you calmed down a little.” He sighed. "It must be something similar though.”
That should probably bother her, but none of them seemed terribly worried by the idea. In fact, the archer sounded almost relieved.

And Felicity really was tired, so she just kept quiet as he led the rest of the way to his room. Thankfully it was late enough that no one else was up and about to answer questions. It was only as they got there, though, with the other two bidding them goodnight at the door after Oliver had checked to make sure his room was perfectly safe, that she realized a problem.

“I forgot my nightgown,” she sighed, and started to turn back towards the door.

“No,” Oliver stopped her, turning her back towards the bedroom despite her protests. “Sara will bring everything over soon.” He gave her tired form a considering look, then frowned. “Here, you can change into something of mine.”

Felicity blinked at him, “But—”

“It’s that or wait for Sara to get here.” He told her, not pointing out that the two assassins were going to be checking all of her belongings for anymore potentially deadly traps in the meantime, so it might take them a while.

It might take them a long while if they got around to talking about any of the things they undoubtedly had to talk about, too.


Oliver only offered her a nod in response. “Come on.”

And somehow, no matter how truly terrible this day had been, and no matter how much she hated being on this damn island again, Felicity still felt a little better.

Safe.
A/N: *sigh* Well, there’s the next chapter! Hope it was worth the absurd wait. We’re on the island now, and most of the key players are already there, so the coming chapters shouldn’t be as hard to write. In theory, anyway. Though I’m definitely not going to let myself write multiple versions of the next chapter again. I had no less than five versions of this chapter going at one point—figuring out how to blend them all together was a migraine all its own! This means that, yes, I’ve proof-read and edited this thing more times than I can count looking back, but I may still have missed something. If you notice anything, please let me know. I’m sure I’ll find something later on either way, but I didn’t want to keep you waiting even longer just because I’m more than a little sick of rereading the same chapter over and over and over again. The ending still feels a bit forced to me, but maybe I’ll feel better about it once I’ve written past it...

Again, many apologies to all of you for the ridiculous wait. I’m not going to promise it won’t happen again, because unfortunately I haven’t hit the lottery yet, so work does always have to take precedence. But I will try to not leave you guys waiting so long. Ideas and comments ALWAYS help, of course, but you already know that. So, I hope all of you are having a great Valentine’s Day, and hopefully this chapter came as a pleasant surprise to those of you that were still looking for it!

Sincerely,
Jess S
Breakfasts & BIG Babies

Chapter Notes

A/N: First and foremost, I’d like to apologize to everyone for how ridiculously long it’s been since I last updated. It was not at all intended. In fact, I thought I’d posted THIS chapter months ago… but apparently not. I’m a little wary of posting it now, because I can’t remember why I wouldn’t have posted it and I must have had a reason of some kind. It looks fine though, so here it is. Let me know if you see anything off about it, please.
And, of course: Enjoy! :-D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tommy Merlyn’s P.O.V.

Tommy knew he was staring, but he really couldn’t help it. He was just way too surprised by what was in front of his eyes right now.

The one lying in the bed with the sunlight glistening off her hair was definitely not Ollie. What was Felicity doing in Ollie’s room? How had he missed that finally happening? But wait, Tommy frowned as he noticed something strange; she still had clothes on?

Before anymore thoughts could cross his mind, however, a hand on his shoulder was yanking him away from the bedroom door, and he was a lot less surprised to find his friend’s ‘you have failed this city’ scowl suddenly aimed straight at him.

“Sorry, sorry,” Tommy had thrown his hands up in surrender even before his mouth started surrendering, too. “Thought you’d be, well, you know—”

“Quiet,” Oliver hissed at him, even as he finally stopped dragging him once they were in the living area of the suite that was about as far away from the still open door to the bedroom as you could get without going out into the hallway or jumping off the balcony. “Keep it down. She needs to sleep.”

Somehow that didn’t add up in Tommy’s head anymore than the sight he’d seen in the bedroom itself did. “…But she still has her clothes on?” he asked in honest bewilderment.
“Shut up, Tommy,” Oliver rolled his eyes even as he shoved his still confused friend back towards the door that led from the suite’s living area out into the communal center of the V.I.P penthouse level. “Nothing happened.”

“Yeah…” Tommy nodded slowly, still very confused. “I just said that,” he didn’t even try to hide the unsaid ‘why the hell not?’ that was right there in his tone. Somehow that seemed a whole lot more important than why Felicity Smoak was just sleeping here instead of in her own nice suite if she and Oliver hadn’t slept together. It all just didn’t add up in his head. At all.

“We needed to change some things up for security.” Oliver shook his head again, “She’s safer with me.”

“…Uh-huh.”

“Why are you even here?” the vigilante’s fearsome scowl returned as he quickly demanded, “And how the hell did you get into my room? The door was locked.”

“Yeah, I think all our keys work on all the doors here? Mine has so far, anyway,” Tommy shrugged, a little uncomfortable as he realized his still half-asleep action—born from a lifetime of sleepovers and vacations with his best friend—might not have been the wisest move, especially when his now very lethal friend was so on edge. Talking about that probably wouldn’t help, though, so he just soldiered on with answering the other question he’d asked. “And your mom sent me to grab you for breakfast. Sara said you’d want to wait for Felicity, so you’d—well, she probably—”

“Weren’t we just having breakfast on the terrace this morning?” Oliver cut in, still frowning at him.

And Tommy took a breath to stop the flood of words that never used to happen to him before he got to know Felicity Smoak. “Yeah,” he confirmed. “You two and Thea were the only ones that hadn’t shown yet. Digg offered to find you, but I figured he could use more time with his pretty secret agent lady, so…”

His friend’s face twisted between amusement and irritation at that, but then he just shook his head. “Well, thanks. I’ll see if Felicity’s ready to get up. She’s still healing, so—”

“So if sleeping beauty wants some more sleep we’re gonna let her get it. Yeah, got it,” Tommy readily agreed, holding both his hands up. “I’ll let ‘em know.” He started to turn back towards the breakfast terrace, then stopped and looked back with a frown. “What about your mom? I mean, I
“My mother knows better than to say a damn thing either,” Oliver interrupted; an even darker look then before crossing his face as he said it.

“O-kay…” Tommy sighed, not liking the reminder of just how bad things had gotten between his friend and Missus Q but as he didn’t have any idea how to help fix it, all he could do was surrender. “I’ll, uh, I’ll let ‘em know you’re on your way? Both of you?”

Oliver only nodded silently, but most of that forbidding expression had fallen from his face while he escorted his friend to the door. “Yeah, I’ll be there soon. After I check on Felicity.”

“Okay then. See you soon.” Tommy said, turning to go back down the hall he’d just come here through a few minutes before.

It wasn’t that he didn’t understand where all of Oliver’s anger was coming from. The sense of betrayal that you should have expected but just didn’t ‘cause you didn’t want to. The extra intense anger at yourself, and the betrayer, as a result. And how much worse it was when that betrayer was your parent.

Tommy definitely got all of that. He’d been disappointed by his father far too many times over the years—long before the madman decided to become a mass murderer—so he knew that anger deep down in his blood and bones.

But Moira Queen was still leagues ahead of Malcolm Merlyn in every way. Especially when it came to good intentions in a parent.

Sure that might’ve just made the betrayal—the double betrayal, really—that much worse for Oliver. Because Ollie had had his mom up there on a pedestal even when she was being tried for conspiracy and 502 counts of murder. Somehow her public outing of the Undertaking before it’d happened had helped redeem her enough in her son’s eyes to keep her from toppling off the top of that pedestal.

That warning hadn’t been enough for the courts, but the D.A was a scapegoat-seeking idiot in that regard anyway. It’d been a relief in more ways than one when the jury had declared Missus Q not guilty. For Tommy especially, because he’d been wondering the entire time why exactly Laurel’s boss had decided to go after the woman his father had terrorized into helping him, but not the madman’s own son. His girlfriend had insisted she’d had nothing to do with it, that Donner had
already decided that Tommy almost dying in The Glades himself meant he hadn’t known. It still
didn’t sit well with Tommy, though it would’ve been a lot worse if that jury had decided Ollie’s
mom was guilty of anything.

Ollie and Thea had managed to forgive their mom—for the most part—when it came to the damn
Undertaking. It’d taken a trip back to that Island for Ollie to come to terms with his failure to stop it,
and Thea had needed a few months to accept the whole thing, too. But they’d all managed to be
there for the trial, though watching his girlfriend take over for the prosecution had been about as far
from easy for all of them as you could get. Still, they’d all breathed stunned sighs of relief when the
forewoman of the jury had said ‘not guilty’ to every charge.

But after all of that, Ollie really wasn’t ready for yet another horrible skeleton to come crawling out
of his mother’s closet like some kind of zombie. None of them were. So that second betrayal did
manage to tip the pedestal over. And who knew if its crumbled ruins could ever be repaired into
something of a real relationship again…

Never mind how screwed up everything was with the two of them insisting on keeping Thea in the
dark about why they were arguing. That seemed to be the only thing Ollie and his mom could agree
on these days. Well, that and supposedly the fact that they even were arguing. But really, the kid
wasn’t stupid.

It made Tommy glad very Thea had a steady, reliable boyfriend in Roy. The kid had been a real rock
for the baby sister that Tommy and Oliver both shared. Had always shared in their hearts, but now
knew they shared her by blood, too. It was probably the only good thing about finding out that
Missus Q had slept with his dad a lifetime ago. Even Oliver had said that. Well, that and the fact that
Thea existed at all; though most of her must’ve come from her mom, because there was no way
many of his dad’s traits had been the dominant genes that made up that wonderful girl.

Tommy tried to tell himself that most of him had obviously come from his mother, too, but it was a
lot harder to convince himself of that when he barely remember the woman. All his dad had ever said
about his lost wife after her death was the repeated reminders of the fact that she was taken from
them by some punk in The Glades. She was dead. Murdered. Gone.

Ollie’s parents had nicer memories to share about Rebecca Merlyn with her son. They were the ones
that would always tell him about how she worked tirelessly trying to help people just because they
needed the help. They were the ones that would tell stories about the friend they’d lost, the mother
Tommy had lost, to help keep her alive in his mind. And they were the ones that would smile and
comment if he did something that reminded them of his mother. Those memories and some
photographs were treasures he’d always hoarded close to his heart, hardly ever able to share them
with anyone when he was sober.
It wasn’t even an issue that Ollie’s mom had cheated on his dad once upon a time. Not really. Not when they both knew that Mister Queen hadn’t been faithful to his loving wife—far from it. Thea might not have understood what most of her parents’ arguments years ago were about, but Oliver and Tommy had. That Moira had sought some comfort with a friend—even if that friend was Malcolm when he was still a grieving widower—was something they could forgive. Ollie could especially, seeing as he’d cheated on Laurel more times than he could probably count looking back.

Though it did make Tommy wonder how his father could’ve ever threatened Moira Queen—even if he hadn’t known the truth about Thea. Sure, after he came back from his two year abandonment of his son he’d been a coldhearted bastard through and through, but he’d always seemed to have a soft spot for Moira. So Tommy also couldn’t help but wonder if killing Robert Queen wasn’t as purely practical ‘had to be done’ as his father had once said it was. Not that he’d ever consider saying that out loud…

The situation out on the terrace was about the same as it’d been when he’d volunteered to run off and find Oliver, which meant that there was the pretense of civilized chit-chatting still going at the breakfast table. Sara’s scary friend and Missus Masrani seemed to be verbally dancing around each other even more than Mister Masrani and Missus Q were, but Tommy wasn’t really making much effort to follow either conversation before he left, and he wasn’t going to now either. He’d only had one coffee so far, and the jet-lag still seemed to be hanging on hard this morning.

Which was also probably why he still couldn’t make heads or tails of why Smoaky was in Ollie’s bed but the moron hadn’t slept with her…

Then again, Tommy and Laurel hadn’t even been able to drum up much interest in sharing the incredible shower their bathroom boasted just yet either this morning, so why would anything else be adding up yet either?

“Ah, Tommy,” Mister Masrani’s irritatingly perky-morning-person voice calling his name, however, couldn’t really be ignored. “Will Oliver be joining us soon then?”

“Yeah,” Tommy answered as he flashed a smile at his girlfriend when she handed him his refilled coffee cup as soon as he sat back down beside her. “He said he’d check on Smoaky, too,” he directed at his girlfriend’s sister.

“Guess I don’t have to then,” Sara said with a smirk that made Laurel frown a little at her, but confirmed for Tommy that she did know exactly where the other blonde was waking up this morning. Only she probably knew why. “Wasn’t sure I wanted to try too soon anyway. She needs to sleep to heal.”
“Yeah,” Tommy agreed, his face somehow staying straight as he said it. “Ollie said she might not be up yet and he didn’t want to push her either.”

“Of course, of course,” Masrani nodded, still sounding too happy even though the corners of his mouth had turned down in was probably supposed to pass for a thoughtful frown as he sighed. “I had hoped we’d be able to watch the first Masosaur feeding—breakfast is always supposed to be her best jump, I’m told. Ah, well, perhaps we could watch it again tomorrow.”

“Again?” Missus Masrani repeated with a little laugh. “Dear, I doubt you’ll have even the slightest chance of talking Felicity into watching that show more than once.” She shook her head. “I’ll be amazed if you get her all the way into that stadium in the first place.”

“Nonsense, my heart,” Masrani objected, “Felicity agreed to make the effort to see every dinosaur. And she is a lady of her word.”

“She is,” his wife agreed, took a delicate sip of her coffee and then added, “But we’re trying to help her, remember? That’s why you agreed to let her veto three attractions if she needs to, remember?” She shook her head again. “And everyone can see that enormous monster—”

“She’s not a monster,” Masrani protested almost sulkily as his wife went on without any indication she’d heard him.

“—just fine from farther away. Much farther away, perhaps,” Evelyn turned her head a bit to consider the coastline of the big bay beside the resort. “In fact, we may be able to see it from here. That is the feeding line over there, isn’t it?”

“Well, yes, of course,” Masrani acknowledged as he, like the rest of them, also looked out at the manmade bay.

Presumably he and his wife were talking about the stadium seating and the gigantic length of some kind of line they could see stretching through the sky a good distance above the surface of the water. All of it so large that they could still clearly make it all out clear across the big bay from here.

“But there’s no fun in that!” Protested the man who Tommy had already decided was the real real-life example of the term ‘eccentric billionaire.’ “And it’s perfectly safe, my heart. She knows that.”
Maybe ‘super eccentric billionaire’ fit him better though?

Evelyn sighed again. “That doesn’t mean she’ll be any less terrified, Simon. And really, this experience is supposed to help her get over her fears, not bog her down in them.” The beautiful brunette shook her head. “No, I think we should start smaller, with the babies. She’ll like them,” she said decisively, nodding to herself; and then suddenly frowning. “Just not the baby raptors.”

“Why not?” Thea interjected curiously, making Tommy realized she’d arrived at some point while he was gone to sit at one of the small tables with her boyfriend. “What’s wrong with the baby birds?”

“Nothing!” Mister Masrani insisted, even while his wife answered:

“Oh, they’re not birds. Though the park has several winged dinosaurs in the aviary—the park’s gigantic bird cage. No, here the Velociraptors are the dinosaurs typically referred to as ‘raptors,’” she told Thea, then reminded her husband. “And one of them—one of the babies—did bite her last time she was here.”

Tommy blinked at that, “ Seriously?” he asked, unable to stop himself. Because she really couldn’t have said that, right?

“Oh yes,” Evelyn nodded as she reached gracefully across the table with the coffee pot to refill the cups she could reach. “The group arrived just in time to watch as one hatched, and like most babies they are rather adorable when they’re so small. I believe Felicity was petting it when it decided to bite her.”

“The little one was hungry,” Masrani defended the baby dinosaur with a stubborn frown. “Felicity knows that. And besides—”

“Whether she agrees with that or not, dear, doesn’t mean she’ll want to see baby Velociraptors again,” his wife interrupted mildly, “Anymore than she’ll want to see the adults.” Evelyn raised an eyebrow at Sara’s scary ex-girlfriend-who-maybe-wasn’t-her-ex-anymore. “Would you care for more tea, Nyssa?” she offered, indicating the other pot of hot-and-necessary-morning-beverage on the table.

“No, thank you, Lyn,” the assassin replied just as sweetly.
The hostess nodded in easy acceptance, reaching for the fruit bowl at the center of the table to refill her own plate and her husband’s again.

And again, Tommy was sure he was missing something there, too, but he wasn’t going to put any mental effort into figuring out what. Not when one of the two was the scary assassin that’d poisoned him and Laurel not too long ago. There was more than enough going on with all the people he did care about right now to keep his mind more than busy enough.

Tommy Merlyn had never been a wallflower in any sense of the word, but he did know when to keep his mouth shut.

When Laurel was arguing with her father—absolutely. Coming between any of the Lance family when they were clashing words was usually just plain stupid. Even if Detective Lance wouldn’t necessarily let himself shoot his daughter’s boyfriend, Laurel wouldn’t thank him for getting in the way there, anyway. So it was a lose-lose situation.

When the adult-adults—as in Missus Q and the Masranis here—were trading polite small talk, Tommy preferred to pretend he was either still only half-awake any time in the morning or starting to get tipsy if it was late enough in the day. That still allowed for witty interjections and jokes when they occurred to him, but kept him from having to really think too much about what the older crowd thought was important. If only to avoid the boredom he’d never quite been able to shake with that kind of talk…

Since he’d been forced by his father’s missing-and-presumed-dead-but-to-be-arrested-if-that’s-ever-proven-otherwise status to step into the role of C.E.O of Merlyn Global Group, Tommy had had to spend way too much mental energy on boring business thoughts as it was. Trying to help fix some of the mess—catastrophe—his father had made was something he was happy to spend his time on, but for almost everything else when it came to running the business he had to remind himself that he didn’t want it to go under just to spite his father. Not because he cared about the money or Merlyn Global himself, but because he did care about all the people who worked there—many of whom had decided to stay on with him at the helm even after what’d happened. Which also had a lot to do with why he was so glad a business titan like Simon Masrani—super-eccentric though he might be—had decided to step in to save Queen Consolidated, even if it was just for Felicity. Merging their two businesses made the most sense, as long as it didn’t mean their employees in the process, and he could hope that Masrani might be able to help them make that happen…

But they weren’t talking about that now, so Tommy was keeping quiet, as had been his preference for most of the last few months. Whether it was with the boring adults, Laurel and her parents, Ollie, or anyone else…

Actually, when Oliver was arguing with anybody… well, Tommy was slowly working his way back
to being able to tell his childhood best friend if he was being an ass, just plain stupid, or both.

Watching Ollie dance around the literal genius he’d dragged into both his nighttime ‘career’ and more recently into trying to save Q.C, too, was starting to become more and more of a motivator though.

It’d been hard when Ollie and Sara were supposedly ‘together.’ Mainly because Laurel liked the idea of her sister with anyone other than the scary warrior woman who poisoned them to draw Sara out and professionally assassinated people for a living. Even if that anyone else was Oliver Queen.

But even Sara seemed to be shoving Oliver and Felicity together every chance she got now. And the scary lady was sitting right next to the younger Lance sister at the breakfast table when they all came out here this morning, so that was definitely a losing battle on his girlfriend’s part. Laurel would always fight the good fight, but she was too smart to set herself up for a loss that was all but inevitable. Most of the time anyway.

But the real point was that Tommy Merlyn did in fact know when he should keep his mouth shut, and hiding behind his coffee cup and frequent mouths-full of tasty pastries seemed like a fantastic idea this morning. Running away to make Oliver get out here once it was noted that the Queen siblings and Felicity were the only ones not up yet, had seemed like a great idea, too. But Tommy would be the first to admit it hadn’t helped much. Not yet.

At least Roy was out here before most of them. The youngest vigilante was more than willing to sit between everyone else and the scary lady that’d taught one of his own teachers how to also be scary.

So Tommy was trying to not think about what was going on between Nyssa-the-scary-assassin and Missus-call-me-Lyn-Masrani. Because there was definitely something going on there, and it wasn’t the perfect hostess simply not knowing that there was a world-class assassin at her breakfast table along with the vigilantes and everyone else. He couldn’t for the life of him imagine what the hell it could be, because given this group the possibilities were endless.

But wondering why Oliver hadn’t finally slept with Felicity last night—never mind why she was in his room and his bed anyway—seemed like much safer territory for his thoughts. Not just because Tommy knew neither the archer nor the hacker would kill him. He’d been wondering when the other former playboy would find his game again for months now.

