Summary

Felicity's soulmark burned every single time Oliver denied the bond they shared, every time he took another woman to his bed. For years it felt like someone was branding her. Now the mark is destroyed. Maybe now she won't feel it anymore.
Once the bullet was removed and the wound sutured, Sara started to carefully wipe away the smeared blood on Felicity's shoulder. The leather jacket and the yellow top the computer specialist wore tonight were discarded somewhere, and she was wearing only one of Oliver's shirts that he kept in the lair in a case of emergency.

And since she was wearing only that the guys were politely facing the other way, giving them some privacy.

Diggle sat on the office chair. He was obviously tired, they all were, and just wanted to go home and get some sleep. But before that he wanted to make sure his friend got home safely. Right now Felicity was in no shape to drive, not with the strong drug in her system. He told her it was a simple Aspirin, but it was obvious by the way she was disoriented slightly that it was something way stronger.

Oliver didn't bother to hide his amusement when he whispered to the younger man he actually gave her Oxycodone.

She refused Lidocaine, saying not to get that syringe anywhere near her, so this was the only remaining option that would allow Sara to treat her bullet wound.

A dark shape appeared once she cleaned away the blood and Sara stared in shock at the mark on Felicity's shoulder. A dark mark that matched the one her soulmate had on his shoulder. But usually they are on the same place. She never heard of the marks that weren't identical in shape and position.

"It's fitting, isn't it?" the injured woman was a bit loopy from the medication, but it also gave her the courage to finally say out loud the things she promised herself she never will.

"What...?" Sara looked at her, noticing the two men, who were till then turned away to give them some privacy, had done the same.

"Tockman, he shot me in my soulmate mark. It's fitting that it's destroyed now."

"You shouldn't say stuff like that Felicity." Dig approached her slowly, respectfully looking at her face and not the pink bra that was peeking from under the unbuttoned blue shirt, and took her hand in his. She was a bright and cheerful person, she shouldn't feel bitter about anything.

"Why not Dig? It's not like it means anything, my mark. Right Oliver?" her blue eyes focused on the man that was still rooted on the same spot, "It's covered mostly, but sometimes the cutouts on my clothes don't hide it completely so you must have seen it a few times... I never saw yours... it's under the dragon, isn't it?"

"The dragon is on Oliver's left shoulder blade, Felicity." Sara reminded her, "Your soulmate mark, although looks like his is on your right, and that is-"

"Mirror marks." Diggle interrupted her, "Had a buddy who had one. Man it was tough when his... shit."

"That's how I figured it out." Felicity leaned forward and placed her forehead on Diggle's shoulder, "I suspected with Isabel in Russia, but I knew for sure with Sara down here in the Foundry."

"Felicity..." it was the first time Oliver spoke, and the courage the drug in her system gave her was
on it's peak. It allowed her to finally tell him everything.

"You know I'm a virgin? I was raised to respect the soulmate mark, not to sleep around in complete disrespect of the person the nature intended for me. You didn't. I know, cause I felt it." Felicity was now sitting straight, her hands holding the sides shirt tightly together, "I felt it before the island, and I felt it after the island. The burn. With Helena, and with Mckenna, and Laurel. I felt it in Russia but desperately tried to persuade myself it's a coincidence. But it wasn't. Cause I also felt when you slept with Sara."

"You can't actually-" Sara started to speak, but was cut off.

"I can! I felt it every time, not that you care!" Felicity slid off the metal table and turned to case the other woman, "You didn't care before that he wasn't yours, not just cause of the mark but cause he was with your sister. Not that Laurel cared either."

Diggle took Felicity's forearm gently, and she turned to look at him, "Come on, I'll drive you home."

"No, why can't I stay? Why can't I finally say what I want? Why can't I tell him that I wish I fucked every single guy in college that hit on me? Cause if I did then he would feel what it's like when your own soulmate denies you. When your mark burns like someone is branding you. I felt it Dig... almost every single night." the tears that escaped Felicity's eyes were ignored as she continued to lay out the complete truth, "I don't want to feel it anymore... maybe now that the mark is destroyed I won't feel it anymore. So no worry Oliver, you can continue to sleep around. It won't hurt me ever again... not that you cared either."

Diggle caught her just as her legs gave up and she almost crashed on the hard concrete floor. When he picked her up he noticed she was light, too light. It reminded him the few times he cause her pushing her food aside, instead of eating it. Combined with the dark circles under her eyes that she covered up with make-up and he had his answer.