He really hoped it was soon. Felicity Smoak wasn’t a woman who’d wait forever. Honestly Tommy was surprised she’d waited as long as she already had. But then the last guy she’d been interested in was that kid from Central City—and hadn’t that been both fun and painful to watch. Until the poor
The kid was literally struck by lightning: then it was just downright depressing. Even if it did give Ollie a little more time to get his head out of his ass.

“Ah! Felicity and Oliver, there you are!” their host almost crowed a moment later, making everyone follow his wide smile towards the sight of the last two members of their huge travel party as the pair finally joined the rest of them on the V.I.P floor’s terrace. “Good morning!”

“Good morning, everyone,” Felicity said more quietly, both in response to the greeting and politely directed at everyone else.

Oliver helped her into the chair next to their hostess, earning him a small smile and nod of thanks while he took the other seat Masrani’s wife had saved for them without ever once waiving anyone off or saying anything. It was kind of impressive how she could just direct you to where you were supposed to be with her eyes.

“Thank you, Lyn,” the genius said with understandably more feeling when the older woman immediately handed her a china cup full of coffee that was still steaming, hot from the pot at the center of the main table, even though the other woman had already added the creams and sugars Felicity preferred, too.

Her knowing Felicity’s coffee order wasn’t surprising, but she’d somehow known everyone else’s without asking too, which took the perfect hostess thing to a whole new level. And kind of made him wonder if she had files on all of them somewhere with those kinds of details, but with all the secrets his friends had he wasn’t going to suggest the possibility. Simon Masrani undoubtedly had all the files he could ever need about each of them in the professional sense, that was to be expected, but the personal nature of knowing that Tommy took his coffee with just a little sugar while Laurel’s was at least half sugar and milk mixed with some coffee took that to a whole new level.

“You’re welcome, Felicity,” the brunette returned with a smile, studying her for only half a second before she added. “You’re looking much improved this morning. Did you sleep well?”

Tommy almost missed it, because he was caught up—and confused once again—by the glance the hostess sent towards Sara’s scary girlfriend as she finished, and the way the assassin was simply staring back calmly. That half-second, however, was more than long enough for the blonde to take that first vital sip of her coffee, so her almost choking on it was hard to miss.

Felicity just barely managed to swallow the steamy beverage down without sputtering though her response. “Yes, thank you. Very,” she acknowledged.
And Tommy blinked at her, because she really *did* look a lot better. That hole in her shoulder couldn’t have healed overnight, though—whether it was just a graze like Sara had said or the almost apocalypse Oliver saw it as. Either way, she *was* hurt; and flying thousands of miles down to a tropical island that happened to be the source of her worst childhood traumas didn’t seem like it should’ve helped her at all.

Though maybe sleeping with Oliver—*without actually sleeping* with Oliver—had helped keep the nightmares away and that made all the difference? There was a depressing thought. Could Ollie have gotten it into his head that trying to be Felicity’s human dream catcher was a good idea? Could he *really* fit that under the category of over-protective but completely platonic friend he kept trying—and completely failing—to fit in? Because Oliver Queen and Felicity Smoak were about as far as anyone could get from platonic territory without accepting that they were smack dab in the middle of romantic country, whether the river of denial was still flooding the area or not. But Tommy had already been thinking *that* about the two most stubborn people he knew for months now…

“You are looking much healthier, my dear,” Masrani echoed his wife enthusiastically, taking a bite of his toast that looked like it was more jam than bread, chewing and swallowing before going on. “I am very glad to see it.”

Felicity only nodded her thanks as she took another sip of coffee to excuse not saying it out loud. Likely because she knew what was coming out of their host next.

“Any thoughts on what you’d like to see first today?”

“Dear,” Lyn chastised her husband immediately. “At least let her eat breakfast first.”

Masrani shot his wife a little frown as he replied defensively, “I’m hardly stopping her, my heart.” Then, turning back to Felicity, he added, “You really ought to try the pastries, they are Guillaume’s specialty.”

Because *of course* he had a French baker hidden away here somewhere, right?

Granted, there was a time when that sort of thing had seemed pretty matter of course to Tommy Merlyn—back when he and Ollie were the partying playboy heirs of two billionaires and had far too much time on their hands plus not nearly enough sense in their heads. But these days, partially thanks to his psycho-father ironically enough, Tommy did appreciate these kinds of things more. After surviving his father’s attempt at mass murder he also tended to be much more wary of the distracting
gilding on the cage he’d lived in for too long. That mistrust tended to take the form of sarcasm more often than not, though sometimes he could keep it stuck inside his head.

Like now, Tommy took another sip of coffee instead of saying anything.

“They are good,” Thea spoke up, and the encouraging smile she sent towards the older woman probably had more to do with her still strong concern for Felicity being forced to come back here in the first place, not any doubts about Masrani’s French pastry chef being a fantastic baker.

Felicity nodded as she set down her coffee cup after another sip to reach for one of the recommended masterpieces. “They look good,” she agreed, and gave Oliver a small smile when he picked up the whole serving platter and moved it closer so she didn’t have to reach for it. “Thank you.”

Tommy knew his friend was being protective of her, and he completely understood why, but he was torn between the observation that her shoulder didn’t seem to be bothering her so much this morning and noticing the thoughtful little frown on Lyn Masrani’s lips for half-a-second as she looked between Felicity and the scary assassin lady for some reason before the frown disappeared behind the coffee cup she raised to her mouth. Whatever that was about, though, it had to be something along the lines of every other little look the two women had traded—or not traded—so far this morning, and Tommy was still pretty sure he didn’t want to put the mental effort into trying to figure it all out after his mind woke the rest of the way up.

“Mmm,” Felicity’s moan into that first bite of pastry was something they all understood, and how much she enjoyed it drew smiles from all around. Even Sara’s scary girlfriend, Digg’s secret-agent-ex-who-he-might-be-dating-again and Missus Q all smiled a little bit for that first moment there.

The silence was broken again a moment later by the buzz of a phone, and not surprisingly—since most of the people who might call anyone else here were here—it was Masrani who yanked his mobile out of his suit pocket with a wince. “So sorry, this should be just a moment, please excuse me,” he said before he answered after a glance at the screen. “Good morning, Claire,” he greeted the caller, then listed a moment before he replied. “Yes, yes, everything is excellent. As always.” Another pause, then he shook his head. “No, I don’t think that will be necessary. The Verizon contract is more than safe in your very capable hands, I am certain. Is it not?”

Well that was a loaded question for this woman who was obviously one of his underlings. A pretty high-ranking one, two, if she was both responsible for negotiating a major sponsorship, and as she had her C.E.O’s direct number rather than the contact info for one of his who-knows-many assistants around the globe.
“Yes, I am quite certain, thank you.” Masrani went on then. “But that meeting is the day after tomorrow, is it not? You should join our tour. We are, of course, going to be wandering a fair bit more than most of the V.I.P’s.” He paused, then shook his head. “No, no, I am sure Miss Young is entirely capable herself. You might leave her overseeing operations for a time to come join us, yes?” He shook his head almost immediately after another moment of listening. “We will be visiting the Operations Center, as well, certainly. But you must at least come see our newest dinosaur. No, not today—tomorrow, I think. Or the next day, perhaps, if my guests prefer.”

Given his earlier apologies, all of them could be chit-chatting while he took this phone call, but somehow the nodding man just seemed to fascinating to ignore. And he hadn’t left the terrace, or even the table, to take the call, so he clearly didn’t care that all of them were listening to his side of the conversation.

“Very well, very well. Yes, we will see you later. Perhaps in operations…” Masrani paused and then nodded again. “Yes, I am quite certain we will be there at some point. Miss Smoak did design the majority of our systems, so I’ve no doubt she’ll like to see them… Yes, thank you. Goodbye, Claire.”

Felicity had nodded when he’d mentioned her, looking more interested in the computer systems then she had been—or would be—at seeing any of the dinosaurs. Understandably.

Tommy listened to every word, just like everyone else, but watching his friends was much more interesting.

Oliver was hovering around the brilliant woman who really was much too smart to be just his assistant for long. That was nothing new. Just like how protective he was around her—over the top even for the two of them since she’d gone and gotten herself shot—wasn’t at all shocking either.

The surprising thing was how happy he looked now. Some of his ever-present worry was still there, but it wasn’t dominating his presence anymore. No, that intimidating aura Oliver seemed to almost always have these days seemed to have settled. Or sunken back in under his skin. Or something.

In its place were the upturned corners of his mouth. A smile that wanted to come out, even surrounded by his concern, as he catered to the blonde’s every whim. His eyes warm and maybe even bright as he watched her. Come to think of it, that was how he usually looked when he was watching the blonde. Wow, did he have it bad.

But then, Tommy already knew that. Anyone who spent any time with the two of them together did—as long as they weren’t blind, deaf or dumb. Well no, someone who was blind would still hear it,
and someone who was deaf would still see it, so they’d have to be blind \textit{and} deaf, or dumb, to not notice that chemistry.

“Whoa, what’s that?” Thea suddenly asked, her words too loud to not be intended for the group at large. Making them all glance at her, and then followed her frown out across the beautiful bay their terrace overlooked.

Some sort of fish—long and angular—was being dangled from a long wire over the surface by the stadium seats. It was on the other side of the big bay, so it probably wasn’t as small as it looked from way over here. It was probably pretty big.

“A shark,” Nyssa answered the question matter-of-factly, looking across the water at the display with clear curiosity. “A great white, I believe.”

“Oh, yes,” Masrani enthused, his exuberance undimmed by the business call. “Her breakfast.”

“Wait, something’s going to \textit{eat} the shark?” Thea frowned at him.

Making Tommy wonder what exactly she thought the thing might be hanging out there for, but he
wasn’t going to ask that out loud.

“Well, of course, she does need to eat, dear,” Masrani told her, though his eyes were locked eagerly on the bay.

Tommy looked back out there, too, out of morbid curiosity more than anything else. And he couldn’t help but jolt in his seat when something huge suddenly shot up out of the water. No, not huge—it couldn’t be called anything less than *massive*.

It was like a long alligator, only *massively* bigger. Its gigantic jaws had to be several stories tall. In contrast, the shark looked like the miniscule snack it was to it as the monstrous mouth closed around it, easily tearing it off the hook as it dropped back down into the bay with its breakfast.
“Good god…” Moira murmured, and when Tommy looked at her with a swallow she looked a little paler than she had before.

“She is a beauty, is she not?” Masrani asked, smiling proudly while the far-off stadium seats full of an amazed audience started to sink down. They could hear the cheers and applause from here, though the sight of them seeming to sink under the surface with that monster wasn’t something that’d have him cheering.

‘Beauty’ wasn’t the word Tommy would use either. His word would be closer to ‘monster’ or ‘horrifying.’ And he really hoped Felicity would decide to either veto seeing that thing up close or win the argument about having seen it already from here. But if you can’t say something nice…

The thoughts made him look back at Felicity and Oliver, however, and not surprisingly that happy caring had fallen back behind the protective worry.

Except Ollie looked strange—he was tense and tight.

And Smoaky looked worried about him?
Not at all what he’d expected…

Tommy thought about it for a moment before he realized what the problem might be. The other man was the survivor of both a shipwreck and a shark attack, after all. Everyone knew about the first, and the second had left a huge scar along his side. So while seeing one of those predators of the deep served up like a worm on a line might be a bit satisfying for Ollie, the very idea of a massive monster like that in the water couldn’t be a reassuring thing for him.

Or anyone. If it ever got out of its manmade lagoon in the middle of the island, it’d be more than capable of eating whole boats like that super-shark in *Jaws*. And being in a bigger boat probably wouldn’t keep that thing from sinking it if it wanted to.

It made Tommy very glad they’d flown here, come to think of it. And that they’d be flying out of here, too.

“Well,” Lyn Masrani spoke up a moment later. “Now that we’ve all had some breakfast, shall we head to the petting zoo? Assuming you’re done, dear?” she directed the last at Felicity.

The blonde sighed, “As long as there’s some coffee I can take with me, I’m good,” she told their hostess, before she grimaced. “What kind of dinosaurs are we supposed to pet?”

“Oh, only the ones you want to, of course,” Lyn reassured her, not seeming to notice the way her husband deflated a little as he closed his mouth instead of saying what he wanted to. “Only the herbivore babies are there, of course.”

Felicity finished the sip of coffee she’d been taking with a chuckle, “So like Mister Hammond’s intro to dinosaurs only a lot smaller?” she asked more lightly.

“No, I don’t believe John Hammond had any of the young dinosaurs on the tour,” Masrani put in. “Only the hatchlings you saw in the lab, no?”

“We saw those. And no, they weren’t supposed to be part of the tour,” the blonde acknowledged with only a little wince for the fact that she’d been bitten by those ‘hatchlings.’ “But many of the herds of herbivores were allowed to roam free around the Visitor’s Center, so we saw them first. They were definitely grown-ups though.”
“The ones we pet will be much smaller,” Lyn told her.

“Is that where you can ride the triceratops?” Roy interjected curiously, earning several eye rolls all around.

“Pretty sure that’s for the kids,” Thea told her boyfriend with a smirk.

“Hey, they get big, too,” the youngest vigilante insisted. “They probably have some that adults can ride.”

“I’m afraid not,” Lyn answered, pausing to shoot her husband a look that successfully made him deflate a little again. “And don’t even think about trying to add it. You’d never be able to get enough insurance to cover it.” The smile she turned back to the teenager was kinder then. “The triceratopses are rather darling as babies, but they only take direction well when they are quite small. Ensuring that they’d be safe for adults to ride is quite impossible.”

“Too bad,” Roy shrugged, taking it in stride.

That was something the kid definitely had going for him. It made him a great employee at the club, a good boyfriend for Thea and was probably a useful trait in a vigilante sidekick, too. Though the last part did sometimes get in the way of the first two.

Then again with the super-soldier stuff in him, Roy would probably be able to take anything even the big horned dinosaurs could dish out. But that wasn’t exactly something they wanted to broadcast on this island full of scientists who were already pushing borders all the time.

“I’d like to see the babies,” Felicity finally admitted, offering their hosts a small smile. “We can start small and work our way up to the big ones?”

“Certainly!” Masrani agreed enthusiastically, and so they were off.

It was a good place to start. From what Tommy had seen in his brief perusal of the island’s literature on its attractions the only thing that might be less intimidating was the botanical gardens. But then again they might have some scary ancestor of the Venus flytrap hidden in there…
The Gentle Giants Petting Zoo, however, was full of dinosaurs that weren’t that much bigger than them. It felt a little weird to be cutting all the lines, but Masrani did it so graciously Tommy could almost tell himself he wasn’t reverting back to the juvenile delinquent who once waived around money without even a single thought for such luxuries.

Watching just about everyone try to keep themselves between Felicity and the dinosaurs even while Masrani kept trying to drag her over to them felt absurd, so it was probably a complete comedy for all the people they were cutting every which way anyway.

“Oh, oh! I need a picture with this one!” Sara’s burst of enthusiasm upon spotting the first baby dinosaur of the day surprised everyone. Mostly because they’d all been expecting the eccentric billionaire would be the one to skip over to the baby dinosaur, not their former assassin turned vigilante.

“Why?” Thea asked with a laugh even as she, like Felicity, obediently took out her phone for the requested photo, neither of them seeming to notice the professional photographer that Masrani immediately waived over.

“She’s my namesake.”

“From Land Before Time,” Oliver clarified, earning a bewildered blink from his mother and Laurel.

The little triceratopses did look a lot like the one from the cartoons, but these ones were a lot dirtier. They’d probably all been dutifully hosed down before entering this little arena they were supposed to entertain the tourists in, but all the dust being stamped up nonstop coated their skin pretty quickly.

Sara didn’t seem to notice as she made a show of dancing from one horned dinosaur to the next for the photos her friends and the professional photographer were dutifully taking.

“Ah, yes, an excellent movie,” Masrani approved even as the requested photos were taken. “Movies, actually. There must be a dozen of them by now.”

Tommy was busy focusing on the fool that Sara was making of herself for the cameras, deliberately avoiding answering the questioning looks his girlfriend kept giving him. The shock of seeing Nyssa al Ghul actually smiling as she watched Sara almost made him forget about those looks.
“Don’t forget the rules,” Roy reminded the other vigilante after she’d made them take several pictures, pointing at the sign on the paddock wall. “Pretty sure too many photos counts as harassment.”

The Canary only laughed, rolling her eyes after she glanced at the sign that read:

PLEASE respect all Jurassic creatures.

DO NOT taunt, tease or harass the animals.

“How long are the babies here?” Laurel asked curiously while they kept wandering around the enclosure with the few early park visitors that were allowed to be in here with them.

“It differs from species to species,” Masrani answered distractedly, because he was trying to feed one a little dinosaur that was hopping around a lot like bird. The food was clearly on hand for the baby dinosaurs to snack on, but the bird-like baby seemed to be more interested in hopping around him.

“This little one will be sturdy enough to join one of the flocks at three months, I think.”

It was a fast little thing, but something about the way it moved really reminded Tommy of chickens. He couldn’t say when he’d last seen a real live chicken hopping around, mind you, but this thing still looked a little like one. Even while it was hopping around the park owner like it was the most fun game in the world. At least it was a little funny to watch…

“Used to be two, sir,” one of the park employees spoke up. “But we like to wait now until the Gallimimus are a bit bigger, and faster. She’s getting close. The triceratopses are usually ready a few weeks earlier, though, at about two and half months.”

“How can you tell?” Lyla asked curiously. “Just by size? Or are they chipped?”

“Size and weight, yeah, we keep track of all of that. Measurements are taken every morning,” the park employee showed them the tablet she was carrying around in a heavy-duty case, which had a whole bunch of data for her to scroll through. “And yeah, all the dinosaurs have the J.P-standard digital chips implanted when they’re still in the lab,” the park employee told them helpfully.

“Yes, all state of the art,” Masrani agreed. “As John Hammond would say, we spared no expense.”
“God, please stop saying that…” Felicity’s aggravated mutter was just loud enough for those of them standing right around her to hear, so of course the super-eccentric billionaire who was still trying to feed the baby dinosaur that was playing with him remained oblivious.

“Darling, I don’t think it’s hungry,” Lyn finally decided to save her husband from his own self-inflicted humiliation. Or tried to.

“Nonsense,” Masrani objected, still trying to shove the big stalk of greens in the tiny dinosaur’s uninterested face. “She’s a growing girl. She’s always hungry.”

Lyn sighed, then looked over at the helpful employee again. “It’s Emily, isn’t it?”

“Oh, yes, ma’am,” the woman confirmed, before reluctantly taking the hint and speaking up again, sounding the whole time like she wouldn’t be saying a word if not for Lyn’s reassuring nod. “She is still growing, sir, but the Gallimimus aren’t too fond of plants.”

“What?” Masrani stood up with a frown. “Why are they all running around here, then? The predators —”

“They’re not carnivores, Mister Masrani, sir,” Emily interrupted, hastily trying to explain. “They’re omnivores, just like we are. We make sure they eat the steady portion of plants Doctor Wong wants them to have in their diet, of course, but they’re much more partial to insects and eggs.”

“So they’d like a vege-omelet?” Tommy asked, mostly so poor Emily could stop fidgeting under the C.E.O’s mild frown. “With a side of ants?”

“June bugs and beetles are the norm here, but yes, essentially.” Emily agreed more happily, pointing to the nearby dinosaur that was now trying to get Masrani to go back to entertaining it. “See her long fingers and arms? Their ancestors probably used those to dig up insects and steal eggs, but we provide them now.”

“But the adults are kept with the herbivores, as well, are they not?” Masrani wanted to know, still frowning unhappily at the discovery.

“Yes sir,” the baby dinosaur expert agreed. “But we continue to provide the eggs they eat, as well as making sure there are plenty of insects for them to hunt. Not that that’s hard in this climate, of course.” Noticing the C.E.O was still frowning, she tried to reassure him. “They’re not dangerous, Mister Masrani. To the other dinosaurs or any of the guests. They’re not hunters. They can’t be—
they don’t have any teeth, and their beaks are just for eggshells and insects, like I said.”

“And sometimes plants,” Tommy reminded her. “They’ve gotta eat their veges, right?”

“Yes,” Emily agreed, returning his smile.

“Why?” Sin interjected then curiously. “Why do they need the plants?”

“Jurassic World’s lead scientist wants them to have more nutrients than they’d get from just bugs and eggs.”

That didn’t make much sense to Tommy, because he was pretty sure an egg should have everything they’d need in it. But there was a reason he’d taken as few science courses as possible in school.

“It’s not because of the lysine contingency still?” Felicity spoke up again then.