"Do you want me to...?" Oliver never got to finish his question when his friend turned to look at him seriously.

"Have you seen her mark? Did you know?" was all he wanted to know from the younger man.

When Oliver only nodded silently Diggle walked past him and out of the Foundry. He wasn't interested in hearing some dumb excuse Oliver would come up with, some empty words that only serve the purpose of him making himself feel better about the choices he made.

Some shit along the lines of 'for her own good'. Dig was pretty certain he already fed her a bullshit like that one after what happened in Russia with Isabel.

Sara was lying on the cot at the back of the Foundry. She was tired, drained, after the events that happened earlier that day but she couldn't sleep. Her mind was moving too fast for her to find rest.

She remembered that evening when her sister threw her out of her apartment. She called her selfish that night, said Sara stole her life when she stole Oliver. And she was right, but only partially. Cause what Felicity said today was true, Oliver didn't belong to Laurel either.

They were both thieves.

A soft thud made her look towards the computer station where Oliver was still sitting. Now his elbows were on the desk and his face hidden behind his hands. She didn't know what he found, what he read, but she guessed it was something that confirmed what Felicity revealed that afternoon.
Dig obviously knew something about it, about these things called mirror soulmarks, but she never heard about them before. And neither did Oliver apparently, since the first thing he did once they were left alone in the Foundry was sit in front of the computer and start researching the rare occurrence.

That was around five hours ago, and this was the first time he moved. His appearance, his pose, served as a hint that he found what he was looking for. He found that Felicity spoke the truth.

Her soulmark burned every single time he took a woman to his bed, it told her he was unfaithful to their bond over and over again. It didn't matter that they haven't known each other, haven't met before. She was his, and he was hers... only he wasn't. He belong to countless others, but never to the one meant for him.

Sara touched her soulmate mark on her left wrist. Somewhere out there there is a person with the same mark on the same place, somewhere out there her soulmate is waiting to be found.

Her hand moved to a small scar on her abdomen. She recalled how much it hurt her when she got injured, how much every single one of them hurt. Felicity will only have one scar on her skin, earned when she saved Sara's life, but she felt the pain many times... too many times.

Oliver suddenly stood up and picked up his jacket from the table he dropped it on earlier, before he left without saying a word. Sara knew he won't go to Felicity tonight, tomorrow maybe once he got the chance to process everything. Tonight the emotions were too raw.

She understood him. She didn't think she could face Felicity right now either.

Instead she stood up and walked to the computers that were left turned on. Usually their IT expert would turn them off before leaving, but Oliver didn't bothered with it. For that Sara was glad, because she sat on the chair he occupied till then and started to read.

Oliver stumbled mid-step when he exited the elevator on the executive floor and found a young man sitting behind Felicity's desk. A quick glance towards Dig, who looked equally confused, told him he wasn't hallucinating from the lack of sleep that night.

"Where is Miss Smoak?" he asked approaching the wrong person at the AE's desk, "And who are you?"

The man jumped off the chair and stood in attention, like a soldier, "Mr. Queen, I'm Gerry Conway. HR assigned me as your temporary EA until Miss Smoak returns from her leave."

"Leave? I was not aware she requested a leave." Oliver muttered, more to himself than anyone else, and entered his office. Diggle, who could see the news didn't sit well with him, followed him inside after throwing his temporary assistant a look that told him not to follow them.

"Next week." Oliver turned to look at Dig in question, "She planed to take some time off next week and visit her mother. It's possible she decided to travel to Vegas a bit earlier."

"Why didn't she said anything?" the look he got from his friend told Oliver he already had the answer to that question. But before anything else was aid a knock on the glass doors of his office interrupted them.

Both men turned towards Gerry, who looked uncomfortable, and gulped before informing his boss, "You have a meeting with investors from Coast city in 10 minutes in the boardroom. It's marked in the calendar as extremely important."
"Thank you." Oliver told him and the kid, that didn't even look old enough to buy alcohol, nodded and returned to his position behind the desk.

"We don't have the time to discuss it now, but you and I are going to have a long and detailed conversation about how you fucked up." Diggle told Oliver seriously, "Mirror soulmarks are not a joking matter."

"I know." the younger man said, avoiding his friend's eyes, "I researched it last night."

"Damnit, Oliver... you saw her mark before. I know it cause I did too. If I knew it matched yours-"

"Diggle."

The older man merely sighed, opened the glass door again, and took his position just outside of the office. And few minutes later, after Oliver composed himself and grabbed the file he would need for the meeting, he followed the younger man into the elevator and to the floor below. And while it appeared to anyone who was watching that he was being a watchful bodyguard to his boss, he was actually pondering on how to assist the kid to fix what he messed up.

His first thought was to contact Felicity once Oliver was in the meeting, check up on her and find out where she was and if she wanted to talk. He only guessed she went to Vegas based on what she told him earlier that week. Apparently she went every year to be there for her mother on the anniversary of her father's death. Mrs. Smoak was still affected by it, even after almost twenty years.

Diggle glanced at Oliver and noticed the tension in his jaw, and the way the younger man started in front of himself like the metal elevator door held the answers for all his questions.

His mind went to an old army buddy of his that also had a mirror mark in a shape of a butterfly on his left elbow. Some teased him for it, until a welcome back party when they met his girl and noticed an identical mark on her right elbow. That was the first and only time Diggle met someone who wears mirror marks.

Then one night their friend collapsed to his knees, gripping his elbow tightly and clenching his teeth in pain. There was no wound, no obvious reason why he was in such pain. During a video chat a few night later he learned his girlfriend got drunk and slept with some guy she met in the club.

He felt it, that one time she was with someone else he felt it. A soldier trained for combat, and he was almost rolling on the floor; the pain was so terrible.

The mere thought that Felicity endured such a pain for years... Diggle didn't even want to consider how young she was the first time she felt the burn. Oliver is four years older than her and was always in the popular crowd, being a son of a billionaire and all. Was he fourteen, fifteen years old the first time?

Diggle's phone dinged with a new message just as Oliver was getting ready to enter the large boardroom. Instead he stopped and looked at his friend.

"It's Felicity." Dig answered without Oliver even having to ask the question.

"What did she write?"

Diggle sighed, "Just that she's alright and that she'll come back."

Oliver nodded silently and entered the large room. She was safe, that's all that mattered right now. Once she returns to Starling city then he will do whatever it takes to fix things.
If it wasn’t too late already.
Chapter 2

Donna Smoak was a romantic. She met her soulmate when she was in high school, he was a new student that just moved in with his family and they have been inseparable since. That is until he died in a tragic accident years ago.

Since then she tried desperately to function properly, and she succeeded most of the time. But there were days when she struggled to even get out of the bed, and go to work. There were days when she couldn't even force herself to eat anything because everything seemed tasteless.

It became even worse when Felicity left Vegas and found a new home for herself, first in Boston and then Starling city. But Donna refused to be selfish and ask her little girl to return. Not when she was working hard to achieve everything she always dreamed of. Felicity had a life outside of her mother's pain, and short talk the two of them led always brought rays of light in Donna's day and encouraged her to continue.

After one of such conversations Donna decided to look for help. There were several places where someone who lost a soulmate could find assistance, but the one that she found was in a small clinic that held weekly meetings. At first she wasn't sure if she would return cause it reminded her of AA meetings, but after hearing few people tell their stores, and seeing the support they were getting from others who suffered the same loss Donna decided to give it a try.

So few weeks later she stood up and told people she didn't know about the worst day of her life.

And she felt better.

Now, two years later, she managed to deal with her bad days better, and knew if she ever needed help or someone to listen there were those who understood and would gladly assist her in any way necessary. Still, it was difficult when the anniversary of Noah's approached and there was only one person who could comfort her.

But she didn't expect to see her daughter until next week, so when Donna opened the front door of her apartment and saw Felicity standing there it was a surprise.

"Hi mom." Felicity greeted her with a small smile, and Donna instantly grinned and hugged her little girl.

"Look at you! You look... honey, what's wrong?" the smile fell as mother's intuition kicked in.

Felicity shook her head, "Nothing's wrong. I missed you, so I took some more time off so I can stay in Vegas longer."

But Donna wasn't easily fooled, "You hate Vegas, don't think I don't know that. Every year you spend minimal time here, and now you want to stay longer. What is really going on?"

"Nothing. I just missed you."

"I'm blond, but I'm not that blond." the younger woman sighed as her mother used the same words she once used while talking to Dig.

"Troubles at work." Felicity mumbled finally. It wasn't actually a lie, but it was closest to the truth she was willing to admit at this point. She just wasn't ready to tell her mother she met her soulmate.
She knew how ecstatic her mother will get, she'll probably start making plans for the future right then and there. But right now Felicity wasn't even sure if she and Oliver even had a present, let alone a future.