“Oh no, ma’am,” Emily answered promptly. “That population control was found to be ineffective in—well, after the old park. The herbivores got more than enough lysine from the plants they eat, and the carnivores ate ‘em, so they got enough, too. There was no point to it, so that genetic defect was discontinued when the labs reopened.” She shrugged. “Now we just have to make sure they get all the nutrients they need outta their diets.”

“And you’ve done very well here,” Lyn put in then, her voice just as kind as her smile. “All of you have,” she finished, making all the nearby employees smile proudly.

“Thank you, ma’am. We try to do our best.”

“And you succeed, most certainly, far more often than your fail,” Masrani put in then, his frown finally put away even as he asked her, “But why are they kept with the herbivores?”

“We don’t need to segregate them, sir.” Emily told him firmly. “And the flock does better with the herds. All of them benefit from the socialization.” She insisted, and then shrugged. “And of course all of our dinosaurs are created in the labs here, so there’s no loss from the eggs that aren’t fertilized in the fields.”
It seemed like a fair point to Tommy; given that the island’s whole dinosaur population was famously the massively successful results of the same science experiment repeated over and over again.

But the owner of Jurassic World was notably subdued by it: he was frowning again, and now he wasn’t just ignoring the disappointed baby dinosaur by his feet, he didn’t even seem to notice its unhappy little chitters as it kept hopping and bobbing around him like an oversized chicken. Then again, his wife—who frequently seemed a lot harder to upset—was suddenly quietly frowning, too.

Tommy glanced between the two of them a few times, and he wasn’t the only one—there were a whole lot of sharp eyes in this group. But before he could think of something to say, Missus Q was speaking up.

“Are there other omnivores here then?” Ollie’s mom asked lightly, allowing the poor employee to seize her question like a lifeline out of the quicksand hole she’d unexpectedly found herself in.

“No, ma’am, all of the others are herbivores. We’ve been told we may work with more omnivores in the future, but the labs have been much more focused on carnivores lately.”

“Yeah, ‘cause we really want to bring more of those monsters into the world,” Felicity grumbled acerbically, and again Tommy thought it was too quiet for anyone farther away than him to hear. But it drew glances and slight smiles from Lyn Masrani, Roy, Sara and the ever-scary Nyssa, too: all of whom were farther away than he and Ollie were.

“So what happens to them all when they’re not babies anymore?” Thea asked, though her attention wasn’t wavering from the long-necked baby dinosaur that she was petting as she said it.

“We’re the final nursery stage for the young dinosaurs,” Kelly explained, visibly more at ease with what was probably her expertise here. “Here they’re strong and steady enough to start exploring their world, so we allow them to interact with each other, with us, and with visitors like you,” she said with gestures as needed. “When they’re a bit bigger they graduate to the valley with many more species, and the adult herds and flocks that will adopt them.”

“Adopt them?” Roy repeated, sounding surprised. “What, you just let a new dinosaur loose when they’re old enough and the others just say ‘come on over’?”

“Well, yes, essentially. But we take a little more care than that,” the woman said with a chuckle.
“Remember, it’s nothing new here. It’s how all of the dinosaurs have joined their herd or flock. And they don’t have young of their own to protect from outsiders.” She shrugged, “Even if they did, it’s not unusual for any adult creature to take in young ones who aren’t their own offspring but still need a caretaker. It’s continued to work well for us. And them.”

“That it has,” Masrani agreed with a smile, some of his stubborn enthusiasm making a comeback as he grabbed a big handful out of a bucket one of the workers had just brought over and scattered them on the ground for the chicken-like dinosaur to bob after with all the eagerness of an animal that couldn’t be a hundred percent positive that it’s next meal would keep coming from the same place it’d always come from. “Thank you for your help, Emily.”

“Of course, sir,” the employee didn’t quite bow her head before she offered a wide but still professional smile for the whole group. “Have a great time with us at Jurassic World, everyone!”

They all offered their own farewells as she walked off: headed straight towards a family that was trying to teach their two toddlers how to pet a toddler-age triceratops without success.

Masrani looked around, opening his mouth to probably start herding all of them again, but then he stopped, his mouth closing into a small smile.

Tommy followed his eyes to the long-necked dinosaur that Thea had been petting earlier. The teen was rubbing the base of the happy creature’s neck now, but it was probably the fact that Felicity was smiling softly as it nuzzled into her palm just like dogs or cats did—helping her find just the right spot—that was putting the smile on the park owner’s face.

“Well, this was a lovely start,” their hostess spoke up after a moment, also smiling softly at the sight of Felicity and Thea petting the Little Foot-like dinosaur.

“It was,” Masrani agreed with his wife as he looked at his watch, before offering another wide smile all around. “And we can make the next Mosasaurus feeding now—”

“No,” Felicity interrupted flatly, her smile already a frown again.

“No, Felicity—”

“We already saw that thing,” she cut him off again.
“Yeah, it was pretty big appetite-killer for breakfast,” Roy pointed out. “And lunch isn’t that far off.”

“Nonsense,” Masrani tried to protest, but the frown his wife was aiming his way, too, made him pause and backtrack. “Come now, the show really is quite exciting.”

“Maybe another day, darling,” Lyn told her husband firmly, her frown flipping back into a little smile as she looked around. “It’s too early for lunch, I think, but there’s a lovely little café not far from here. We could decide where we’re going next from there. Perhaps the Innovations Center?” she directed at Felicity. “The Operations Center is there, as well as the labs.”

“That could be fun,” Felicity agreed, still petting the long-neck—he really should look up what they were called since it didn’t seem like anyone was going to tell him. She gave that neck another stroke before turning towards the exit. “Shall we?”

“Of course,” Lyn agreed smoothly as she led the way. Not that the exit was that hard to find. The petting zoo wasn’t small, but it was all walled in and there were signs pointing you towards specific parts of the exhibit or back to exits all over the place.

“Why don’t you want to see the Mosasaurus Show?” Masrani apparently couldn’t keep himself from asking—and he got the question all the way out before his wife could shoot him another glare that turned into an eye roll.

“Because I’d like to make it through today without my heart stopping too many times?” Felicity replied, not quite sarcastically.

“Nonsense, my dear,” Masrani protested, not looking towards his wife: probably very deliberately. “You liked all the dinosaurs here, did you not?”

“They don’t want to eat me,” the blonde shot back. “And if they accidentally step on me, all I’ll have is a few smooshed toes.”

“Squished toes, you mean,” Laurel corrected mildly.

“No,” Sara said, just as mild, though she was grinning. Whether it was more at teasing her sister or
pride for her friend at standing up for herself now only she knew. “I think she meant ‘smooshed.’”

“Oh, I definitely meant smooshed,” Felicity agreed, earning smiles from everyone except the park owner as they left their first successfully visited exhibit. “It fits the big ones better. Because they do get bigger. A lot bigger.”

“Yeah,” Tommy opined before Masrani could say something that might make his wife do more than glare him into momentary muteness. “Kinda goes with the territory of being dinosaurs, Smoaky. You know? That’s the ‘wow’ factor.”

Felicity shook her head, frowning at him now. “They’re dinosaurs. They exist again after being extinct—nothing but fossils, not even bones—for hundreds of millions of years. That’s ‘wow’ enough.”

“More than enough,” Oliver agreed with her, and he wasn’t the only one nodding.

“Well, yeah, obviously,” Tommy allowed, then added, “But how big they were—and are now, here—is the other thing everyone knows about them.”

“Exactly!” Masrani agreed eagerly, making Tommy instantly uncomfortable even while the older man went on. “And Jurassic World exists to show us all how—”

“How small we really are,” Felicity cut in with a snort. “Yeah, you’ve said that before. More than once. But the old park already managed that, a long time ago.”

“Which was why we took such care designing the new park before it opened,” Masrani agreed, before insisting, “It was designed to contain and display these magnificent animals to all the world. You know that, Felicity. I’ve no doubt you still understand how this park operates better than I can ever hope to.”

The tech genius sighed, “Jurassic Park was supposed to be safe, too. It wasn’t.” She jerked her chin towards the beautiful bay, its calm surface an obvious deception since they now all knew what lurked in its depths. “If that thing ever decides it’s hungry and there isn’t a shark for it to chomp on, anyone walking by that railing could be its snack.”

“She’s never indicated even the slightest interest in eating people, Felicity,” Masrani tried to tell her.
“We’re much too small, I’m told. They have to let the shark clones grow to a certain size before she even deigns to notice them.”

“Doesn’t mean everyone up here’s safe if it’s hungry,” Diggle spoke up then, in that mild but still serious way that made everyone listen to the ex-soldier turned professional bodyguard. “All the people in Jaws thought they were all safe from sharks, too. Then the big one ate the boat.”

Masrani sighed, “Hence, precautions have been taken,” he told them. “Should she ever come too close to shore, enough electricity will be shot into the water to discourage her from swimming too close.”

Given how high and far that massive thing could leap, Tommy wasn’t too sure that’d be much of a deterrent, but he kept quiet as Felicity sighed.

“Well, that’s reassuring, I guess. At least its Frog D.N.A can’t help it grow legs and it climb up on shore to eat us all.”

Tommy couldn’t keep his mouth shut at that. “Morbid, and very pessimistic in a Godzilla sort of way. Not at all like you, Smoaky,” he observed with a wince.

“Godzilla was probably based on these things, you know.”

“No, actually—”

“Shut up, Tommy,” Laurel cut him off firmly, though it was the concerned look she was giving Ollie’s maybe-new-girlfriend that made him comply without further protests.

Why was everyone telling him to shut up today?

Chapter End Notes

Author's Note: Well, there you have it. A little more time in the amazing park we’d all like to visit even though common sense would say we shouldn’t.
Again, apologies to everyone for the ridiculously long wait.
And kudos to Bookslover93, who’s recent review led to me taking a more recent look at
this story and thus realizing that there was a chapter missing. Meaning I hadn’t updated it back in the spring when I thought I had. ALL of your comments, are of course always appreciated though. And I do need this inspiration for this fic. Unlike my Felicitas series, I’m writing Wings of that Butterfly Called Chaos as I go. I have a vague outline and I know where it’s headed, but it’s much slower going than I’d like. I don’t want to rush it because there’s SO MANY different storylines coming together for this fic, but sometimes my muses do need inspiration to get me moving again. This story really is like the Mosasaurus, I think: lurking in the depths of the calm before the storm, lunging up to form some scenes when it spots a shark overhead but really waiting till it can grow legs and jump out of the bay…

My progress here isn’t helped by almost all of my attention being on the Felicitas series, but I’m afraid that’s not likely to change. I’ll update when I can, of course, and your kind comments always immensely appreciated. At SOME point I’m sure this will all flow smoothly for me. But until then the updates here will likely be fewer and farther between than I’d like. So apologies again for that. Sorry, sorry, sorry! :-)

And yet again, comments DO help, even if it’s just to remind me I SHOULD work on this story I DO NOT intend to abandon occasionally. Where do you think they should go next? What are your thoughts on what we’ve seen so far? What should I keep from JURASSIC WORLD and what should I change? What about the magnificent mash-up I plan on making of Season 2 ARROW? Thoughts, suggestions, ideas, whatever else you might want to call them PLEASE with a baby dinosaur on top?

Till next time: thank you so much for reading!

~ Jess S
Sara didn’t even bother with the pretense of stepping into a toilet stall after she’d followed the other blonde into the ladies’ room, though she did glance at them while Felicity actually made use of one, just to confirm that there weren’t any other occupants to worry about. Then she leaned back against the wall by the sinks to wait, and gave her friend a small, sympathetic smile as soon as she came out.

“Hey, you okay?”

“Yeah,” Felicity answered automatically as she started washing her hands. Then, as she added the soap and started scrubbing a little too roughly, she added: “No...” her nose wrinkled in confusion at her clear inability to answer the simple question. “I don’t know. I’m sorry, I—”

“Don’t say you’re sorry,” the Canary cut her off firmly. “All of this—it’s a lot for anybody to take in. Must be hell with your history, but you’re handling it real well. Real well.”

“Really?” Felicity laughed shortly as she started shaking her hands underneath the automatic drier-
thing. “‘Cause I think I might puke. And I kind of feel like I’m gonna come apart at the seams or melt any second now.”

“We’re all melting a little bit, it’s hot here,” Sara pointed out. “And the humidity’s not helpful either.”

“Yeah,” Felicity groaned and looked back towards the sinks, specifically at the mirror over them to study her reflection. “Surprised my hair hasn’t already started frizzing out. Even the tightest ponytail can only do so much…”

Sara’s lips quirked into a smile again without any thought, but she stayed silent at the other woman sighed.

“But I think a part of me’s still wishing no one had been there to save me from the evil cookies of death last night,” Felicity frowned, shaking her head as she admitted, “Don’t get me wrong. I know I should be grateful, and I am, but there’s a pretty big part of me that’s not. You know? And that kind of scares me.”

“Good, it should. The world would suck a lot more than it already does without you in it, so no wanting to abandon us to it,” Sara answered softly. "But it's not that surprising you feel that way either."

Felicity turned towards her, still frowning, but clearly waiting for the other blonde to go on, so she did.

“How many times do you think you told yourself—or Mister Masrani—that you’d die before you came back here?” Sara asked her.

That made the genius snort. “Too many to count,” she admitted. “And I never tried to.”

“Yeah,” the assassin nodded. “We’ve all got places and memories like that.”

Felicity shook her head again. “Never thought I’d come back here. Never thought there’d be anything that could change my mind…”
“But there was, and now you’re here. Surrounded by all these things you’d probably call the scariest things on Earth?” Sara guessed.

The dinosaurs’ sheer size alone made them all dangerous. Most might be lulled into a false sense of security by the fences, and by the simple fact that the all of the massive things were contained and controlled. But that could chance at a moment’s notice, something Felicity Smoak had already learned the hard way here, and Sara had learned the same lesson elsewhere. Though her hellish lessons’ hadn’t involved monsters that could kill you by accident—just by stepping on you as easily as you might step on a mouse or an ant…

“Something like that,” Felicity sighed again.

Sara let her think about it again for only a moment. They didn’t have long before someone else would be wandering in here; it was a public restroom in a pretty busy café. Even Nyssa’s dark glare, Evelyn Masrani’s frown and Ollie’s impressive scowl wouldn’t scare everybody off forever. And if they were in here too long those two ladies would be the one’s barging in. With Ollie right behind them only because he wouldn’t want to be caught forcing his way into a ladies’ room on his own. Besides, thinking too much about what you were really scared of never helped anybody, so after that moment she shrugged. “Hey, it’s not paranoia if they’re really out to get you. The predators are predators. All it’d take is one malfunction. One mistake. One open door, maybe. And then all of us are their all-you-can-eat buffet, right?”

“Not really helping. But no,” Felicity denied, even as she shuddered. “There’re protocols and plans for all of that. To keep it from happening… again,” she shook her head. “It’s not just a door or a fence. There’s a whole bunch of doors. And the electric fences should still keep it confined to a specific area of the island. And we saw some of the army they have here to hunt them down, if it ever came to that…” she shuddered and shook her head again. “They’re as ready as they can be.”

“That’s all anyone can do,” Sara nodded. “Try to be ready. And when shit happens, they’ll react. And so will we.”

The genius looked at her a long moment, then shook her head yet again, though she finally stopped shaking her hands under the drier to turn towards the door. “I’ve gotta say, Sara, that’s really not that comforting.”

Anywhere else, it probably would be. No, it definitely would be. There weren’t many things Felicity didn’t think her heroes could handle. It was part of her whole charm. The determination to believe in the people she cared about—a kind of optimism that was practically a force of nature all its own. It was something you had to admire, and that admiration was almost addictive.
But here and now, Felicity’s doubts weren’t at all hard to understand. These were dinosaurs. Things that shouldn’t be walking around in this same age as humanity—but here they were. Here some of the monsters were as big as the buildings, or bigger. How much could a bow and arrow do against a T-Rex or the Mozzo-shark-eating-thing? Or a bo staff, or even a sword? All the modern firepower the League would frown upon probably wouldn’t matter too much either. Out of all of them, only Roy with his super-strength might be able to pack enough of a punch to give one of those giants pause. Maybe.

And for Felicity these were her real-life nightmares. Creatures she remembered hiding and fleeing from as a terrified child. One of the most traumatic experiences of her childhood that she’d reluctantly chosen to relive, regardless of how hard it had to be for her. She was here for them, despite the reality that even she couldn’t possibly have complete faith in her heroes being able to do anything at all if faced with those monstrous forces of pre-history brought back to life in the modern-era...

“Yeah, well, reassuring’s not something I’m very good at that,” the Canary admitted, then shrugged. “It’s the truth, though, and there’s a little comfort in that, right?”

“I guess.” Felicity sighed, but nodded as she took a breath, then headed for the door.

Sara followed, and was unsurprised to see the once-overs that everyone in their not-so-little group gave Felicity when the pair of blondes first rejoined them. Though she had to smile a little when she saw Nyssa doing it, too, pleased to see that the woman she loved was willing to let herself care for Sara’s friends so much.

Nothing had really changed, of course. This was only a vacation from their lives of heroics, vigilantism and assassination, and when it was over they’d have to go their separate ways. That didn’t mean they couldn’t enjoy what little time they had together...

But, Sara reminded herself, right now her friend needed her...

“We were starting to wonder if you’d snuck out the window, Smoaky,” Tommy teased her, his teasing grin almost hiding his honest concern.

“I didn’t see a window,” Felicity shrugged, hesitating halfway through the motion as she recalled just then that it should hurt, but it didn’t, so she completed the shrug as she went on. “Besides, Sara was with me.”
Sara didn’t let herself glance at the woman she still loved then. She knew better than to say anything about it, especially here. Though she still couldn’t imagine Ra’s al Ghul actually allowing anyone outside of the League to receive even a little of that miracle-cure for any reason. It was a rare privilege within the League itself, and not one even Nyssa should have shared. But she had anyway… and Sara couldn’t say how much she appreciated that, because this wasn’t even a case of ‘better to ask for forgiveness than permission.’ No, this was something that hadn’t happened. And that it had was a secret that could never reach the dark halls of Nanda Parbat, because it was all too possible that Nyssa’s father might demand Felicity’s death if he deemed her unworthy of the honor, or if he was holding a grudge against Sara still, or even if he simply sought to punish his Heir for even considering a life that didn’t belong to the League one worth preserving…

There were far too many ways that that could go so very badly. So badly that Sara couldn’t let herself keep thinking about it, so she shook the thoughts off firmly and focused on her friends just in time to see Tommy glance back at the other blonde with a belated smirk.

“Yeah, she probably would’ve just helped you sneak out.”

“True,” Sara smirked as she told the other blonde, “And the window was in the handicap stall. You ever want help escaping, sweetie, just say the work, okay?”

The genius’s smile was small but sincere as she agreed. “Okay.”

“Hey, you can’t just abandon the rest of us!” Tommy protested, his grin still not wavering even a little.

That grin, and the genuine good humor that determinedly drove it, had a lot to do with why Sara liked her sister’s boyfriend so much. Though how exactly he could be Malcolm Merlyn’s son would always be a brain twister to her. All she could figure was that Rebecca Merlyn must’ve been one hell of a lady…

“There are several areas we will want to split up in, and a few we have to,” Evelyn Masrani said then; and it looked like she’d deliberately gotten the words in about half-a-second before her husband was going to open his mouth. “For the **gyrospheres** in particular we will have to split up into pairs. And the **Science Center** was designed for everyone to wander through at their own pace, as are the **Bamboo Forest** and the **Botanical Gardens**, which are both delightful.”

“Indeed they are, my heart,” Masrani agreed.
Sara couldn’t help but smirk when she spotted Oliver coming back to them at the head of the group that’d practically taken over the little shop’s counter.

“Here,” he offered one of the drinks he was carrying to Felicity, who accepted it with a blink. “It’s mint chocolate chip.”

“My favorite,” Felicity blinked again, then she remembered to smile at him. “Thank you,” she said before taking a slow sip.

Oliver handed his sister and mother their shakes, before he tossed the tray into a nearby trash, keeping the last drink for himself. Diggle and Roy, meanwhile, were passing out the shakes that everyone else had ordered.

Sara accepted her strawberry with a nod of thanks, immediately taking a sip of the cold but somehow still melty drink. “Yum…” she savored, “These are great.”

“Yes,” Masrani agreed, nodding happily after a sip of his chocolate concoction. “We spared no expense.”