"I heard you got a new boss. He's quite handsome, a real catch." Donna moved to the kitchen and started coffee. It was a thing for Smoak women, they were addicted to the brown liquid.

"I suppose." Felicity muttered.

"Have you seen his mark? Or did he already found his-"

"I haven't seen it." Donna turned towards her daughter after Felicity interrupted her. She never heard that tone of voice before, not from her happy girl.

"Honey?"

"Later... okay, mom? I'll talk about it later. Right now I just want to... I don't know what I want."

"I think you do." Donna said softly.

"Yeah, well what I want isn't something I can get. So there is no reason to ponder about it too much." Felicity moved away from the kitchen island where she was standing and grabbed the handle of her small suitcase, "I'll go unpack."

"I'll be here," blue eyes watched until the younger woman vanished behind the closed door of her childhood bedroom. Like Donna, Felicity suffered after her father's death, but she was dealing with it better. But right now the look on her daughter's face reminded Donna of how she saw herself in the mirror those first few weeks, or was it months, after Noah died.

Something happened to Felicity, something hurt her little girl, and she desperately wanted to help. And while she might not be able to there might be someone else who could.

At first Felicity felt like an idiot, sitting on a hard plastic chair, and listening to complete strangers share their life stories with other complete strangers. But as the minutes trickled by she actually started to pay attention to the words, to hear people talk about the good things, not just the bad.

She smiled as a woman spoke about a tradition her late husband had, every year on his birthday he would go in a casino and play. Just that day, just once a year. So this year she went to continue the tradition and won big. And with that money she founded a scholarship in the name of her deceased soulmate.

A young man, around Felicity's age, told the story about Anna, his fiance who died just days before they supposed to get married. He is an inventor and has recently started to work on a new gadget and planed to donate the profit from it to a middle school she worked in before her death.

Donna eventually nudged Felicity gently and two women looked at each other. Felicity knew what her mother wanted her to do, but she couldn't. Her legs refused to work, her mouth was dry, and her heart threatened to beat out of her chest.

How could she stand in front of these people who lost their soulmates and say hers is still alive? How could she compare their pain with hers? These people will never see their soulmates again, she can see Oliver every day. In hr mind standing up right now and share her story would be incredible selfish.
So she remained silent.

"Felicity?" a man called, and both Smoak women turned to see who it was.

Donna beamed as she noticed the young man that shared his story and plans earlier with the whole group.

"Do I know you?" Felicity asked suspiciously.

"Oh, I'm sorry sweetie." Donna interrupted before he managed to answer, "I talked about you a few times during meetings. Well bragged really... and Ray mentioned once he would like to meet you."

"Right." the man muttered and offered his hand for her to shake, "Ray Palmer."

"Felicity Smoak. Why did you want to meet me?"

His eyes instantly lighted up with excitement, "Cause your mom said you are a computer genius and I could use a second opinion on my gadget. It's basically a watch, but also a computer. You can check your emails, listen to music, visit social networks... the whole nine yards. It had wi-fi so you can use it anywhere and anytime."

"And you need help making a prototype." Felicity concluded.

"No, already made one. But I want to make sure it's as good as I hope it is and that is where I could use your help." Ray was excited like a kid in a candy store.

"You want me to try and hack it?"

A snort told her Ray Palmer obviously had a high opinion on his computer slash watch. His words confirmed it when he said, "I built the firewall myself, no hacker can get in and steal information off of it."

"Give me a tablet and few minutes." Felicity deadpanned and Ray's eyes widened. He wasn't sure if she was being serious or joking with him.

But Donna always described her daughter as genius with computers. And while he suspected the blond woman, as any mother, thought her kid was off the chart smart, it seemed Felicity was confidant in her abilities and knowledge. He liked that about a woman. Anna was like that too.

"Alright. If you get in I'll buy dinner." he decided to make things a bit more interesting.

Felicity offered her hand suddenly, "Two minutes to hack and it better be a nice restaurant."

Ray grinned, "Deal." and shook her hand.

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The day was long and brutal. He was late for a meeting with investors that morning, but for a change it wasn't his fault. The calendar on the computer has been tampered with, he was sure of it. Gerry, the replacement EA, was ready to swear on a Bible that he entered the time right, and he had no idea how something like this could happen. The kid was close to tears, and Oliver started to consider if he should hug the guy to comfort him. After all it wasn't his fault.

The smug little smile on Isabel Rochev's face when he finally entered the conference room confirmed what he suspected. As did the surprising lack of her growling at his EA and calling him incompetent. She never failed to do that to Felicity.
Luckily the city was rather calm for a change, so there was no need for him to put on his hood. Downside is he was coped in the Foundry for a few hours with Sara who constantly tried to apologize, and Dig who glared at them the moment they were less that five feet of each other.

He could have skipped that part and go home, but that would mean facing his mother and that wasn't something he was looking forward either. He was still processing the latest information regarding her, and trying to decide if he should keep quiet and support his mother's need for secrets in the family, or come clean with his sister regarding her true parentage. Neither option was appealing.

Finally, around midnight, Oliver walked in his room and dropped the suit jacket and tie on the couch. He needed an hour long shower and dreamless sleep. The first was pointless and a waste of water, and the second was improbable.

He hadn't had a good night of rest since that damned evening with Tockman.

Oliver was on his way to the bathroom when his cell phone started to ring. It was still in the pocket of his suit jacket and he was considering to just let it go to voicemail, and call whomever it was later. But at a last moment he walked back to where his left his garment and took the phone out. Reading the name on the screen almost resulted with him dropping it, but luckily that didn't happen.

With a shaky hand he accepted the call, "Felicity?"

"I wanted to do it." was the first thing she said to him in days, "He's good looking, and smart, and funny. And he respected me too... do you know how much it means when a guy respects you? Your opinion? It matters a lot. And because of that I wanted to do it... but I couldn't... and it's your fault."

"Felicity, is everything alright? Are you hurt?" after a moment Oliver finally asked what he suspected since she started to speak, "Are you drunk?"

"Yes, I'm drunk! So what? How many times did you get completely wasted and fucked someone you just met? How many times? So why couldn't I do it too?! I wanted to, I really did!" the sound of something crashing to the floor and a small curse interrupted her rant, and gave Oliver just enough time to process what she was saying.

She met someone, she got drunk, and she wanted to sleep with him. But she didn't. He would have; before the island he would have jumped in a bed with any woman that was hot and showed even a speck of interest in his, "I wish I could take it all back." he told her honestly, "I wish I never hurt you."

"I was punished." Oliver pointed out, sadness obvious in his voice, "I lost you."

A snort was heard before Felicity corrected him, "Lost me? You didn't lose me, Oliver. Despite never actually having me you didn't lost me. You almost did... I wanted you to feel what it's like when your mark burns, but I pushed him away instead."

"I'm sorry."

"No you're not."

"Yes I am." Oliver started to pace his room, "I feel so damn guilty for what I did to you, Felicity."
"I'm sure Sara will be more than happy to help you east that guilt. At least for one night."

First tears escaped Oliver's eyes, and he didn't even bother to stop them, "Felicity, please."

"Oh, did you go to Isabel instead? To the woman your father planed to leave his family for? I did some digging into her past, interesting literature."

"Tell me how to fix things." he finally begged.

After a few moments of silence Felicity finally answered, "Stop denying me."

"I promise I will, Felicity. Felicity?" but the beeping sound told him she disconnected before hearing his answer.

Oliver sighed and turned to drop his phone on the small coffee table in front of the couch when he realized his bedroom door was open and his sister was standing in the doorway.

"I came to talk to you about something... but it seems you have something you need to talk about too." Thea walked in and closed the door.

"Speedy, not now. I'm tired and-"

"Yes, now. Because I know you and tomorrow morning you will deny the conversation I partially overheard ever happened, and you need to talk about this now."

"How much did you hear?" he finally asked before sitting down on the couch and Thea taking a seat next to him.

"You were talking to your EA. You have feelings for her, despite denying the rumors there is something going on between the two of you."

"The rumors are not true, Thea. There is noting going on." Oliver once more said what he's been saying since the day he made Felicity his Executive Assistant.

Thea watched him carefully for a few moments before concluding, "But you wish there was something going on. Can's say I blame you, she is kind of hot. Not that I was checking her out or anything. Roy agrees with me, not that he was checking her out either."

His sister's ramblings made Oliver smile for the first time in what felt like forever. Lately his days were mainly consistent of gloom and doom, and his sister's light was welcoming. So when Thea leaned towards him and placed her head on his shoulder, Oliver wrapped a hand around her waist and pulled her closer. She was comfort he needed right now.

After the prolonged period of silence in which the siblings were just sitting there, and keeping each other company, Oliver decided he could make the first step in doing what Felicity asked of him. He will stop denying her.