Sara didn’t let herself frown at him, but she wasn’t the only one that thought that oft repeated phrase was getting annoying. Oliver didn’t even try to hide his frown after Felicity grimaced. Both of them remembering the probable source of her discomfort there: ‘Mister Hammond always said they spared no expense…’

“We should get going,” Felicity commented with a glance at the long line of people they’d cut ahead of—some of whom were still scowling at them. “Lots to see,” she said the last like she was talking about watching an execution—or, probably in her own mind, maybe walking to her own execution…

“Yes, we should,” Evelyn agreed. “Sipping milkshakes in the sunshine is always quite pleasant.” So saying she led the way back outside, with the little security detail that Digg’s girlfriend had brought from ARGUS acting as a buffer on the way out and back on the busy street.

The agents tended to ‘disappear’ whenever the group didn’t need them as buffers, trusting Masrani’s own bodyguards and all the trained fighters in the group to look after everyone for the most part. But they were on hand every time they were needed, even if it was just to part the crowds. Impressive, considering the ‘security detail’ thing was just a cover for them. Sara was surprised they were even
hanging around as much as they were. Then again, maybe ARGUS needed more help with whatever they wanted on this island, so they’d stay close until Digg’s girlfriend told them what exactly that was. Hopefully that’d come up before Oliver lost the thin patience he had with ARGUS and attacked one of them. Probably the guy with the stupid disguise of a red shirt that said ‘Bite me!’ Though poor wardrobe choice might not be something he deserved to be decked for, if Felicity saw the shirt and even winced all bets were off…

“So, Blondie,” Roy spoke up just then, drawing a raised eyebrow from the Canary, but of course he was looking at Felicity. The kid might be super-strong now, but he wasn’t suicidal. “Which dinos do you hate the most?”

The team’s tech genius blinked at him. “What?”

“Which one do you hate the most?” Roy asked again. "Out of the dinosaurs?"


There really was no other word for the slightly squinty eyes and the frown she was only half hiding behind her milkshake. And again it was so cute it was a bit bizarre. Sara and Nyssa had to exchange grins. Oliver’s eyes, of course, were locked on the woman next to him.

Roy only rolled his eyes in response, “‘Cause maybe we should see that one first,” he suggested with a shrug. “Get ‘em out of the way?”

“An excellent idea,” Masrani agreed with that same level of enthusiasm he’d given just about everything else that Sara had seen. Save for the short confrontation he’d had with ‘Isabitch’—as Felicity had so fittingly renamed the woman—during which the world renown businessman had well and truly shut the bitch down.

Well, no, that wasn't true. They’d also seen the businessman appear a few times regarding the ‘contract’ Felicity had agreed to, but now that she was here he was so dedicated to being the perfect host and making Felicity realize that this place wasn’t the stuff of nightmares like she remembered…it was painful to watch.

What was worse was Sara was pretty sure Ollie had been repeatedly reminding himself that he couldn’t hurt Masrani for a while now. And she hoped Diggle would step in if their archer slipped up, because he was probably the only one who might.
Assuming the man’s own wife didn’t put her husband’s attacker on his ass, of course, which was yet another thing she had to ask Nyssa about. Sara could tell that Evelyn Masrani wasn’t a trophy wife. She was more than beautiful and charming enough, of course, but she also moved like a trained and experienced fighter. And the way the Heir to the Demon kept the older woman in her sights told the Canary that she certainly wasn’t imagining that.

Her gut wasn’t playing paranoid tricks on her here. That woman was dangerous. Especially considering how well the perfect hostess could hide her scary side. So far Lyla Michaels was the only ARGUS agent Sara had seen giving Evelyn Masrani a sideways glance. The former assassin still would’ve wondered if her instincts were only on overdrive because of the dinosaurs if not for Nyssa. But Ra’s al Ghul’s daughter was watching the older woman far too carefully for it to be something Sara was imagining…

“But I get to veto the ones I don’t like the most,” Felicity didn’t quite ask. She sounded tired and resigned, which was even more painful for her friends to see.

Sara wasn’t the only one to wince.

“If you must, of course,” Masrani sighed, sounding like she’d just said chocolate had vanished from the world—or something equally apocalyptic. “I do understand your fear towards the predators, my dear, but the viewing platforms for all of them are all quite safe.”

“We already saw the Masosaur,” Felicity reminded him firmly.

Sara had to agree on that one. The monster that dined on a diet of sharks wasn’t at the top of her list either. Then again, like Ollie she’d been in a boat wreck before and drifted out on the ocean for a while afterwards; more than once, in her case. That Nyssa had found in it a convenient way to dispose of bodies hadn’t surprised her, of course, she’d always been pragmatically resourceful like that. But Sara was happy to stay far away from the thing herself. That monster made great white sharks look like sardines, and brought to mind the line from JAWS about needing a bigger boat—but no boat could possibly be big enough unless it was armed with missiles that didn’t miss.

“Debatable,” Masrani refuted, going on before anyone could say anything—though the way he wasn’t looking at his wife, who was frowning at him now, was kind of funny. “You did express interest in the Velociraptor Program.”

Felicity’s eyes narrowed. “That’s not an open exhibit.”
The park’s owner shrugged, not arguing that point because it really didn’t matter. “Well, no, but they are fascinating to watch, my dear. And, of course, quite safe,” he tried to reassure her. “The team that’s working with them has made remarkable progress. Mister Grady has become quite the authority on them. I’m sure he’d be happy to help put your mind at ease.”

Evelyn Masrani actually snorting had them all looking at her in time to watch her pull her sunglasses down from her hair not quite fast enough to hide her rolling eyes.

Masrani frowned at his wife, “You disagree, my heart?”

“No. Though I do hope you don’t expect Mister Grady to toe the company line, darling. He won’t. You may recall that is something Mister Hoskins has already discovered? To his very vocal chagrin?”

Masrani looked thoughtful for a moment, but then he shook his head. “An entirely different matter,” he insisted, looking at Felicity again then. “Truly, Mister Grady is our foremost expert on the Velociraptors. The only true handler, you could say. Certainly until we are able to expand the program, though we’re not quite there yet. Perhaps you would care to speak with him before you make your decision?”

Felicity stared at him for a moment, but then nodded slowly. “I guess…” she agreed, almost managing to make the agreement sound like it wasn't a tooth being pulled out of her mouth.

“Excellent!” Masrani enthused, before leading the way down the street a bit faster. “Now our rides should be here any—ah, yes, there they are.”

“Wait,” Felicity said before they could all take more than a few steps towards the vehicles.

“What is it, my dear?” Masrani frowned. “Truly, you’ve nothing to worry about—”

“No, that’s not,” Felicity shook her head, before finally forcing herself to frown at him. “The Tyrannosaur paddock. It’s near there, isn’t it?”

“No,” Masrani frowned and gestured back in the opposite direction from their V.I.P transport. “The
T-Rex Kingdom is—"

“No. No, not the new one,” Felicity cut him off, shaking her head rapidly even as she forced herself to soldier on at the same time. “The old one… where the fence broke. Where it broke the fence, I mean.”

‘…The power was off… We didn’t really realize it till… till the T-Rex was tearing the fence down.’ Felicity had actually snorted at the next part of her traumatic memory. ‘It almost grabbed the warning sign about the fence being 10,000 volts as it was pulling the cables down…’

Sara was wincing again now just as she remembered bits and pieces of the retelling, fairly sure she didn’t like where this was going even though Felicity was the one to bring it up. But she knew better than to say anything: that wouldn’t help her friend.

“Ah, of course,” the park owner sighed, than spread his hands. “The Murphy’s were most insistent that that place should stay as it is. That much of the original park should remain untouched, in fact. As a reminder, one could say. And so it has, touched only by time.” He shook his head then. “It is visible from the monorail, briefly, but not open to visitors—”

“Neither are the Raptors, and we’re going there, aren’t we?” Felicity asked, but again shook her head right away and went on without waiting for an answer. “I want to see it again. It’s on the way, isn’t it?”

“It is,” Evelyn answered when her husband just kept frowning a moment too long, which had to be why she looked at him a moment later. “We can stop there along the way, can’t we, darling?”

Confusing contrast between nerve-wracking and pure charm though she was, Sara was really starting to like the other woman. Her dangerous edge didn't make that hard for the blonde: she'd fallen in love with Nyssa, after all, and loved her still. That they couldn't be together didn't diminish that.

Masrani still looked uncertain, and enough so that they could all actually see it, but after a second in which his frown started to look like it might want to become a pout he nodded. “If you wish to do so, we shall,” he shook his head. “There’s nothing there but broken wires and concrete, but—”

“I want to see it,” Felicity said again.
Now Sara couldn’t help but approve, if a little worriedly. And of course she wasn’t the only one, but like her the others could only keep hovering as silent, protective support.

“Very well,” Masrani acquiesced. “If that is your wish, by all means.”

The same S.U.V limos they’d ridden in earlier were waiting at the end of the block for them, and everyone was happy to climb into the air conditioned interiors. Sara had to give Missus Queen, plus her sister and Tommy credit for making sure that Masrani didn’t notice Felicity was getting in the second car with them instead of the first one with him. Though it was probably ultimately his confusing wife that’d kept him from coming back to join their already crowded car.

“There, bit of a breather,” Thea was the one to actually say it once they were all seated and the vehicles were moving, all of them still sipping their milkshakes. “You okay, Felicity?”

The blonde immediately nodded, “I’m fine.”

Thea rolled her eyes, “Really?”

Felicity’s mouth twitched ever so slightly, then she shrugged that same hesitant and then over emphasized shrug as before. “I’ll be happier when all of this is over, but… I’m not going to finish that thought out loud because I don’t think any of the wood in here is real, so knocking on it might not work.”

“Probably a good call,” Diggle congratulated her from up front. His ex-wife-and-now-girlfriend was probably in the front of the car following them, along with most of her superfluous security team and all their covert and clandestine purposes.

“So, the shark-eater’s your least favorite so far?” Roy apparently had to bug the tech genius again, not seeming to notice the looks he got from both his girlfriend and her brother for it.

Sara couldn’t decide if he was actually that dense or just good at pretending to be, but she was leaning towards pretending, because Öllie’s frown-that-was-almost-a-scowl was hard to miss. She couldn’t see how any kid from the Glades could be oblivious enough to danger to not notice that…

Felicity blinked at him, then she shook her head, “No, I don’t care about the Mosasaurus as long as I don’t have to get any closer to it,” she explained, then added quickly: “We already saw it.”
“Amen to that,” Sara murmured, shrugging when Nyssa smirked at her.

The daughter of Ra’s al Ghul had always had a stronger spine than her beloved, and Sara was just fine with that. Even if she could argue that fear in the face of certain death wasn’t cowardice—it was common sense telling you to get the hell outta there before you ended up dead.

“Yeah, I don’t think Simon agrees with you,” Roy told her.

Felicity shot the youngest vigilante a look. “‘Simon?’”

“That’s his name, isn’t it?” Roy grinned. “I keep waiting for the chance to make a ‘Simon says’ joke, but it hasn’t happened yet… what?” he asked, when he finally realized his girlfriend was frowning at him.

“Seriously?” Thea said sarcastically, rolling her eyes.

Fortunately for him, Felicity decided to come to his rescue then. “No. I’d have to say the Raptors are the ones I,” she paused just long enough for it to be noticeable before she finished with, “dislike the most. Definitely the Raptors.”

Oliver’s frown turned to her then, “The ones we’re going to see now?” he clarified with concern.

“No. We’re going to see the Raptors expert. That’s all I agreed to,” Felicity insisted. “The expert. Not the Raptors.”

“What’d you have against the dino-birds?” Thea asked then, her eyes careful as she asked the question that she couldn’t bite back any longer.

“They’re not birds, though the real ones were more like them than the ones they created here with frog D-N-A,” Felicity shook her head even as she went on to tell her, “‘Raptors’ is short for ‘Velociraptors,’ here,” she went on after an even more violent shudder. “And they’re like kangaroos with teeth and the ability to open doors.”
“Pretty sure kangaroos have teeth,” Digg offered from up front.

“Not like those things,” Felicity insisted adamantly. “They’re vicious. And their claws are like,” she tried to indicate the size by spreading one hand, then she shook her head and showed it instead with two of her tiny hands forming a long curve that would be made effective by its size alone if it was wielded well and sharp. Such things were pure instinct for creatures born with claws, whether they were supposed to be more like birds than reptiles or not.

“So they have teeth and claws and they jump real high?” Roy clarified, sounding like he was trying to understand why that’d make their technical teammate so afraid of the monsters. But then again his perception of danger would be completely skewered until they figure out how to get the Mirakuru out of his system…

Their genius sighed. “They’re fast, too. Cheetah speed, out in the open,” Felicity’s sigh sounded painful. “And they’re smart. That’s how they open doors. And how they hunt… almost like wolves, I guess? Like a wolf pack, with all of the wolves hunting at once?” she shuddered again, helpless to explain it better than that. “It’s scary.”

Considering the average size of dinosaurs in general, her description did bring to mind fearsome creatures. Even if these ‘Raptors’ were on the smaller side of the dino-size scale, all of their other attributes undoubtedly made them rank right up near the top of this island’s food chain under normal circumstances. Not that there was anything at all normal about this place. But a pride of lions or a pack of wolves could both bring down far larger animals than any lone lion or wolf could hope to, so the same had to be true for dinosaurs, too. Judging by how Felicity spoke of these ‘Raptors,’ her ‘dislike’ of them was even stronger than her easily understandable grudge against ‘Isabitch’ Rochev. It was still all too easy to understand though: the Raptors were undoubtedly being kept in cages of some kind, like all the other dinosaurs, but such measures had failed on this island before. Making Felicity’s fear of the predators especially about as far from paranoia as it could possibly be…

Maybe it was the way their genius shrank in on herself again after she finished trying to explain again, or maybe it was simply the fact that she’d ended up explaining her fears again, but Oliver finally couldn’t keep his hands to himself. He wrapped his arms around Felicity and pulled her a little closer. Not that she seemed to mind: as she leaned into his touch automatically, like she always did. It was sweet, despite the circumstances—though maybe that reality just made it all the more sweet…

“A fearsome foe, to be sure,” Nyssa spoke up, startling even Sara, because the lifelong assassin hadn’t said much all morning. Now her dark eyes were watching Felicity with a friendly gentleness that even her lover had only seen occasionally. “Yet clinging to that fear will not help you overcome it, my friend.”

Oliver shot the assassin a sharp look, but he didn’t contradict her, and when Nyssa simply kept
holding Felicity’s gaze he looked back towards the girl in his arms.

Felicity finally sighed, “I get that we’re supposed to face our fears,” she shook her head. “But these things aren’t something a human being can—”

“Oh god, don’t say that,” Sara cut her off with a groan, and she frowned at the woman she loved then. “Nyssa, you can’t break into Velociraptor cage to fight them.”

“It seems unlikely I shall have any need to do so, Beloved,” the Heir to the Demon replied, but her small smile wasn’t at all reassuring.

The assassin-turned-vigilante locked gazes with the woman who’d taught her pretty much everything she knew about fighting, but it was a silent argument that wasn’t going anywhere. Nyssa might not go looking for a fight with these Raptors, particularly if they were under the kind of surveillance they pretty much had to be here, but she wouldn’t shy away from it either.

Nyssa never avoided conflict without a good reason to, but she didn’t needlessly seek it out, either. Not outside the League, which was the only place she really ever had anything to prove—and living under the onus of Heir to the Demon meant that she always had to be deemed fit for her place, lest she risk losing it. That was enough of a burden for her, most of the time. But there were times when Nyssa’s determination to prove herself ever-worthy of her father’s respect—and as strong and admirable as any son could be—led her to seek out challenges she could’ve circumvented. But that, too, had more than a little to do with why Ra’s al Ghul’s daughter’s place as his Heir had never been challenged, even if there were whispers of another child of the Demon out in the world somewhere…

But if anything got out anywhere around her friends, Sara would pick fight over flight, too, so she couldn’t really argue…

“Why did you want to stop at the uh—at the old T-Rex place?” Thea asked then, watching the blonde curiously.

Felicity sighed, leaning a little more into Oliver’s hold as he gave her a gentle squeeze. “I just want to see it again,” she shook her head, her eyes looking far away as she went on. “Without the storm. Without the mud and lightning. Without… Without…”

“Without the monster,” Nyssa was the one to actually say it, successfully drawing the other woman’s
eyes back out of her memories and gifting her with another little smile. “You will find it a very different place in the light of day, I am sure. And as Simon Masrani has said, the passage of time will likely be evident.”

“I know that,” the blonde acknowledged.

Nyssa nodded, “You should see the Tyrannosaurs again as well. Time may well have rendered it far less frightening for you, too.”

“I doubt it,” Felicity snorted, shaking her head. “Not unless it shrunk and lost all its teeth…” she trailed off with that painful look of thought that none of them liked, because she didn’t deserve to be trapped in bad memories of any kind. Not as the innocent child it’d all happened to years ago, or as the grown woman who still suffered from nightmares and trembled as she told her tales.

“You will feel better for facing your fears, my friend.” Nyssa insisted firmly. “And better still for facing them all.”

League remedies and now their hard-won wisdom, too…

Sara supposed she probably shouldn’t be too surprised. Nyssa al Ghul never did anything by halves. Though how easily she seemed to be sharing herself with Sara’s friends made it almost impossible not to wish all the more for all that could not be.

“She doesn’t have to face anything,” Oliver snapped at last. “She’s already here. That’s more than enough,” he insisted, scowling in response to the calm look he got from the Heir to the Demon.

“It is enough only if she thinks it is,” Nyssa replied calmly, not at all bothered by the vigilante’s sharp words or his glare. But then even he shouldn’t be surprised by that. “And then only if she will not come to regret missing her opportunity after the fact. But this, now,” she spread her hands to indicate where they presently were—though whether she meant the whole island, where they were being driven to, or something else entirely, only she knew. “This is a good start.”

“Yeah,” Felicity said before anyone else could object, or Oliver could keep objecting. “Yeah, I think it is.”

Thump.
It was a feeling as much as a sound as their vehicle left the perfectly paved roads that made up the island’s major resort area and started traveling over the much rougher roads made of dirt and maybe some gravel. That jolt made them all stop talking for a second because it was unexpected, but then maybe it should’ve been assumed since both of the places they were going to now weren’t open to the public. Why would the roads going to them be worth much of anything—even pavement—if no one was paying to get there?

Sara couldn’t spare it anymore thought than that though, because her friend had undeniably just gone several shades paler than her normal lovely skin tone.

“Felicity? Are you alright?” Thea asked before anyone else could, then she immediately winced and went on again before the too pale blonde could say anything either. “Sorry, that’s probably gonna be a stupid question the whole time we’re here, isn’t it?”

“Prob-Probably,” Felicity forced a laugh as she shook her head again. “No, I’m okay. I just…” she trailed off, and Sara interjected then.

“Expected the road to be paved?” she half suggested, half asked with a shrug. “Yeah, me too.”

“Kind of,” Felicity admitted, wincing through another sigh. “At least it’s not raining. And sundown’s hours away, so…” she swallowed as she trailed off this time, the fight taking place on her still much too pale face had to mean that her worried ramble was still going on inside her head.

All of which prompted Ollie to now pull her even closer: not quite into his lap, but snug up against his side with his arms wrapped all the way around her. About as physically secure as she could be here, though those arms—so strong from both constant workouts on the salmon ladder and a lot of archery—wouldn’t be able to protect Felicity from her own memories. Sadly actually fighting off the dinosaurs would be a lot easier and a lot more possible than that; what with all of them completely determined to do it or die trying.

“Wonder how far we’re going down the beaten path,” Roy muttered then, peering out the nearest window at the sea of jungle leaves they were bumping by.

“N-Not too much farther,” Felicity frowned. “I-I mean I don’t think that the T-Rex was too far from the start of the tour. I think it just took us so long to get back on foot be-because we couldn’t go back to the road. The T-Rex was there. And-And we were walking, so…” she grimaced then. “I don’t really remember though. Ignore me, please.”
Oliver spoke up again then with that little smile only Felicity could bring out on his face. “The maps we were given showed the Raptor Paddock on the farthest west side of the island. The north and most of the northwest are off-limits areas—”

“That’s to keep the more dangerous predators walled off,” Felicity interrupted. “So even if they escape their cages they still have a bunch of other walls in their way, and plenty of space for the Asset Containment squads to recapture them.” She wrinkled her nose then, “Other than the T-Rex and the Mosasaurus, of course, but the second one can’t come up on land and the T-Rex has a whole bunch of security features around it now, so hopefully—and, again, there’s no wood here so I’m not gonna finish that thought out loud,” she finished with another shudder.

Oliver was just watching her for a moment, maybe holding her a little tighter, then he nodded. “It shouldn’t be too much farther.”

“How do you even know where we’re going?” his sister wondered with a confused frown. “The map didn’t show where the stuff in the old park was.”