"She is more than just window dressing, more than just a pretty blonde that fetches me coffee, which she never did and the hell will probably freeze before that happens, and much more than a cheap office affair. She was never any of that to begin with. She was... is someone I trust to help me out cause I don't know how to run a company. I have no idea what I'm doing half of the time, and the other half I'm improvising."

"She's your friend." Thea concluded, "Your first female friend. You are growing up, Ollie."
"She is, but she is also more."

"Huh?"

Oliver sighed and finally admitted, "She's my soulmate."

Thea listened patiently as her brother explained things to her. By the way he paused several times she realized he wasn't telling her everything, he was taking too much time and picking his words carefully. He was keeping secrets from her, but at this time she was willing to let it slide.

Cause when he came to the part where mirror marks were mentioned and the effect they had on those who had them she elbowed him in the stomach hard enough for him to lose his breath.

He glared at her but Thea only rolled her eyes, "That was for being an idiot and hurting her. Since you didn't know about this mirror thing I won't also stomp your foot."

"And you knew about it?" he asked, annoyed at his sister.

"No, I didn't. Which is really dumb. When you think about it mirror marks is the best way to sell abstinence to kids during sex ed. Just think about it, Ollie. If you were told your soulmate could be in a lot of pain every single time you slept with some random girl would you have still done it?"

"Yes." he answered honestly and she glared at him. Oliver shrugged, "I was an idiot back then! Do you honestly think I would have cared is someone out there gets hurt, as long as I get what I want?"

Thea once more leaned on his shoulder, "I think you would." those words surprised his and he turned to look at his sister, "Yes, you were a douche back then. But I honestly think if you knew you would have done things differently."

"Then you have a better opinion of me than I do." Oliver admitted.

"And the fact you know and admit you were a douche just shows how much you've grown since then." Thea smiled at him widely, "So, because you are my brother and I love you I'm willing to help you with your problem."

"My problem?"

"You messed up and your soulmate took off. That counts as a problem. A really big one."

Oliver sighed, "She'll come back. She said so."

"When?" when her question was answered with a shrug Thea sighed, "It would be easier if I had a timeline, but hopefully they have a fast delivery. So this is what we're going to do: I researched tattoo removals a few months ago, solemnly for fun of course. And there is this gel thing, a new product on the market that you can get over the internet, and it successfully removes tattoos within several weeks."

Oliver was about to tell her it's a lousy idea, but stopped to consider it a bit better. Felicity asked of him to stop denying her. He made the first step by revealing the truth to someone who wasn't there in the lair that night, and didn't witness the fallout of his actions.

His mark was hidden behind the dragon, behind the tattoo that was meant to remind him of Shado. Of her death that he was responsible for. But he wasn't. He didn't make that choice, Ivo did. He desperately tried to save both women the madman held at gunpoint.
Until this moment he didn't even consider removing it. But now it seemed like the right thing to do.

"Look up that gel and make an order. You're right." and she was. He let the reminder of one woman hide the mark that tied him to another. But no more.

Thea grinned and hugged her brother before running out of his room. Oliver sighed and leaned back on the couch. He was tired, both mentally and physically. But it felt like he could breathe a bit easier.

The things were set in motion. Soon he'll be happy.

Three days later, as a small Mini drove through an intersection, a panel van rammed into the passenger side, pushing the car all the way to the sidewalk before a man walked out of it. He dragged the unconscious blonde woman out of the red vehicle, and deposited her in his own. With a bang the slide door closed, leaving Felicity Smoak bleeding out of a wound on her temple on the cold metal floor.

The things were set in motion. Soon the kid will pay.
Quentin Lance stood quietly at the crime scene, his previously hot coffee now cold in his hand. But even if it was still pipping it wouldn't do much to warm him right now.

And not just because of the cold wind that blew the whole morning. It was because of the heartbreaking sight in front of him.

He recognized the vehicle the moment he saw it, despite it being all mangled up and left partially on the sidewalk. How could he not? He saw her enter the bright red Mini countless of times.

"Detective." a young officer in uniform got Lance's attention, "The suitcase is still in the trunk and a handbag with personal things and a wallet inside. It was most likely on the passenger seat before the impact. The ID belongs to one-

"Felicity Smoak."

The policeman nodded in confirmation, "You know her, sir?"

"Yeah. I know her boss even better." Lance muttered under his breath before throwing the takeout cup of coffee in the trash can, and fishing out his cell phone.

Previously he took a lot of pleasure of making Oliver Queen's day miserable. How could he not, when the kid was a sheltered, spoiled brat by day, and a heartless killer by night?

But then the Undertaking happened and Queen changed. Or maybe he changed before that; maybe it happened when Miss Smoak joined his team, his crusade.

Today Oliver Queen was a not completely successful CEO of the family company by day, and a hero that helped the city by night.

And Lance couldn't help but wonder if this wreck in front of him was a result of previous actions, perhaps someone wanting revenge. And doing it through an innocent.

The strong gush of cold air made the detective shiver.

He had a feeling who ever took Felicity Smoak will be the next one to shiver, but out of fear. One does not kidnap the Arrow's friend, and walk away unscaled. The Count is a proof of that.

Three arrows to the chest and a fall from 18th floor.

As he heard the ringing through his phone he took one last glance at the destroyed Mini. There was
blood at the windshield and the air-bag that was deployed. It was a sight that will haunt him for years.

"Detective?" he barely heard Oliver over the sound of the tow-truck that just arrived at the scene, so Lance took a seat behind the wheel of his cruiser and shut the door.

"I'm afraid I don't have good news, Queen. It might be best if you get to the precinct."

After a few moments, and someone talking in the background, Oliver responded, "I'm in a meeting right now. Did something happened? Is it my sister?"

Lance shook his head, and then remembered Oliver couldn't see him. So he sighed and instead asked, "When was the last time you saw Miss Smoak?"

After a small pause he got an answer, "Last week, she went to visit her mother. But we talked over the phone a few days ago. Detective, what happened? Is Felicity-"

"The evidence suggests her car was intentionally crashed into and ran off the road. No sign of the other vehicle... or Miss Smoak. Queen-"

"I'm on my way, detective."

Diggle stood at his usual place outside of the office doors when Oliver's phone started to ring. He saw his friend's posture change from curious to tense in seconds, and instantly knew something was wrong. It wasn't like Oliver Queen to show emotions, not in front of a shrew that was Isabel Rochev.

So whatever was going on... it was big.

He watched Oliver ignore Isabel's protest about leaving in the middle of an important meeting, and step out of the office. He was quiet as he walked pass and towards the elevator, his jaw tense and the look in his eyes clearly showing he was enraged, and ready to kill someone.

Neither of them knew that the moment they were out of sight Isabel took her cell phone out of her blazer pocket and dialed a last stored number. She didn't even wait fr the person on the other side to acknowledge her, before informing him, "Oliver Queen is on his way to the police station."

"Thank you for your contribution."

Isabel grinned, "No, thank you. You just brought me the company."

Diggle was silent, but when the silence became too much, when Oliver sat at the driver's seat and refused to move, he just had to know what was going on.

"Talk to me, man." he said after getting into a passenger seat.

"Lance called." Oliver said though clenched teeth.

"What did he want? Did something happen to Thea or your mom? Oliver?" Diggle suddenly sat up straighter, "Today is 24th... Felicity is returning today... was there a plane-"

"She was ran off the road!" Oliver snapped and punched the steering wheel, "She's gone! And I didn't feel any of it, Diggle! Nothing! There was no burn! No pain! What kind of soulmate am I when I don't even know the one meant for me was hurt... kidnapped?!"

"I don't think it works that way, man." Diggle pointed out, feeling awful reminding Oliver right now
that the burn was only present during cheating, in a lack of better words to describe the whole thing, on your intended soulmate.

"Well it should!" Oliver snapped at his friend again.

Dig didn't hold against him the fact he was taking his anger out on the wrong person. He understood that behind anger lied something else, and it made sense to him the Oliver was freaking out. Because he was more then just angry; he was terrified.

"If it worked that way then Felicity would be in constant pain every time you put on a hood and went after bad guys." he calmly pointed out the hole in Oliver's logic, and as a response got glared at.

"You suck at calming people down, you know that?" the younger man said eventually, and Diggle barely contained a grin.

"You can be calm later, once Felicity is safe. Now I need you to be royally pissed off, cause we need to get this guy that took her, whoever it is."

Oliver just nodded, and parked in front of the police precinct. He would have rather if he was arriving at this place in the back of a police cruiser and with handcuffs. Everything was better than going to see Lance cause someone important to him was taken, even if it meant his secret was out and the whole world knew he was the Arrow.

Felicity's safety would come first.

Quentin Lance waived the two men inside, and moments later Oliver and Diggle were in his office with the door closed behind them. There was no need for others to be privy to this conversation, since there was a good chance certain secrets will be mentioned.