“No,” Oliver allowed with a shrug. “But there were maps of the first park, too. It’s the same island. It wasn’t that hard to figure out based on the old map.”

And he’d undoubtedly studied both maps—old and new—enough to know all the pertinent details. Sara had, and she didn’t doubt Nyssa and Diggle had, too. Of those in this car only Felicity, Roy, Thea and the drone driving them probably hadn’t memorized the map. Of course, Felicity probably remembered a lot about this island that wasn’t on any map: much, much more than she wanted to. If Roy wasn’t letting the Mirakuru drive him too far away from cool-headed logic to think clearly he’d have at least looked at it enough to find his way around, assuming he wasn’t too much of a city boy to find the lack of streets and signs strange. And the driver had to know his way around here pretty well: it was his job. So really it was just Thea that might be hopelessly lost here on her own. And most of the other car—save for Missus Masrani, still going by how much respect Nyssa seemed to have for her. Something Sara still really needed to ask her about...

“Heads up,” Diggle declared from up front, looking back at them over his shoulder as their car definitely started to slow down, “Looks like we’re there.”

Sara glanced outside and blinked as she realized all the overgrown jungle branches had fallen away, because they were apparently too high over the trees on one side and those on the other side of the road still hadn’t made it all the way to where their limo-S.U.V’s were coming to a stop on the dirt road.
“Right, that’s good,” Felicity said, sounding a lot like she knew she couldn’t even fool herself.

“Hey,” Thea reached over to catch her hand to give it a squeeze. “It’s gonna be okay. The sun’s still out, right? And there’re no storms anywhere near here, I checked.”

Felicity managed a little smile of her own that’d fool most people who didn’t know her enough to realize that wasn’t even close to her real smile. “It is nice out,” she agreed softly. “Thank you.”

Thea gave her hand another squeeze before she let go with a sad smile as both the back doors were opened by Diggle and the park’s driver.

Oliver of course followed Felicity out on Digg’s side, but Thea and Roy almost covered it by quickly climbing out the other way even as Sara and Nyssa both shadowed the first two because Felicity was the one there were all there for.

At first glance there was nothing at all outside. They’d stopped in the middle of nowhere on a road that could barely be called that. The view of the treetops off to one side did a good job of disguising exactly how high up they were here. Though going by Felicity’s traumatic story of racing down one of those tree’s that’d caught their vehicle before almost letting it go to almost crush them, it was more than a few terrifies stories, some of which she likely hadn’t told them yet, and some that she maybe never would.

The trees—some of them, anyway—were taller now than they would’ve been the last time Felicity was here. Tall enough that the ably trained could call them a safe escape route from here if needed…

Sara looked away from the trees to Felicity and followed her gaze to the wall that’d never been fixed. Big blocks of concrete still held up the steel framework, including some of the thick cords that’d once tried to contain a force of nature by harnessing electricity only to fail because of a manmade power outage.

“Well, here we are,” Masrani declared as the whole group met up between their parked vehicles. He didn’t look so comfortable here, facing the irrefutable proof of the first park’s failure, but he hid it well behind his practiced smile and attentive gaze. “Now Alexandra and Timothy couldn’t come to an agreement as to where the actual breach occurred. There are downed wires everywhere. We have done much more reconstruction closer to the resort, of course. However, the computers recorded these coordinates for the tour when it stopped, so—”
“There,” Felicity interrupted, stopping the billionaire short, and now they all followed her eyes a little further down the road. “It came through there. At the bend in the road. We were farther,” she shook her head. “The data must’ve been corrupted by the outage. Or Nedry’s virus… The restroom was a little hut in the trees over there,” she gestured for just a second towards some of the trees that made up the side of that bend that wasn’t too cliff-like, but her hand dropped almost immediately. “I never did understand why there was a restroom there if the tour wasn’t supposed to stop. Mister Hammond kept telling us we weren’t supposed to get out…” she shook her head again, then looked towards the area where the road dropped clearly away. “It must’ve pushed us back to here, when it was knocking our ride around, t-trying to get us. Be-Before it pushed us over the wall…”

Oliver stayed glued to her side and they all followed as she walked closer to the high vantage point that was somewhat obscured by trees.

Obviously they’d come around the edges of some of the island’s mountains here, because they were looking out at all green, with no sign of the big resort areas in sight. Looking out at it made the place look massive and empty. Bigger than an island should seem, but it wasn’t.

Then again, Lian Yu was just a dot on the world map, too, and it’d held plenty of misery for many people. Oliver especially, but not exclusively.

“You must have found the car?” Felicity looked back at Masrani with a confused frown. “Or S.U.V? Whatever it was?”

“Of course, my dear,” Masrani nodded. “It was recovered. If you like one of my assistants could look into precisely where the recovery teams found it. They kept excellent records, as it was a requirement of the job. Though the exact spot, I’m sure, would be rather difficult for us to reach.”

“But not impossible,” Oliver interjected, looking at Felicity—maybe his eyes had never even left her. “If that’s what you want?”

Sara blinked and then exchanged a smile with Nyssa, before they both looked back towards the other pair as the genius answered.

“No,” Felicity shook her head. “I don’t want that.” Then she looked at the Demon’s Heir specifically. “And I am not going to drive one of these cars off of that,” she said adamantly, gesturing towards the treetops they were looking down on. “That wouldn’t be facing my fears. It’d just be suicide…right?”
“It would, perhaps, be a bit extreme,” Nyssa allowed, giving the blonde another little smile.

“We have seen what you wanted to see here then, yes?” the park owner tried to clarify, only to wince as his wife hit his shoulder. “What? There is nothing here,” he insisted, but subsided quickly as Evelyn frowned at him.

Felicity barely seemed notice the couple’s exchange as she walked past them, looking around at the crumbling concrete and rusty steel.

Sara watched her friend walk towards the wall that hadn’t managed to do its job and contain the savage beast within for even one tour, once upon a time, she couldn’t help but wonder Felicity was thinking.

Was she remembering the monster’s size or the sound of the wall’s big, powerless wires snap?

Was she remembering feeling the earth quaking with each of its footsteps or her eardrums exploding when it roared?

Worse was the thought of why the catastrophe had happened. Sweet, forgiving Felicity had almost shrugged it off: the man who was supposed to make sure all the first park’s systems functioned sabotaging them to steal a big payday with no thought as to what bringing the security system down during a tour would do. At least in this case fate was just enough to ensure he met his end the same night as the disaster he’d caused.

Though it was people like him that’d made it almost easy for Sara to rationalize the need for the League of Assassins. People like him or worse. Telling herself that the people she killed had hurt others and wouldn’t be able to hurt anyone else thanks to her. But even that’d only worked for so long…

Creak…

The former assassin turned automatically towards the sound, only to blink at the sight of the huge sign still hanging up high, creaking in the wind as it continued to announce its failure of more than a decade ago, not quite close enough to the steel frames to clang up against it.

100,000 VOLTS!
Sara had to wonder why the sign was left up there, like a testament to the first park’s failure. Then again this whole area being left like this sort of was too, wasn’t it? So it had to be deliberate. But why?

She wasn’t going to ask their hosts though, no matter how accommodating they were sure to be, the Masranis were here for the same reason all of them were. Well, other than the ARGUS agents, of course. The rest of them were all here for Felicity. For whatever she needed.

And right now Felicity wasn’t saying anything. Just looking around at this place she’d described to them as being dark and terrifying when a rainstorm had turned the dirt road to almost quicksand like mud and a monster had gotten loose to crush their car down into it as it tried to eat them…

Sara shuddered at the thought, well able to imagine the helpless feeling. She’d almost died at the mercy of an unstoppable, impossibly large force herself. Sure, the ocean wasn’t actually intent on trying to kill anyone, but it did it all the time anyway. And it had almost gotten her. Twice.

A part of her wanted to drag her friend away from this place, like she was sure several of the others did, too—Ollie especially. But Felicity had said she wanted to see this, and Nyssa was right: facing your fears always helped a whole lot more than hiding from them ever did. Sure, Sara would never like the ocean since that night on The Gambit, but she wasn’t terrified of it. And her friend didn’t need to be afraid of this particular spot on Earth either…

That sign still hanging there on the creaking cords was somewhat fascinating to Sara, too. Occasionally she was sure it clanged hard against the steel frames that were supposed to hold the cords up back when they were still smoldering with enough electricity to contain their monstrous captive, while the power was on, anyway.

But as a member of the League she’d been taught so many ways to free herself from captivity, and many, many more means of breaking into all the places places her missions made her go. Very rarely, however, was brute force the way to go though. It just didn’t work more than half the time. Assassinations, done properly, were about subtlety and finesse much more than anything else—
getting the job done and then disappearing back into the shadows you’d struck from. Though skill in combat was just as important, and any warrior’s strength should never be underestimated: in your enemies, your allies or most especially yourself.

*Creak…*

These monsters had already been gravely underestimated once. Sara could only pray it wouldn’t happen again. Especially not while they were here…

*Creak…*

“Nyssa was right,” Felicity finally said, drawing all eyes back to her as she looked up at the broken fence, or maybe beyond it. “It does look different during the day.”

“Light does tend to have that affect,” Nyssa said calmly, giving the blonde a small smile that few ever saw because it was a real one. “Sunlight especially.”

“Must help that Chomper’s not here, too,” Roy butted in, surprising a snort from Felicity that made it impossible not to forgive him.

“He wasn’t Chomper,” the genius protested, then hastily corrected herself. “Well, she wasn’t. Isn’t.”

“She?” Digg raised an eyebrow at the blonde, visibly both amused and curious, though Sara thought this was something that’d been covered before, but there was no harm in recovering ground that didn’t make their friend tremble or look too much like a ghost.

“That was part of the initial genetic engineering,” Felicity shook her head. “Population control, supposedly. If all of the dinosaurs were female, they couldn’t breed.”

“There’s a depressing thought,” Tommy commented, then just as quickly added, “Well, unless you were the one that somehow got through.” At the look his girlfriend gave him, he smiled angelically.

Laurel just rolled her eyes in response.
“It didn’t work, anyway,” Felicity shook her head. “Cause of the frogs.”

Okay, there was a switch she’d obviously missed there, but Sara again decided she wasn’t going to be the one to ask.

“You did design the technical aspects of *Jurassic World’s* security system yourself, Felicity,” Masrani reminded her again, clearly refusing to be discouraged by her active opposition to enthusiasm of any kind here. “As part of that you were given full access to all aspects of the park’s security from planning to implementation, and to this very day, as well.” He spread his hands for emphasis then. “You *know* that there is no place of entertainment in the world that can compare with our security, just as much as the attractions. John Hammond always insisted that we spare no expense.”

“I can’t really say that fills me with confidence,” Felicity said dryly. “Seeing as every near-death experience I suffered through with those monsters took place while I was right next to Mister Hammond’s grandchildren, who you’d think he’d make sure were the safest people in the world,” she shuddered slightly as she looked away, her eyes straying towards the treetops again but clearly not actually looking at them. “They were running from the Raptors right next to me.”

“Mistakes were made,” Masrani managed to concede again. “Yet every inadequacy in the first park’s system was addressed. You know that,” he reminded her soothingly. “Much of the technology we now employ wasn’t even conceivable in Hammond’s time. The use of one-way glass to watch the predators’ feeding—”

“What?” Felicity actually yelped, her eyes wide with shock as they shot back to the man that really didn’t know how to quit when he was ahead as neither her reaction or his wife’s glare were enough to make the man even pause yet.

“The feeding is one of our greatest attractions,” he told her like it should be obvious. “That is the primary draw of the *T-Rex Kingdom.*”

Sara wasn’t sure how exactly her friend had missed all the announcements about the T-Rex feeding times when they were back on the resort area’s main street. But she certainly wasn’t going to say anything about that either.

Felicity couldn’t look more horrified if she tried. “I swear to God, if you try to make me watch that I will shoot myself first,” she told him firmly.
Oliver put an arm around her shoulders again, while Sara and Digg both closed in around her in clear support. The reassuring smile Sara tried to give her friend, however, turned into a not-so-well-hidden scowl when Masrani laughed like he thought Felicity was joking.

“There are some more sedate exhibits, of course. Many of them,” the madman told her with an indulgent look as he kept ignoring the rest of them. “Alexandra did tell me that you were most interested in all the science involved, which In-Gen has gone to great lengths to display. And that you liked the Brachiosaurus much more than she did.”

Felicity surprised them all by actually snorting again in clear amusement. “Lex liked them, too. Till one of them sneezed on her.” She blinked at Masrani then. “I’m surprised you still don’t have a Sauroposeidon, though. Since they’re so much bigger. Seems like something you’d like?”

“Indeed, I would,” Masrani acknowledged with a nod. “And it is not for lack of trying. But our research teams have yet to find a clear enough genetic sample for reconstruction.”

“Clear enough?” Digg’s girlfriend spoke up then, visibly curious. Then again, half the reason she was here was why all the other ARGUS agents were here likely had a lot to do with the behind-the-scenes access their group was promised, and Amanda Waller wanting to know more about all of this.

“Oh yes. D.N.A is the blueprint for each and every one of us, after all: from the tadpoles, to all of us, and even the dinosaurs. And our scientists have quite mastered how to read it, and even the reconstruction process for many species.” Masrani shook his head then. “Alas, they cannot create and creature entirely from nothing, and the research is still ongoing. Until our archaeologists dig up a viable sample, or Doctor Wong devises some other method to complete their genome, other dinosaurs cannot be added to Jurassic World.”

“But a new dinosaur is being added, isn’t it?” Lyla didn’t let up. “The Indominus Rex, I think it was called?”

Sara snorted at the ridiculous name, shrugging when Nyssa smirked at her, but non one else noticed thanks to Masrani’s enthusiastic reply.

“Yes, indeed!” the billionaire confirmed proudly, smiling widely. “A masterful work, I am told. Though I have not yet seen her with my own eyes.”
“It isn’t the same thing,” Evelyn Masrani told them. “The Indominus Rex is a hybrid, created by splicing together known genomes. Such as the Tyrannosaurs’, as well as several others, from what I understand. And even then it took Doctor Wong a number of years to complete this part of his research. What was difficult with flowers was nearly impossible with dinosaurs.”

“Nearly impossible, but not entirely. It may have taken him far longer than his lovely orchids, but I’ve no doubt the results are all the more awe-inspiring for it.” Masrani nodded, still smiling. “The public will not have the pleasure of seeing her for some time yet, however we will have the opportunity while we are here.”

He didn’t seem to notice all of the looks he got in response, from the incredulity on Missus Q’s face and many others to Oliver’s outright aggravation, Felicity’s clear aversion and Missus Masrani’s bemuse exasperation. Sara, honestly, was surprised Felicity didn’t immediately veto the idea, but she was also surprised Oliver hadn’t punched him yet, too…

Simon Masrani was blind to all of that, even with the proof of the first park’s failure still right in front of him. His little-boy-like-excitement not willing to seriously consider the young woman who’d just threatened to shoot herself if he tried to draw her before one ‘Rex’ dinosaur. That she wouldn’t want to see the new one anymore than the old clearly wasn’t crossing his mind.

“There will be time enough for that later, however the Indominus Rex Paddock is quite a bit farther than our next destination.” Masrani did look at Felicity then as he asked, “Are you ready to continue, my dear?”

Felicity sighed even as she looked around for several long moments more, and then she sighed again. “Ready as I’ll ever be,” she said, and allowed Oliver to steer her back to the second S.U.V again.

“Simon,” Missus Q spoke up before Masrani could move to follow them. “You must finish that story for us. How did you manage to convince the Secret Service that the President would be safe visiting…”

Sara stopped actively listening as soon as she saw that the pouting billionaire was allowing the Queen matriarch and his wife to all but drag him back to the lead vehicle. It was safe to say that that might not work so well on the way back, but they’d cross that bridge when it was right in front of them. The assassin-turned-vigilante did not want to ride in the other car though, so she hurried away from it. Tommy and Laurel had her respect for following along to act as buffers and/or support for Missus Q, but that was it.

No, the former assassin knew she might have to hurt that man if she was stuck in a car with him for
any length of time, especially if Felicity was there, too. So they were all much better off if that didn’t happen.

Felicity seemed to be handling everything a bit better—for now, anyway—so Sara didn’t try to keep Thea from inserting herself as the one on the genius’s free side. The side Oliver hadn’t already claimed.

She was a little wary being next to Roy. Her memories of the out-of-control psycho Slade had become because of the Mirakuru weren’t something she’d ever forget. At least Thea’s hotheaded boyfriend, however, didn’t have the same lethal level of training pre-Mirakuru that’d made Slade Wilson nigh unstoppable.

Sara shook those thoughts off though, instead focusing on the warrior sitting next to her, whose lifelong training and consummate control undoubted made her far more dangerous than Roy Harper could ever be. “Nyssa, what’s the thing with Missus Masrani?” she murmured, just barely loud enough for the other woman to hear. She had to seize the opportunity to ask, because there so obviously was something important about the woman, and she couldn’t decide if it was just because Evelyn Masrani was much more dangerous than anyone would ever expect a rich man’s wife to be.

The woman she loved look back at her for a long moment, then she looked away. “Her secrets are her own, Beloved. But she is no threat to our friend.”

“How can you be so sure?” Sara insisted, needing to know. “If she’s someone else Ra’s released from—”

“She is not, and never has been a member of the League,” Nyssa cut in firmly.

And it was a relief, because the thought of the wife of the sixth or seventh wealthiest man in the world being another Malcolm Merlyn hadn’t entirely made sense to Sara, but it’d kept coming back around in her head anyway. A repeating circle of worry that wouldn’t go away even now, but it’d get better with answers of some—of any—kind.

“I do believe dear Felicity is aware of her friend’s former profession,” Nyssa went on quietly, still entirely calm. “It was there where our paths sometimes crossed a handful of times. All of them, however, are long past.”

Sara frowned, “But Nyssa—”
“Beloved, you need not worry,” Nyssa interrupted; voice still quiet but firm with all the authority she’d known for just about all of her life. “Evelyn Masrani will not harm anyone here unless she is forced to. And I have no doubt that she will also be as quick to handle any threat to our friend as will. Perhaps even faster.”

At that Sara had to blink, “Wait, you’re saying she’s better than you?”

Ra’s al Ghul’s daughter cocked her head to the side—something Sara had never seen her do before, making her wonder if she’d picked it up from Felicity—then she replied. “There was a point in time when that could not be denied. Perhaps it is past. Perhaps it is not.” Nyssa shook her head. “But she is not an enemy of the League, Sara. Nor is she our enemy.”

The Canary nodded slowly, not wanting to but knowing she wouldn’t get anymore answered anyway. Not here and not now, where others might hear them. “Thank you.”

Nyssa’s sad smile tore at her heart, “You need never thank me, Beloved.”

Sara didn’t let herself wince, but it wasn’t easy. “Can you tell me anything else?”

“Now now,” was the not unexpected response.

“Fine,” Sara nodded. “I’ll ask later.”

“I look forward to it.”

Sara made herself look away from the woman she loved then, focusing on her friends again. They were all still centered around Felicity, who was handling Oliver’s over-protective hovering and Thea’s more restrained concern with undeniable grace. Roy looked like he couldn’t decide between laughing or trying to hold his girlfriend back a bit, but either way he didn’t look like he was going to blow sometimes soon. Small mercies.

They all continued that way, with Felicity caught between tornado-Thea and hurricane-Oliver with no way out because the rest of them were just watching and she was still too nice to tell them to leave her alone. But it wasn’t far too their next destination, so it also wasn’t long before Felicity could free
herself from the two forces of nature that were so worried about her. Even if she was escaping to the nonexistent mercies of the things that made up her very worst nightmares...

“We made excellent time,” Masrani was enthusing as they walked towards the large building they’d parked near. “We should be just in time for the latest trial.”

Raajan-an-an...

The sound scraped along Sara’s nerve-endings’ like nails on a chalkboard, but she didn’t recognize it.

Felicity did. The way she froze up for the half second it took her face to lose all its natural color couldn’t mean anything else. And her immediately turning to go back the way they’d come was further confirmation.

Purr-er-er...

“Come now, my dear,” Masrani tried to encourage and chide at the same time as he caught her. “They won’t hurt you.”

“You’re right, they won’t,” Felicity acknowledged, “‘Cause I’m not going anywhere near them. Let me go.”

The billionaire did release her, but still kept himself between her and the vehicles. “You are already here now. What is the harm in—”

“I said I’d meet the crazy person you have trying to train these monsters, that’s it!” Felicity reminded him angrily, or as angrily as she ever sounded—at least until she started using her loud voice, which she wasn’t yet. But then it looked like she might start hyperventilating any second now…

“You did,” Masrani agreed calmly, clearly not noticing that Oliver was just barely keeping himself from punching the other man. Not that that restraint was likely to last long. “And this is where Mister Grady is at the moment. Doing his job. Precisely what you did agree to talk to him about.”
Felicity swallowed, then she shook her head. “You don’t even have them in a full enclosure here,” she gestured at the building they’d been walking towards moments ago. “Are you insane?”

“Some days he is, certainly,” Evelyn interjected. “But then so are we all.”

“None of these Raptors have ever escaped,” Masrani protested. “They haven’t even tried. The imprinting was successful in that regard at the very least.”

*Sara winced at the sound, mostly because what little color her friend’s anger had returned to her face was quickly gone again.*

Felicity took a long moment to collect herself, glancing nervously towards the building that apparently held the monsters she disliked the most, before she spoke again. “Invite him to dinner with us. Or something like that. Not here. Not near those things.”

Dislike was definitely too mild a word, but it wasn’t hard to understand why…

Masrani sighed, “Mister Grady is expecting us, my dear. We should not need to wait long if that is your preference.”

“No, I want to leave—”

“No, you don’t,” Evelyn gently cut her off, going on with a reassuring smile at the wounded look the blonde gave her. “You don’t want to run. You know that, Felicity.”

“She said she wants to leave,” Oliver put in, maybe not as harshly as he would’ve a few seconds ago because he, too, was trying to follow the exchange between Felicity and Evelyn Masrani. Regardless of whatever was going on between the lady and Nyssa—and/or the League—even Oliver could see that Evelyn was doing her best to help Felicity here. At least the archer was willing to recognize it, too.

“No,” Felicity finally sighed, still looking like she wanted to hightail it out of there as she said,
“Lyn’s right… I’ll wait,” she agreed reluctantly, not quite hiding in the arm Oliver had wrapped around her.

Purr-er-er…

This other strange sound wasn’t as nerve grating as the other, half-roar, half-screeching sound they seemed to make, but most of them still winced along with Felicity. With how pale she’d gotten it was hard not to.

“Maybe we could wait inside somewhere?” Thea suggested hopefully. “Or back in the limos?”

“That’s an excellent idea,” Missus Queen agreed, smiling at Missus Masrani. “What do you think, Evelyn?”

The other woman smiled back with a nod, before she raised an eyebrow at her husband. “There is a shelter-in-place location, isn’t there, Simon? I believe all of the sites were required to have them?”

That made sense, what with the man’s insistence that his park was entirely prepared for absolutely anything. So his sigh was more than a little out of place but then Masrani had already proved more than once that he could be more than a little childish about his dinosaurs. It probably came across as childlike glee to most people—people who were at least almost as excited to be here—but for someone who was forced to be here as part of a business deal, even one intended to help her overcome her childhood trauma, it didn’t work well at all.

Fortunately the specific, required shelter that Evelyn Masrani had suggested was an underground bunker. A little fortress that was likely as capable of defending against a bomb strike as dinosaurs, or any other potential disaster. Though the part that was a real relief was that they couldn’t hear the nearby dinosaurs anymore, so Felicity could stop flinching at every single sound.

“Turn on the projector, please,” Masrani ordered the technician that looked like he would’ve preferred one of the dinosaurs invading to the man that his boss’s boss probably reported to. But he complied even as Masrani’s wife hissed at him.

“Simon—”

“There’s several feet of concrete and/or steel all around us, my heart,” Masrani told his wife, then he
looked at Felicity again. “Surely you can watch them electronically? You must have done so before?”

“No. I haven’t,” Felicity denied, but after another swallow she added, “But I can try.”

“Thank you,” Masrani said sincerely, his smile heartfelt for a moment even though it dropped into a frown as he looked back at the bucket-sweating technician. “Is there a problem?”

“N-No, sir,” the poor man answered immediately, visibly trying and failing to reign his nerves in even while he struggled to explain. “We don’t use the projectors here that much. Or-Or at all, really. I-I mean, I-I don’t think I’ve ever seen them used here, but-but they should just come up, over there,” he gestured towards the far wall. “I-I think—”

“Let me see, please,” Felicity finally had to take pity on the stammering man, surprising only him as she didn’t quite push him aside to start pressing buttons at his station.

“N-No, miss, it’s very delicate equipment,” the man tried to protest a moment later, though he was still too in awe of Simon Masrani bringing a group into his little underground workspace to do much more than that. “The system is—”

“I know, I designed it,” Felicity cut him off, successfully subduing all his protests. After a moment she frowned. “It should be—ah! There it is. Someone messed up the connection,” she looked up at the ceiling with a frown, walking over towards the side of the room the man had gestured at and looking up at a machine up by the ceiling that apparently wasn’t plugged in right. “Roy? Could you give me a hand?”

The Mirakuru-dosed man immediately came over, though Oliver was back beside her first. “Sure, what’d you need?”

Felicity pointed at the device on the ceiling. “I need to fix the plugs. Can you guys get me up there for a minute?”

It wasn’t a question that really needed to be asked. Even without the Mirakuru Roy and Oliver would’ve been able to pick Felicity up, and Oliver and Digg definitely could. She was such a little thing, Sara was pretty sure she wouldn’t have too much trouble getting the other blonde up there on her shoulders.
“Sure,” Roy replied, glancing between Felicity and the problematic machine. “You’ll have to stand on my shoulders,” he smirked. “At least you’re not wearing heels today.”

“That’s be harder,” Felicity agreed as she toed off her sneakers, not seeming to notice that Oliver had been joined by Digg and Nyssa even as Sara also came closer to make sure someone would be there to catch Felicity if she happened to fall any way. “Thanks,” she did say as Oliver and Digg helped brace her as she climbed up on the youngest man’s shoulders.

Really she should, for appearances sake, have asked Diggle for this. But she’d asked the kid with the super-strengths specifically because of that.

Which was also why Roy had no trouble at all standing up from his kneeling position with Felicity now standing on top of him, balancing with Oliver and Diggle’s help. The Canary was actually impressed at how easily balanced the other blonde seemed to be on the more than awkward footing: even with the Mirakuru ensuring Roy had more than enough strength to stand steady with ease, her feet curling over his shoulders couldn’t possibly feel completely steady. But it shouldn’t surprise her either: the tech genius was focused on her task, comfortable with the familiarity even to the exclusion of the monsters outside the doors.

“This should take just a sec,” Felicity told them, not seeming to even notice how all her spotters shifted protectively again as she went up on her tiptoes: her feet were more than secure in Roy’s hands, and the others weren’t going to let her fall, but all her attention was zeroed in on the plugs she was pulling out and plugging back in correctly. “Ah ha! There it is,” she said as she reached all the way into the ceiling to pull down a cord that hadn’t even been plugged in at all. “There, that should work. Now I just have to put these two back and—”

Suddenly the projector came to life, creating transparent images of dinosaurs that were probably a bit taller than all of them when they were standing straight, but now they were all crouching, big eyes zeroed in on a man who’s hologram-like image was displayed standing exactly where Roy was.

Sara winced again even before Felicity glanced down to see the result of her quick work, only to fall from Roy’s shoulders with a shriek because he didn’t want to break her feet by holding on.

Oliver, of course, was there to catch her, and quickly cradled her close to his chest as he turned away from the transparent image filled side of the room. The rest of them all formed a wall of bodies
between the blonde and the dinosaur holograms, though Sara was watching the images curiously like several of the others even as Oliver assured the woman in his arms that she was safe and Masrani apologized for the ‘fright.’

Why exactly it hadn’t occurred to him that Felicity would be bothered by life-size images of the monsters that terrified her, the former assassin couldn’t begin to guess. But there was something fascinating about watching the man command there monsters that were all capable of taking him out with next to no effort individually, let alone together. But all four dinosaurs did appear to be listening to the man while he backed away from them. Then he rolled out of view, with the Raptors attempting to follow but stopping short of leaving the hologram’s range, probably because a quickly closed door was in their way or something like that.

Likely because the man wasn’t even supposed to be in the cage with them in the first place. He’d appeared almost completely confident, but how quickly he’d made his escape—which was just barely fast enough—made it clear that that wasn’t normal Raptor training.

“Why was Mister Grady in the pen with the Raptors?” Missus Masrani’s demand confirmed it. “I thought the training hadn’t progressed anywhere near that far?”

“It hasn’t,” her husband agreed, before he turned towards the door. “Please excuse me for a few moments.”

“Turn that off,” Evelyn ordered even before the big door had closed behind him.

“No, wait,” Felicity’s protest was probably the only one that could’ve stopped her. “Can-Can we see what happened?”

“I’m sure we can,” Evenly confirmed with a frown. “Are you sure you want to?”

Oliver had only set her back down on her feet a moment ago, so the older woman’s hesitation was easy to understand.

But Felicity nodded. “Could you switch to the 2-D format, please?” she requested of the park’s technician as she started toeing her shoes back on, with one hand on Oliver’s arm to prop herself up.

“Uh, sure?” the still nervous man agreed. “I-um, I think?”
Sara was starting wonder about the competency of the park’s security guards. But then this was just one man watching a monitor that was probably being watched somewhere else, too. Multiple sets of eyes all watching the same thing made for fewer security mistakes, after all. And the actual army that ARGUS was worried about was around here somewhere, too.

“Sorry I-I didn’t see what—I was trying to change the setting,” the man tried to explain, and mostly managed it.

“Take your time,” Evelyn told him kindly.

“Th-Thank you, ma’am,” he replied, finally sounding a little bit steadier. “It-It was just one of the normal tests earlier. Looked like it went well. I-I don’t know why Owen—I mean, Mister Grady, I-I don’t know why he would’ve gone into the cage, though.”

They were all already watching the not half as intimidating images rewind on the wall now, which also offered multiple camera angles that probably all figured into how the three-dimension projection was recorded. So now they could see the other park worker who Owen Grady had gone in to rescue. And a little further back they saw how the kid had gotten in there, too: trying to catch a piglet, of all things, that apparently wasn’t supposed to be set loose in the cage but had been. He ended up falling in from somewhere on high when a Raptor caught his net and the little pig inside it at the same time. Watching all of it in real time again was even more impressive, especially when the tech somehow brought up the sound, too, though it wasn’t quite as loud here…

“Pig loose! Pig loose!” the teen could be heard yelling as a long pole with a net on the end went after the little piglet making its ill-fated dash across the Raptors’ pen.

The Raptor’s catch looked even faster as it caught the pig and possibly swallowed it whole, but there attention was all drawn away to the kid falling not from the sky, but the walkways high overhead—higher, apparently, than the Raptors could jump but the kid survived the fall well enough to immediately realize he was in mortal peril, so he started crawling backwards right away.

There was the buzz of an alarm, and now they could see off to one side that a gate was slowly starting to open.

“Owen, no!” a man’s voice came from off screen.

But Owen Grady completely ignored him, because he started crawling under the small opening left by the gate right then. “No, no! Hold your fire!” he was standing and running further into the closure while he yelled at the men that’d just run out onto the walkway overhead with big guns aimed at the Raptors. Then he was between the four dinosaurs and the kid still on the ground, and while the Raptors all screech at him they did stop stalking towards their unexpected prey in response to his raised hand.
“Hold your fire! Do not fire!” Grady was still demanding of the soldiers overhead, though his eyes were locked on the predators that were now moving more slowly towards him as he backed slowly away. There was another buzz from the gate as a black man hit one of the buttons on the outer control panel that made the gate stop rising at about two-thirds open. “You put 12 amps into these animals, they’re never gonna trust me again,” he was insisting.

In the background they could see that the kid had crawled close enough to the partially open gate for the black man to grab him and drag him back through it.

“Blue. Stand down,” Grady demanded, his eyes locked with one of the Raptors. Possibly the biggest one, so probably the Alpha—or the Beta, if the training they’d heard about did actually have the Raptors thinking the man in front of them right now was their Alpha. Though the fact they were actually obeying him right now, instead of attacking, wasn’t bad proof. “Stand down.”

“Raa!” ‘Blue’ let loose a little roar as she snapped at the thin air between them.

“Hey, hey!” Grady snapped verbally back, continuing with calm authority that the dinosaurs really did seem to respect. “What did I just say?” he raised his other hand towards the dinosaurs to his far left then. “Delta! I see you. Back up!”
‘Delta’ screeched at Grady as he looked her way, almost drowning out the sounds of the other Raptors faint hissing.

“Okay,” Grady looked back at ‘Blue’ then. “Good. Good,” he kept all the calm authority up, in spite of all the hissing and snarling. “Charlie,” he looked at the one off to the far right now. “Stay right there.”

Raa…

Raaan-an…

“Good.” Grady nodded, lowering his left hand, though his right stayed raised in the ‘stay’ command towards ‘Blue’ as he ordered. “Close the gate.”

“Are you crazy?” the black man immediately retorted, a strong French accent ringing through in his wide-eyed incredulity.

“Just trust me,” Grady replied calmly, still watching the Raptors that were actually still listening to him.

“Close the gate!” the kid who’d started all of this cried out then, looking between the more open than not gate and the man that didn’t want to close his friend in there.

The black man looked between the kid and his friend once, and then muttered something too soft for the security cameras to detect as he darted back to the control panel.

Buzz!

Grady shuffled back a step as the gate started closing, his eyes still on the dinosaurs. Then he suddenly turned and threw himself at the closing open, rolling through when it was barely big enough for him, and just in time, too: as the gate closed far enough behind him that all four of the following dinosaurs ran right into it.

Clang!

Raa! Raa!

One of the views changed to the inside of that gate area—in between the Raptor’s pen and another
gate that would’ve kept them from escaping even if they had followed their ‘human Alpha’ through the first gate.

“T’aurais dû l'aisser l’bouffer,” the black man was saying as he helped the crazy man up.

“Yeah,” Grady agreed with a barely believing little laugh at himself.

Both shared another little laugh, then the black man walked away, leaving once he’d opened the outer gate while Grady knelt in front of the kid he’d just saved.

“You’re the new guy, right?”

The kid nodded shakily, clearly not even a little aware of the fact that the two older men had just been agreeing on his hero’s stupidity in not just letting the Raptors eat him. “Yeah.”

“You ever wonder why there was a job opening?”

The kid’s eyes widened even further as he stared up at him.

“Hey, don’t ever turn your back to the cage,” Grady added, before he turned to walk away even as the kid looked back to see one of the Raptor’s still crouched there, now growling at him.

And undoubtedly leaving the kid suitably impressed with the need for much more vigilance during his workday. A good thing when even a moment's inattention--if it happened to be the wrong moment--could lead to deadly consequences, like it almost had today.

“That took guts,” Roy said then.

“Yeah, it did,” Oliver agreed aloud, while the rest of them just nodded.

“Well, we’ll get to meet the man himself soon enough,” Evelyn said then, looking around with a frown. “Though we really don’t have to stay here, Felicity,” she told the younger woman, going on before she could respond. “I’m sure Mister Grady would be happy to accompany us back to the resort. Or meet us there.”

“Yeah, after that he probably wants to get away from those things for a little while,” Thea pointed out.
Felicity sighed, “Mister Masrani won’t—”

“Simon isn’t good at not getting what he wants, it’s true,” Evelyn shrugged. “It doesn’t happen often, so he hasn’t had to get used to it. That doesn’t mean it’s not good for him.” She gave Felicity a little smile again. “Of course we can stay here, if you want to. But we don’t have to. It’s up to you.”

That all seemed very reassuring to Sara, but the other blonde just sighed again. “I’m already up to my three vetoes,” she pointed out unhappily. “The T-Rex, the Raptors and the Indominus. It wouldn’t be—”

“I don’t care what that contract said in writing,” Evelyn interrupted. “Simon gave his word to both of us that he’d have a care for your feelings. And while he’s not good at hiding his disappointment, he doesn’t want to hurt you either, sweetheart.” She shook her head with a little smile. “Not that anyone here would let him if he did.”

“But the contract—”

“If there’s a single word in that contract that is actually a problem I’ll take care of it.”

Felicity blinked at her, not able to hide her bewilderment, “But you don’t—”

“My husband and I do own everything equally, Felicity, you know that.”

Missus Q looked shocked at that, so shocked she didn’t even try to hide it. “But surely your pre-nup…” she trailed off uncertainly, her good-manners returning a few seconds too late, but the other married woman didn’t seem offended.

“We signed one, of course, the family lawyers insisted on it,” Evelyn shrugged. “They weren’t too fond of the details, but there is a pre-nuptial agreement in their filing cabinets with both our signatures. Most of the specifics we agreed on were for the unlikely event of our ever needing a divorce.” She shook her head. “We have separate bank accounts, lines of credit and such, but everything else we share.” She sighed, looking away for a moment. “We might’ve seen cause to move these things around more if we’d ever had children, but we’ve never been so lucky.”

If possible the Queen matriarch looked even more shocked, and Sara was pretty sure it wasn’t a look she’d ever even imagined seeing on Moira Queen’s face.
Felicity spoke up again then, “Thank you, Lyn, but,” she shook her head. “I gave my word.”

Evelyn’s kind smile never wavered, “And that is a very fine thing, Felicity. Commendable,” she reached out and took her hand, giving it a gentle squeeze. “But you are already here, and you are already trying. Please believe me when I say that that is enough for us.” She shook her head, “Simon sometimes get caught up in his own enthusiasm, here especially. But for all his bluster, he would never forgive himself if he hurt you. And we want what is best for you, so if you say ‘no’—or anything else about any of this—we will listen. I promise you that.”

Felicity’s lower lip trembled a little bit as she smiled back at her, “Thank you,” she replied, returning the gentle squeeze before their hands dropped as they all turned at the sound of the door opening again.

No one was surprised that they recognized both men walking in, as Masrani had all but said he was going to drag the Raptor handler in here. The man didn’t look like a pushover, but the park’s owner wasn’t someone any of the park’s employees might gainsay.

“Nothing to worry about, everyone,” Masrani started speaking almost right away. “No one was hurt.”

“Except the piglet,” Roy mutter in the background echoed around the little room, as did his surprised exclamation when his girlfriend kicked him. “Ow.”

Masrani continued as if he hadn’t heard the teen, “Mister Grady had the situation well in hand,” he indicated the other man that looked like it was only his prior military service keeping the neutral expression on his face right now.

Not that he looked like he was nervous; Sara just definitely got the vibe that he’d rather be back with the maybe-man-eating-dinosaurs than dealing with the park’s crazy owner and his V.I.Ps. Honestly she could sympathize, and most of the other V.I.Ps could, too, so they’d probably get along just fine.

“We saw,” Oliver responded, which was enough to draw everyone’s eyes back to him.

And Sara didn’t even try to hide her smirk, because if the other vigilante wanted to hover any closer he’d have to just pick Felicity up again. Actually, that’s probably exactly what he wanted to do. Since the other blonde didn’t look particularly upset now that there weren’t hologram’s of dinosaurs
attacking, she could only assume that he was being territorial now in response to the other alpha-male in the room. Eventually it’d probably stop being cute, but until it bothered Felicity enough for her to mention it Sara wasn’t going to say anything. She was far too amused by the fact that he somehow didn’t seem to notice that he was jealous of someone he’d just met—and all because Felicity was smiling at him as Masrani introduced them all.

“Mister Grady, may I introduce my wife, Evelyn Masrani, and our dear friend Felicity Smoak,” Masrani started off with the two most important people in the room to him, again managing to endear himself to at least Sara just because it was a sort-of-confirmation that his wife was right. Despite how stupid he sometimes seemed to be about all of this, he did seem to care for Felicity, and that had to count for something. “As well as her traveling companions from Starling City.”

Oliver stepped forward before Felicity could finish raising her hand for a polite handshake to grab Grady’s with his own firm grip. “Oliver Queen,” he shook hands once, and apparently was being polite enough to leave it at that as he let it go to begin indicating everyone else, even though Masrani would’ve probably gotten to them next once Felicity and the Raptor handler had met. “This is my mother, Moira Queen. My sister, Thea Queen. Her boyfriend, Roy Harper. My friend and business partner, Tommy Merlyn. His girlfriend and her sister, Laurel and Sara Lance. And in charge of our personal security we have John Diggle, as well as Lyla and Nyssa.”

“Nice to meet you all,” Grady nodded to them all.

Sara was just impressed that Oliver had managed to introduce them all—even Nyssa—so smoothly. Then again, she probably shouldn’t be. He had been raised as the scion of the Queen family, and no matter how much he didn’t like playing C.E.O at Queen Consolidated he had been for a few months now.

This should be fun…

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Yet again, I’m so sorry for the horribly long wait. It wasn’t intentional. This chapter just didn’t want to be finished. It still doesn’t, truth be told, but this seemed like an okay place for it to stop. And there was a fair amount in here, so hopefully it wasn’t too disappointing.
I know many of you want to see Felicity meet Owen, so you had a quick peek at it here. There will be more in the next chapter.
And yes, while it should be obvious: the Raptor situation with Owen rescuing the kid was stolen straight from Jurassic World. BUT after watching this movie I don’t know how many times I decided that that particular scene could’ve happened at any time as it wasn’t mentioned in the later scenes. The only thing that sets it anywhere in the timeline
is the In-Gen guy lurking, but he’s already here in the story, too, so… *shrugs* I’m not trying to be confusing. It just seemed to work really well, so I went with it.
As always, thank you so much to everyone still reading. I promise I’m not going to abandon this story, but apparently the chapters just aren’t going to come easily, so hopefully it continues to be worth the wait for those of you that are still hanging in there. And, as always, a million thanks to those of you that have been commenting, too. All of you have helped a lot. Some with specific ideas, and others just with encouragement—all of which I can’t thank you enough for, so: thank you, thank you, thank you!
Suggestions, ideas, constructive criticisms et al. are ALWAYS welcome.
I won’t try to nail myself to a timeline on the next update, because that just does NOT seem to work with this story. But I promise I’ll be trying to get it out to you as soon as I possibly can. Until then, I hope everyone has had a wonderful holiday season to date and wish you the best for the start of a fabulous new year! :-D
Estranged Eyes

Chapter Notes

A/N: Once again I’m apologizing to all of you that have had to wait so long for this update. As I’ve said before, the problem with this story is it’s NOT really planned out. I have a bunch of ideas, and some of you have given me a few more on top of that, but it’s only sort of mapped out with a scene or two pre-written. Which means that I’m actually writing each chapter as I get to it—and there are times I swear have a tooth pulled was less painful. At least that’s over and done with and the pain lessens right away and is gone in at most a couple of days…
At SOME point—though it may not be till the Indominus at last breaks out—my muses for this story should find their feet and start running and/or dancing with it. Until then I’m just trying to make sense of everything and hopefully the end results are both logical and at least a little entertaining.
Anyway, I hope you find this new chapter was worth the wait. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Moira Queen’s P.O.V.

Moira could understand Felicity Smoak’s fear of the Velociraptors very easily. The dinosaurs that the younger blonde feared most weren’t as large as some of the other creatures Jurassic World boasted, but their overt ferocity more than made up for that. Agile, fast and armed with teeth and claws that weren’t unlike weapons—add to all of that the group mentality could and did make any creature more dangerous and these ‘Raptors,’ as some informally referred to them were among the deadliest of all the dinosaurs. Even if you didn’t have a traumatic history with them, the Raptors were a sum of all fears.

It was what’d made the unplanned demonstration of control over the creatures so impressive. The sheer authority exuded by the man who’d managed it most impressive of all.

That same man, however, looked a lot more daunted by the park owner and his guests than he had been by the monsters he was responsible for. But that wasn’t surprising, really: everyone had their own comfort zone—and familiarity accounted for a lot of that.

What’s more, the former Navy Seal somehow reminded her just as much of her son as he did of
Mister Diggle. Though that likely had a lot to do with all the mental leaps she’d managed to make while she’d had nothing to do but think during her months in prison after the Undertaking…

“You know, I can’t remember the last time I was in here,” Grady said after Masrani had finished the round of introduction, shaking his head after he finished the quick look round the room. “Not the most comfortable place. Secure though, for sure,” he smiled directly at Felicity again then, silently confirming that Masrani had already made it clear that she was the priority here—and he would have mentioned why they were hiding here in what was basically the bomb shelter. “Course we’d be safe outside, too. Even if any of the Raptors got out, they wouldn’t make it a full foot before the A.C.U guys stunned ‘em.”

“But you didn’t let them,” Thea spoke up, drawing everyone’s attention away from Felicity for a second, though the sincere surprise in her voice probably meant the little frown on her face was one of confusion. “That would’ve been a lot safer than what you just did… wouldn’t it?”

“Sure it would,” Grady agreed easily, and then he shrugged. “But it would’ve meant years of work down the drain, too.”

“You said they’d never trust you again?” Felicity asked quietly.

Moira blinked at her, surprised she’d spoken up at all when she’d been giving every impression of wanting to get as far away from this part of the island and the dinosaurs it housed till now. But she was coming to find that the blonde her son had found in the I.T Department was much more than just a pretty face with a tasteful dye job. The resume that looked more like it should’ve belonged to someone who was at least running a department at the company said that much, even before Simon Masrani had swooped into Starling City to try and steal her away for what wasn’t the first time.

Something Moira wouldn’t let happen now that she’d spent some time watching her son when he was with this woman. Around Felicity Smoak, Oliver seemed to come alive again. Some of the weight seemed to lift off his shoulders. Some light seeped back into his eyes. Smiles started to creep up along his lips.

Moira might be running for mayor of Starling City more to redeem herself than anything else, but a big part of that was to lighten at least some of the burden she’d put on Oliver and Thea’s conscience by letting the Undertaking happen. Both of her children understood that she’d been trying to protect them—it had after all been her defense in court. But that’d only made them feel more culpable for what she’d been willing to do to keep them safe.

Oliver had been the one that’d truly tried to stop Malcolm Merlyn and save the city, but that didn’t
help him. She’d never heard him say as much, but she could still see it in her son’s eyes. The fact that he’d failed because he hadn’t been able to stop the second device, so 502 people had died. Very nearly 503, given how close Tommy had come to dying that night...

Thea just couldn’t comprehend how her mother had done what she’d done. Short of having children under threat herself years from now—something her mother could never want—she never would be able to grasp it. Not entirely. And learning that the man behind it all was her biological father would not help. Far from it—it’d destroy her. That was why Moira could never let it happen. Why she hoped that the League of Assassins had found him, as Ra’s al Ghul had promised they would.

Moira would burn in Hell for what she’d done. She knew that. But she’d deserve it, and she was okay with it. If it meant that her children could be happy.

“I’ve known Blue, Charlie, Delta and Echo all their lives, but I don’t control them,” Grady shook his head. “They’re too smart for that. It’s a relationship—built on mutual respect.”

Moira blinked at him, not sure what to make of the concept. The idea that some of the most fearsome monsters on the planet could be trusted enough to respect them was quite beyond her. And a glance at the younger woman the words were aimed at told her that she was not less confused.

Felicity didn’t seem to know what to make of his words, or have any idea of what to say to it either.

Moira waited a moment to see if the young woman’s brilliant mind and fast mouth might manage to catch up, but then she decided to step in. Lest her territorial son do something even while he wasn’t admitting to himself that he was being at all territorial. The more she saw Oliver with Felicity and Thea with Roy, the more she thought that happiness might actually be in reach...

“We would like to hear more about your work, Mister Grady,” Moira offered him a polished smile. “Perhaps you could join us for dinner?”

It was practical and expected. Giving Felicity the way out she wanted, while allowing Masrani a chance to reopen this debate when there was more of the island between them and their group and these particular dinosaurs.

Grady blinked at her, and then looked between her and Masrani. “Uh, yeah, I guess. I’m supposed to go to the banquet for the Verizon reps, but—”
“That won’t be necessary,” Masrani shook his head. “I would like you to examine the security of our new dinosaur before we open to the public, but—ah, actually you could come with us there now. You have the time, yes?”

“…Yeah?” Grady agreed uncertainly again, knowing better than to say ‘no’ to the man he was talking to.

“Wait,” Felicity spoke up with a frown, “That’s the Indominus Rex, isn’t it?”

“Indeed it is, my dear,” Masrani agreed enthusiastically. “She won’t be open to the public for several more months. Asset Containment is being over-cautious, of course, but that is their job.”

“Wait, the ‘Indominus Rex?’” Grady repeated the dinosaur’s name like he thought it was a joke, one he was just barely managing to not laugh at as he finished saying it out loud.

Moira might understand the impulse if more color had returned to Felicity’s face. The girl clearly meant a great deal to her son, and Thea had warmed to her, too, after only meeting her a few short days ago. Neither one of her children would react well to the poor dear fainting from fear.

“A bit of a play on names,” Masrani admitted. “The T-Rex has long been considered the ‘king’ of the dinosaurs. The Indominus, however, is undoubtedly her superior. Or she’s supposed to be,” he shrugged as he admitted, “I, myself, have not yet seen her either. I am told, however, that she lives up to all she’s promised to be.”

Moira couldn’t help but blink at him, because that description was not a good way to convince Felicity Smoak to go see the monster she was already considering vetoing. Especially not now that she knew that she had Masrani’s wife—and, apparently, the co-owner of Jurassic World—completely on her side.

Felicity wasn’t objecting yet though, and Oliver seemed to be more focused on her than he was on what anyone else was saying. It was cute to watch—as long as she didn’t faint.

“Claire will be meeting us there in just half an hour,” Masrani went on like more than half the group wasn’t looking at him like he’d just grown a second head.

“Claire’s coming out of the control room?” Owen sounded surprised. “Really?”
“Indeed, Mister Grady,” Masrani enthused, “I know she does not venture out often, but examining our assets after the scientists have completed their fine work is a very necessary part of her job. And mine,” he nodded happily, though his frown appeared as his wife spoke up with a roll of her eyes.

“No it isn’t.”

“Of course it is, my love. You know—”

“I know that you get the reports on every facet of this island. I get them, too, remember?” Evelyn shook her head. “They tell us far more than our own eyes ever could.”

“But reports cannot calculate the response, dear heart,” Masrani objected. “How the public will react.”

Evelyn rolled her eyes in unhidden exasperation. “I’m pretty sure publicity and finance cover that between all their stats.”

“Bah, statistics are only numbers,” her husband insisted, making a grabbing motion at the air to emphasize his words as he said them. “Reaction is emotion. The deep, visceral feeling that only experience can bring.”

“Oh god, please tell me that you don’t have some crazy part of this island where even crazier people can try to escape predators. Or hunt them. Or anything like that.” Felicity demanded, her horrified eyes a little too wide to convey actual authority but still desperately seeking an answer.

“What?” Masrani scoffed again. “No, of course not.”

“Legal wouldn’t let him,” his wife added, earning a half-betrayed, half-sheepish look from her husband. “They said the insurance would be impossible.”

“Wait, wait, wait,” the Velociraptor handler looked only a little less horrified than Felicity as he stared at the park’s owner. “You were actually going to—”
“No, no,” Masrani cut him off, gesture the crazy idea with a little waive of his hand. “It was just a thought. We are going to create a virtual reality game at some point. Using the actual animals would be unkind regardless.”

“Unkind is too mild a word,” his wife offered into the tense silence that followed his remark. “Wrong, I think, is a better one.”

Masrani winced, but then immediately nodded. “You are of course right, my heart. As always. Forgive me?”

“Always,” Evelyn chuckled lightly, before she offered Felicity a little smile. “Now, my friend, have you had enough for the day or shall we continue?” She shot her husband a sharp look halfway through, stopping him in the act of opening his mouth to protest, her eyes gentling as they went back to the blonde once she was sure her husband wasn’t going to say something.

Felicity visibly marshaled herself with a sigh, “I guess we should keep going,” she allowed, following it up with more words spoken so softly they had to be for herself instead of anyone else. “Get it over with.”

“Well, we don’t have to see the Indominus right away,” Masrani wavered with a frown. “We haven’t yet seen the Velocir—”

“Dear, shut up,” Evelyn ordered, and her husband not surprisingly obeyed, though he visibly wilted at the rebuke—and possibly under the strain of holding his unwelcome enthusiasm back. “Felicity?”

The blonde glanced at the Velociraptor expert, who returned her gaze calmly: clearly not about to make any demands of her because he clearly didn’t see any need to. It showed that he did have at least some survival instincts; at least enough to know that getting involved in an argument between the couple that owned this island would be far from smart. Of course, the same could be said for stepping between even semi-obedient predators and their prey when they were about to pounce, but again, everyone had their own comfort zone.

“What about the labs?” Sara suddenly spoke up, shrugging as all eyes went to her. “Or, I don’t know, that command center you mentioned? We’re supposed to see those, too, aren’t we?”

“We are,” Evelyn agreed easily. “Would you prefer that Felicity? Or perhaps some more of the herbivores? I rather think you’d enjoy the ride through the Gentle Giants habitat.”
Again the blonde visibly struggled with herself—who knows how many conflicting fears at war within her mind—before she shook head. “I’d rather get it over with today. The Indominus. One less thing I have to worry about after that.”

“Yes, yes,” Masrani nodded approvingly. “Well, we have to go back outside to get back to our vehicles first. Of course, I’m sure the Velociraptors are secure?”

The Velociraptor expert immediately nodded. “Yeah, of course. They were headed back to their pens before I came in here anyway,” he directed his response at Felicity, undoubtedly hoping a little more color might return to her face, too. “There’s no way for them to get out of there even if they wanted to—and their dinners in there now so they won’t want to leave it.”

Felicity flinched. “Do you still feed them live cows?”

“What?” Grady blinked at her.
“No, my dear, we do not,” Masrani replied at the same time, going on helpfully in response to the confused looks several others were giving him and Felicity. “The old park, I believe, fed the livestock to the predators live, correct?”

“Yeah,” Felicity confirmed, visibly swallowing as she finished.

“Mister Hammond’s scientists believed it necessary to engage the predators hunting instincts, however our scientists found that there was no real need for it,” Masrani finished with a shrug.

“So the poor goats that are sent out into the T-Rex paddock really are just for entertainment?” Evelyn asked her husband disapprovingly.

Masrani immediately winced, raising his hands a little in self-defense, but Owen Grady answered before he could.

“No, I know that one,” the Velociraptor expert shook his head. “She’s the same T-Rex from *Jurassic Park*—that was what she got used to there. And after A.C.U captured her she kept trying to break out of the paddock if she wasn’t allowed to kill her own prey.”

“Wait, it’s the same one and it’s still trying to break out?” Tommy demanded, looking about as shocked as Moira felt.

“No, no, not anymore,” Masrani took over. “She’s calmed down a great deal in her older age. She hasn’t tried to break out in years, truly, and even if she wanted to she won’t be able to manage it.”

“That’s true,” Grady agreed with him. “Paddock 9’s plenty big enough for her—visitors only see a bit of it from the viewing areas, mostly the feeding platform. She’s got plenty of space to roam though. And except for the viewing areas themselves, those walls are solid steel that’s at least a few feet thick.”

“The viewing platforms aren’t a weakness either,” Evelyn said, watching Felicity with concern. “The glass is thicker than the windows of the space station. And it’s one-way.”

“So she can’t see anyone,” Felicity nodded, seeming reassured by that at least.
“The openings are also way too small for her to get through,” Grady added helpfully, glancing at Masrani as he asked, “The Indominus’ setup’s probably similar, right?”

“I believe so, yes,” the C.E.O agreed, before he too looked back at Felicity. “A.C.U decided to feed the Indominus differently, however. So only the T-Rex is routinely fed live goats or cows.”

“Then why was the piglet running around here?” Thea asked with a frown.

“Oh, that’s part of their training and evaluation,” Grady answered, shrugging as he went on. “They don’t get to really hunt, so we have to test them somehow.”

“It’s mean,” Thea said, still frowning.

“Yeah, some of the animal rights groups don’t like it,” the specialist admitted with a sigh and another shrug. “But they gotta hunt and we have to test their abilities, sweetie. That’s the job.”

Thea sighed, and she was still frowning, but she didn’t say anymore as her boyfriend wrapped his arm around her again.

There was a moment of uncomfortable silence before Masrani broke it yet again. “Yes, well, shall we return to the cars then?”

“If we must,” Felicity replied, sounding like she was almost trying to joke about it but not quite managing it because she finished with a sigh.

“Well of course we must,” Masrani replied seriously as he led the way outside, “We can’t stay in the bunker. It’d get quite boring very quickly, I’m sure. Now just come this way, my dear, and we can ‘get this over with,’ as you put it.”

Moira followed as the younger blonde was shepherded into the head vehicle with the park owner before she could slip away to the second again instead. Oliver, of course, was barely a step behind her, with Mister Diggle and Sara also staying close. Thea and Roy must have noticed how much more crowded the first vehicle was going to be and turned instead towards the second with Tommy, Laurel and Sara’s friend. The Velociraptor expert also looked at the second vehicle speculatively, but a gesture from his employer had him trying to squeeze in with the rest of them.
“Everyone ready?” Masrani checked once they were all inside and the doors were shut behind them. “Cozy in here, isn’t it?” he chuckled after he’d received affirmative mumbles.

Moira was just glad to see some more color starting to seep into Felicity’s face as they started to roll away from the dinosaurs she disliked so much. Though thankfully she was still only pale—with no greenish tinge to indicate that the bumpy roads they were traveling on might lead to problems.

“It is not very far, though the dirt roads mean it will take a little longer,” Masrani told them all with a thoughtful frown. “Perhaps we should get them paved.”

“What’s the point?” Evelyn asked her husband, with the kind of pointed patience that only practice and love could create. “The train track is almost done, isn’t it? And that’s surrounded by electric fencing, moats and tunnels. Much more secure than any roads would be.”

“True,” Masrani sighed his agreement. “The lawyers insisted on all of that.”

“They were right to. You know they were,” his wife reminded him.

“Of course, my dear, of course,” the multi-billionaire dutifully replied.

There was heavy silence for several moments as they were jolted by a few more bumps along the unimproved road, then it was surprisingly Felicity who broke it.

“How do you do it?” she asked the Velociraptor Expert with visible bewilderment all across her still too pale face.

Something in the man’s posture softened just a little as he looked at her again. “Do what, Miss Smoak?”

“Trust them?” Felicity shook her head. “Just one of them could—could kill you. In the blink of an eye.”
“So could a lightning strike. Or a guy with a gun. Plenty of other things, too.” Grady shrugged. “Heard there’s some guy with a bow and arrows where you’re from?”

“There is,” Felicity acknowledged more evenly than most of the other people in the car would probably be able to.

Moira had watched her son’s face go especially blank at the question, and half wondered how she hadn’t made the connections months sooner than she had. But then she hadn’t been looking for the face of her son under the hood of the archer that’d threatened her…

“Do you walk around worrying about getting shot with an arrow every day?”

“No.”

“No,” Grady nodded, and then shrugged again. “Not much sense worrying about it is there?”

“That’s different,” Felicity insisted. “The Arrow goes after people who are hurting other people. And he hasn’t killed too many of them since the Undertaking.”

“Yeah, something crazy like that would probably make even another crazy guy rethink his manifesto,” Grady shook his head, “But that’s not the point.”

“Then what is the point?” Oliver interjected almost too firmly for it too sound like the question it was.

Grady didn’t even glance at him, his eyes not wavering from the small blonde that was sitting between them. “Worryin’ about everything that might happen only hurts you, doesn’t it?”

Felicity frowned, and then shook her head. “I don’t worry about the dinosaurs when I’m not on the same island as them,” she replied, then when on a little more shakily. “The Raptors—they hunt us,” she insisted.

“So do alligators. Lions. Wolves. Lots of other predators. We like to think we’re the top of the food-chain, but even if we’re armed there’s a bunch of hunters out there that could get the best of us if
we’re in the wrong place at the wrong time.” Grady shrugged yet again. “I try not to be, just like everybody else.”

Felicity shook her head. “But you just—”

“I should probably clear this up,” the Raptor Expert interrupted her then. “What all you guys just saw? That’s not the usual around here. That kid fell into the cage, and I just reacted.” Grady shrugged again. “Came out fine, in the end. But usually they’re wearing muzzles and locked in place if there aren’t bars between us or the two stories between the ground and the walkway over the paddock. And there’s a reason we’ve got guys with stun guns posted ‘round here all the time.”

“But you didn’t let them do their job,” Diggle pointed out from up front with the driver.

And Grady shrugged again, just as easily as he had when the same thing was pointed out earlier. “Didn’t wanna see years of work get shot away, like I said. I’m allowed to take risks like that if it’s needed—it’s right in my contract. And I felt it was needed.”

“To save that kid,” Oliver added the obvious as he finished, and the Velociraptor specialist didn’t deny it.

“Yeah,” Grady nodded, then shrugged again. “But *A.C.U* would’ve fired, anyway, if the Raptors had actually attacked me.”

“But they didn’t,” Felicity objected. She shook her head so forcefully this time that her ponytail whipped up to swipe Oliver’s cheek as she stopped to stare bewilderedly at Grady again, but he didn’t bat an eye. “When the Raptors tried to follow you out—”

“Up to that point they’d obeyed me,” Grady cut in again. “They were under control. I was in command. And the door closed in time to stop them. If it hadn’t, the *A.C.U* guys would’ve fired. And then the Raptors never would’ve trusted me again.” He shook his head again. “It was worth the risk: for that kid and everybody else here.”

“Indeed it was,” Masrani spoke up approvingly then. “Your reports have been most promising. You are making tremendous progress with your charges. That demonstration, while quite unnecessary, more than proves as much.”
“Yeah, well,” Grady shrugged again. “All in, all the time.”

Felicity was still frowning at the Velociraptor Expert though, “But you believed that they’d listen to you. And…” she shook her head. “And they did?”

“Part of that’s the imprinting,” Grady told her. “But mostly it’s all the work since then. I’m their Alpha. They want to listen to me.” He met the bewildered blonde’s gaze for long moment before he shook his head again. “It’s a relationship, like I said, Miss Smoak. Built on mutual respect.”

“But—They could—How do you—”

“I know they could kill me.” Grady cut her confused ramble off before Moira or her son could decide if they should try to intervene: thankfully before she could upset herself further, as Oliver wasn’t likely to let this conversation go on all that much longer without a fight if she didn’t calm down. “Believe me, I don’t ever forget that. But I don’t dwell on it either. Nothing gets done that way.”

“But how can you trust them even that much?” Felicity wanted to know. “How can you trust them at all?”

Grady met her eyes calmly. “How do you learn to trust any animal? Or anyone, for that matter? You give ‘em a chance,” he shrugged again. “Sometimes a lot of chances, if you think they’re worth it.”

Felicity blinked at him again, but at least she didn’t look as fearfully confused as she had just a minute ago.

It was enough that Oliver’s tone, too, was calm when he decided to interject, “You said something about them imprinting? Like birds?”

“Yeah, and other animals, too,” Grady nodded. “Even human babies learn to recognize their parents pretty fast. For the Raptors it’s kinda the same thing. Only the pack is their family, like it is for wolves, lions—lots of other animals, too.”

“So you’re their Alpha because you spend the most time around them?” Oliver asked, clearly not convinced.
“No, I’m their Alpha ‘cause I’m the adult that was with them when they hatched.” Grady admitted with an easy chuckle. “So they bit me to learn who I was—and imprinted on me.” He raised his hand a bit as he said that, but dropped it just as quickly.

“They bit you?” Sara repeated incredulously, frowning as she went on. “What? Do they learn the way sharks do?”

“Not really. More like a toddler: their teeth and their tongue’s not all that they learn by. It’s just where they start. And they didn’t take a whole bite outta me. Blue just sank her teeth in a bit. And the others all follow her, ‘cause she’s the Beta, so this all I’ve got to show for it,” he held out his open hand for a moment this time.

Between his thumb and pointer finger a small, crescent-shaped scar stretched. It didn’t look like much, but then it’d presumably happened some time ago as the Raptors were full-grown now and this had happened immediately after they first hatched.

Moira didn’t understand why it seemed like everyone other than the Masrani’s looked stunned staring at it. Even Mister Diggle’s eyes were a little wide as he turned to look back from the front seat for a solid second before he visibly made himself turn around. Personally she couldn’t understand how anyone could be convinced to actually let something bite them, but if it was how his job here had started and it’d ultimately worked, Owen Grady clearly considered it worth the exchange.

“Hurt like hell at the time. An’ it took the doc a while to convince me I had to let ‘em bite me. Thought he was crazy when he insisted it was part of the imprinting, but he wore me down. Plus it was right there in the contract I signed. Part of the ‘voluntary necessary risks’ clause,” Grady admitted, looking down at his hand a running a finger along the scar for a moment. “Wasn’t sure I’d actually do it till I saw those little eyes starin’ at me like I was the only thing they saw. Kinda forgot about it then, went to pet her and suddenly her sharp little teeth were stuck into my hand.” He made a gesture with the aforementioned hand again before he dropped it, only looking up to then notice the way most of them were still staring. “What?”

“A bit of a shared experience there,” Masrani explained before anyone else could try to answer. “It was actually from Miss Smoak’s initial interaction with a newly hatched Raptor: back before the first park was forced to close, that Doctor Wu hypothesized his theory on the role the infant Velociraptor’s venom plays in their imprinting upon their superior in the pack—their Alpha, as you say.”

Grady blinked at the blonde then, “Wait, you were bitten?”
“Ye-Yeah, when I was twelve,” Felicity acknowledged shakily, and then her brow furrowed as she turned towards Masrani. “Wait, venom? What venom?” She demanded, waiving her own hand once. “Nobody said anything about venom! It’s just a scar!”

“It isn’t dangerous, my dear,” Masrani reassured her. “If it were you would have suffered the affects long ago. As I understand it, the young Raptors secrete a very mild venom in their initial year that they seemed to use specifically for imprinting. I don’t think venom is the correct word, myself, as it doesn’t sound like a poison at all, but—”

“It’s not,” Grady interrupted, also looking to reassure the blonde who was wide-eyed next to him again. “It’s just their saliva, really. Doesn’t do anything to us. Just sticks around in the scar—an that only took a few days to heal.” He indicated his hand again. “All the Raptor’s can smell it though, so it works somehow.” He shrugged as he admitted. “Not sure on the specifics myself, that was about all I got. Well, that an’ I’m the only one the Raptors really listen to, so I guess the doc was right,” he finished with a shrug.

Felicity still didn’t look very reassured, and her frown returned as he looked back at the park owner again. “Is this why that scientist wanted to study my hand when I was in college?”

Masrani sighed, “Yes, I understand they wanted to test how the venom, or saliva, stood up to the test of time. And again I cannot apologize enough for his enthusiasm—”

“That’s one word for it,” Felicity snorted.

“What’s it actually mean?” Oliver all but demanded, frowning as he worriedly looked between the Velociraptor expert and the blonde whom he had his arm wrapped around again.

“Mean?” Grady blinked at him, before shrugging as he turned back to Felicity. “Nothing, really. I mean, the Raptors might recognize you as another Raptor. Maybe even another Alpha.”

“So they’d take orders from her, too?” Sara asked curiously.

Grady shrugged again, “Well, I mean, like you just saw, they barely take orders from me. Between us they’d probably side with me if they had the choice—they don’t know you.”
“Fine with me,” Felicity told him bluntly. “They’re all yours. Just keep them the hell away from me.”

There were plenty of powerful feelings ringing through every word, but at least she didn’t look like she might soon pass out anymore.

“Yes ma’am,” Grady agreed with another easy chuckle.

“But if she asserted dominance somehow, they might obey her?” Sara pressed again, ignoring the frown Felicity sent her way.

Moira couldn’t help but frown at the younger Lance sister, too, not sure why she thought this topic was something that needed to be expounded on when it so clearly continued to upset the woman they were all here for.

“Well yeah, I guess they might,” the Velociraptor expert sighed. “Can’t see how she’d managed that, though. I was with them when they were still little. Not much more dangerous than teething puppies those first few days.”

“It is an interesting idea to consider,” Masrani put in, giving Felicity that cheerful smile in response to her scowl as he went on, “In theory only, of course, my dear.”

_Thump._

The Raptor Expert cocked his head to the side as they obviously started driving on smoother terrain after that one bump. “Must be almost there,” he said, leaning forward just a little to peer through the front. “Yup, that’s definitely a bigger cage.”

“Of course it is,” Masrani chuckled, looking more like an enthusiastic schoolboy than a world-renown businessman again. “The Indominus is a bigger dinosaur.”

Moira had to smile at his barely restrained childlike glee though.

It reminded her of how happy Robert used to be when he got a new boat or sports car. Walter didn’t have the same enthusiasm for anything, expect perhaps watching soccer—the World Cup in
particular.

That Simon Masrani was so comfortable with all of them, however, was somewhat reassuring. It went a long way towards proving his wife’s point that he really did care about Felicity. Therefore he was likely to honor his end of their deal. So once they escaped his island, Queen Consolidated would be safe from ‘Isabitch’ Rochev, as she’d heard Felicity refer to her on the flight here. It was uncouth, of course, but it still felt like a fitting nickname for the woman even if it’d likely never leave Moira’s own mouth…

Moira who had to suppress her smile as soon as she saw the look of annoyance on Oliver’s face when it was her accepting his helping hand out of the car because Felicity had slid to the opposite side where Mister Grady was helping her out. “Thank you, Oliver,” she said pointedly: mainly to make him stop frowning, because jealousy would get him nowhere with Felicity Smoak.

“You’re welcome, Mom,” Oliver answered automatically, even as he deftly withdrew his hand after she’d found her feet and rounded the car to come up alongside Felicity again.

Sara Lance was already standing on the blonde woman’s other side, and was clearly just as amused as Moira was as they watched Oliver insert himself between Felicity and the Velociraptor Trainer, while they all looked at the helicopter that must have landed a short distance away from here only moments before they’d arrived themselves, because the rotor blades were still spinning to a stop and the doors were just opening.

“Oh, welcome, ladies, welcome!” Masrani called to the two women who were walking over from the helicopter a moment later.

Both were stylishly dressed, but it was the guards trailing behind them that hinted at how important at least one of them was.

“Good afternoon, Mister Masrani, everyone,” the redhead returned, while the blonde beside her nodded.

“Everyone,” Masrani started to introduce, “This is—”

“Lex?” Felicity interrupted, blinking at the other blonde in amazement.
“Hey, Felicity,” she smiled gently, giving a little waive.

It took her a moment, but a real smile finally spread across Felicity’s face and then the two blondes were wrapping their arms around each other tightly.

“Oh my god, what are you doing here?” Felicity wanted to know, not pulling away from the hug to ask.

“It’s so good to see you,” ‘Lex’ told her with a laugh, also still returning the hug.

“Yeah, yeah, it is,” Felicity agreed quickly, finally drawing back a little to look up at her as she repeated. “But what are you doing here?” she asked again, sounding astonished—there really was no other word for it.

“Heard you came back,” ‘Lex’ replied, her smile looking sadder now. “Couldn’t let you go it alone.”

And that was enough for Moira make the connection as to who this woman had to be, but they’d undoubtedly get around to introductions again soon enough.

Felicity bit her lip to stop what sounded like a little sniffle, “I let you come back here alone,” she pointed out ashamedly, shaking her head again.

“No, you didn’t.” Lex told her, shaking her head. “You made sure at least Timmy was coming with me. And Alan was, too. Remember?” She waited for Felicity to nod timidly before she pulled away to gestured towards one of the guards behind her. “I have something for you. From Alan.”

“Doctor Grant?”

“He said we could drop the title, remember?” the other blonde told her. “That we’re not kids anymore, and we went through hell and back together, so we should at least use his first name. And,” she held out the box that the guard had handed to her to give to Felicity. “He wanted you to have this once you made it full circle, too.” As Felicity accepted the package, she explained, “Timmy and I got ours when we came back. Everyone did.”
Hesitantly, Felicity peeled the tape up to avoid tearing the paper, before delicately unwrapping the box. Then she opened it just as carefully, her eyes widening as she stared down at the contents.

Nestled in a bed of soft fabric like some kind of jewel was a big curved claw.

“Is that a Raptor claw?” Grady asked from where he was now standing next to the redhead that hadn’t been introduced yet.

“Yeah…” Felicity confirmed, then blinked and frowned at Lex. “I thought he threw his away?”

“He did,” Lex acknowledged with another nod, “Didn’t think there was much reason to cling to the fossils when dinosaurs were walking the Earth again.” She shrugged then. “But he changed his mind after he ended up back on one of the beta islands. Long story, but I guess he saw some more of them then, and,” she shrugged as she went on. “The Raptor Pack was what we had to handle on our own for a while, so he figured it’d mean more to us kids. We escaped in the end, so we deserved something to show for it, I guess.” She reached inside her blouse and pulled up a chain to show that she was wearing her own claw. “There’s a chain for yours in there, too. If you want to wear it, I mean.”

“Thank you,” Felicity said automatically, then shook her head again. “I’ll have to thank him myself. He’s still in school, right?”

“Yeah, in New York,” Lex confirmed. “He’s thinking about grad-school, too, so it’ll be at least a few more years.”

“I’ll have to call him,” Felicity nodded with a sigh. “Better souvenir than the nightmares,” she murmured as she took the claw out of the box.

It really did look like some sort of weapon. The fossil dwarfed Felicity’s hand, and it certainly looked like it’d be more than capable of hurting or even killing someone. And this was just a fossil…

“Allow me,” Sara offered, taking the box and the claw away from her friend when Felicity just looked between the claw and the chain in consternation that was completely understandable. It looked rather massive for a necklace—truly more like a weapon than a gem. “This’ll just take a second.”
“Thanks,” Felicity said automatically, looking back at Lex as Sara and Nyssa started working with the chain. “And thank you for coming.”

“You’re welcome,” Lex replied with another soft smile. “I would’ve been here sooner, but Lyn only called me last night. I hopped on a plane this morning.”

“You didn’t have to do that,” Felicity told her again automatically.

“I wanted to,” Lex insisted, telling her again, “You shouldn’t have to go through this place alone. Not that you’re actually alone now, of course. Your entourage is a lot bigger than mine.”

Felicity blinked, “I’m sorry, I should introduce everybody.”

“No need,” Lex told her, waiving to the group at large. “Hi, everyone. I’m Alexandra Murphy. But call me Lex, please.”

“The famous Lex,” Tommy grinned as he offered his hand with that perfect smile of his. “Hi, I’m Tommy Merlyn.”

Lex accepted the handshake smoothly, “Pleased to meet you,” she said, before nodding to the group as a whole. “All of you.”

The requisite round of introductions finally followed, and the redhead that’d arrived with Miss Murphy was revealed to be Claire Dearing, Jurassic World’s Operations Manager. Who appeared to be on tense terms with Mister Grady, but both were too professional to be obvious about it.

“So you’re here to join us on our mandatory tours?” Tommy asked the newcomers then, still grinning as he stepped back to link his arm with Laurel again: affectively reassuring his girlfriend that he wasn’t flirting.

Not that Laurel Lance needed the assurance. She had always handled having a playboy for a boyfriend quite well—it was one of the first things Moira had really noticed about her when it came to Oliver. An observation she’d foolishly seized on in her hopes for a future daughter-in-law long before her son was ready for her to be thinking about that. But Laurel and Tommy’s relationship had grown by leaps and bounds over the last year, once it’s survived disaster of the Undertaking: which was caused by Tommy’s father and destroyed Laurel’s job by bringing the building down, nearly on
Those first few months after The Undertaking hadn’t been easy for the pair at all. Moira had been in jail at the time, but it wasn’t too difficult to piece everything together after the fact. Tommy’s survivor’s guilt and loathing for his father had led to him trying to shut his girlfriend out. Laurel had fought back though, despite the fact that dating Malcolm Merlyn’s son had caused problems for her at her new job as an A.D.A. That both she and Tommy were among the victims fortunate enough to escape the earthquake that day meant that most sensible people had been able accept that they hadn’t been involved in Malcolm’s plans. But sense had been in terribly short supply in the months following the tragedy, and in a way it was fortunate that Tommy had been almost killed by The Undertaking himself. If he’d been able to walk away from it when so many others had died or been badly injured, the investigation—the witch hunt—into his involvement might still be ongoing…

Fortunately, however, all of that seemed to be mostly behind them. At this point, though, Moira wouldn’t be surprised if she learned Tommy was carrying a ring around in a little velvet box. And that only made her all the more eager to see her son settling with someone. So seeing him with Felicity on this trip was a real help to her—even if Oliver didn’t want anything to do with her as his mother and might never want to again.

“They’re not mandatory for all of you,” Felicity reminded them before either newcomer could respond. “Just me.”

“Yeah, well, like she said we’re not gonna leave you alone for any of it,” Tommy told her, then looked back at Lex, who’s smile had gotten a little warmer. “So, Lex? How much are you here for?”

The heiress shrugged. “Sounds like all of it,” she looked at Felicity again then. “Tim’ll be here soon, too. Even if he has to cut a week of class to make it.” She grinned as she added, “I’m pretty sure he still has a huge crush on you.”

Moira had to bite back an actual chuckle as she saw the sour look that shot across her son’s face, and she wasn’t the only one: there were more than a few grins and Thea didn’t even try to hide her giggle.

Felicity, however, was blinking at her childhood friend. “What? No he doesn’t.”

“He did before,” the other blonde rolled her eyes. “You know he did.”
“Yeah, when he was nine!”

“Eight,” Lex corrected.

Felicity shook her head. “I haven’t seen him since…” she trailed off, visibly trying to place it in her mind.

“Since he showed up at computer camp that one summer,” Lex gestured around them. “Our last summer there. His too, since you weren’t going to be there after that and he still doesn’t give a damn about computers these days.” She shrugged when her friend only blinked at her. “You did save his life, remember. I’m pretty sure the hot girl that saves a boy from being eaten by a dinosaur deserves to be crushed on for life. And Timmy’s definitely still crushing, he—”

“Please don’t tell me. I’m already not sure I’ll be capable of talking to him if he shows up as it is!” Felicity begged her, her face bright red.

Well, at least all the color had returned to her face—and then some—with the arrival of her childhood friend and fellow childhood trauma survivor…

“You, not capable of talking?” Lex raised an eyebrow at her, sarcasm saturating each word. “I’ll believe it when I see it. ‘Cause that’s not the Felicity Smoak I know.”

“So she’s always babbled?” Oliver interjected with a grin that looked a little strange on his face till his mother realized she couldn’t remember the last time she’d actually seen him grin…

How horrible was that?

When was the last time she’d seen him smile? Really smile?

“Oh yes,” Lex confirmed, also grinning as she clarified. “Though the innuendoes didn’t start till, like, high school. Unfortunately. So I only got to hear about the really bad ones or sometimes catch her on the phone.” She prodded her friend’s shoulder at that. “You should’ve come visit, you know.”

“I know, I know, I’m sorry,” was Felicity immediate, dutiful apology: then she frowned. “But wait, I
didn’t save Tim’s life.”

“Yes you did,” Lex told her. “You distracted the Raptors, remember?”

“That was you!”

“No, that was both of us. And you were the one that managed to get the freezer door shut on them.”

“It took all three of us to do that!” Felicity objected again.

“Well, you were the one that got it in the freezer in the first place. Timmy couldn’t walk, remember?” Lex shook her head. “Besides, you were babying him a lot more than I was after he got electrocuted, so it really shouldn’t be surprising that he thinks you’re holding the sun up still.”

“You had just as much to do with ‘saving’ him as I did. Hell, all of us—”

“Yeah, but I’m his big sister, he can’t have a crush on me. That’d be gross and weird.” Lex waived her hand like she could gesture away Felicity’s objections. “If it bugs you that much, just admit I told you about his crush. He’ll probably hide after that.”

Felicity blinked at her friend at that. “You’ve turned into a really evil big sister, haven’t you?”

Lex grinned hugely. “Maybe just a little bit.” The she jerked her chin towards the massive building that was their destination even though it was apparently still under construction. “Now, come on. We should get this over with so we can go see the fun stuff like the control room. Claire was telling me about all kinds of cool stuff they have now.”

So saying, she actually managed to get Felicity to start walking towards the nearby steps without any help, though Oliver was still hovering. Which, again, Moira could easily understand—all the color that’d seemed to be suddenly exploding from Felicity cheeks only moments ago was fading almost just as quickly now.

It was a good thing that Felicity Smoak was still so young; such rapid changes to one’s blood pressure could be problematic later on in life.
Moira made herself look away from girl though, because too many eyes on her couldn’t help her at all.

Instead she focused on the massive fortress they were walking towards. It was significantly larger than the one that housed the Velociraptors, and while she’d never been a good judge of size and space she’d wager the walls were also considerably higher than those that stretched around the T-Rex kingdom that was located amidst the main resort. The sheer size of those walls and the gigantic gate along the side lent physical credence to everything they’d heard so far of the dinosaur that they were about to see.

Moira could only hope that it wouldn’t give Felicity more nightmares. And that it wouldn’t give the rest of them nightmares either…

**Chapter End Notes**

A/N: Well there you have it. The long awaited Chapter 11. Again I’m so sorry for how long this took. I hope it was worth the wait. Gradually we’re getting closer to more action—I’m still hoping the scenes will come more easily to me then. Next, of course, is the AU introduction of the Indominus Rex. Not only do we have all of the Arrow crew there with Masrani and Claire, we have Owen there along with Lex, too. Any thoughts on how it should go? And we’re a few days early here, but I’m carving my pumpkin tonight so I’m going to say to everyone: Happy Halloween! :-D

Thanks so much for reading! As always, comments, constructive criticism, suggestions, ideas, wild theories, desperate dreams and every else in between will be immensely appreciated.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](https://www.fanfiction.net) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!