"Miss Smoak's car was taken to the impound. The technicians are already working on gathering any shred of evidence that would lead us to whomever took her, so at the moment I don't have much. I actually called you in for a different reason."

Oliver watched as Lance took a brown paper evidence bag from the side table and took a familiar flat item out of it. On top was a sticky note that surprisingly still held on to the screen.

"She carried that tablet with her everywhere." Oliver pointed out.

"I figured as much. The girl is a computer genius, after all." Lance said with a nod, "The note says 'I.R. on personal crusade, evidence inside'. Does that mean anything to you?"

Oliver shook his head, "No."

But the detective only sighed, "Look, I don't care if this note leads directly to your other job and to your... Arrowcave or whatever you want to call it... I don't. My only concern right now is finding Felicity Smoak."

"I.R. could stand for Isabel Rochev." Diggle pointed out and Lance focused on the bodyguard standing by the door. When noticing he got the detective's full attention he continued, "As you probably know she is send on behalf of Stellmoore International to acquire Queen Consolidated. But it may be possible Felicity discovered something else."

Lance turned towards Oliver, "And it didn't cross your mind that the initials could mean the woman who is after your family's company?"
Oliver just glared at him, "I am more concerned with Felicity's disappearance then with Miss Rochev."

"Unless she was involved." Dig mumbled and two pair of eyes turned towards him.

"The tablet is locked. I don't suppose you know the passport." Lance turned towards Oliver, who in response reached out.

After Lance placed the tablet in his hand, and after mentioning it was technically an evidence, Oliver traced the three lines on the screen like he saw Felicity do countless times. But instead of a normal screen, he got a password request window.

"You should try-" Dig tried to make a suggestion, but Oliver didn't wait till he was finished before entering a term he knew Felicity used for her password.

On the screen, among the usual icons, were several file shortcuts linked to the memo on the post-it. And considering their names he was certain they were linked to the takeover of QC.

"I can have the best technicians go through the tablet's memory, see if there was something on it that would explain why Miss Smoak was kidnapped." Lance reached for the flat device, but paused when Oliver turned to so he could see what was on the screen, "What is that?"

"Last week Felicity called me late at night. She was drunk, but that's not important. he mentioned looking into Isabel Rochev's past and that it was interesting. I think this is what she was talking about."

"Who the hell is that?" Lance tilted his head, like a different perspective would help him recognize the man on the rather compromising photo. It was made through the window, but that quality was pretty good. They were even able to see the wedding band on the unknown man's finger.

Oliver shrugged and swiped on the next photo. And instantly his heart clenched. He remembered Felicity's words clearly, what he said about Isabel and his father. And now he had proof in front of him, staring back from the screen.

"This one you'll recognize." he said coldly and showed the old photo to Lance.

"Robert Queen. That is way more of your old man's anatomy than I ever wanted to so." the detective muttered under his breath, "What the hell is that woman up to? And how is it linked to Miss Smoak kidnapping? Is it even linked?"

"More then likely, but there is no proof." Diggle said, his fists clenched tightly behind his back, "Isabel Rochev is a woman on a mission."

"Not just mission... try revenge." Oliver said coldly.

The second file he opened was Isabel's phone and e-mail records. Felicity did an amazing job of finding proof that the Stellmore takeover isn't happening because the CEO of the company wants it. It's personal.

Few clicks later blue eyes widened in shock.

"What did you found?" Lance instantly asked, seeing Oliver freeze in the chair.

"Isabel Rochev started an affair with the man on the photo so she could use it against him. Peter Trevor is the CEO of Stellmore International, and she needed his cooperation to go after QC. She's
blackmailing him with that photo, threatening to send it to his father-in-law and actual the owner of the company."

Lance whistled, "He married the owner's little girl, then cheated on her with someone from the firm? Your girl did a good job digging all that up."

"That's how Felicity is," Oliver said with a small smile. He would never admit to Lance, but it felt really good for the older man to refer Felicity as his girl.

"Okay. Enough playing with that thing. I already bent the rules enough by letting you use it. You've been helpful but... what now?" Lance asked after Oliver cursed under his breath.

The next file had similar content, but it was about Isabel's online conversations and messages with someone names Wilson S. Friend. The little note Felicity made said she didn't found anyone by that name in any database, from DMV, IRS, and even Homeland Security. No one by that name existed officially.

But the familiarity of it made Oliver slightly nauseous.

Still, he refused to accept the possibility just cause of the name. It has to be a coincidence. It has to be.

The phone call was short, and came moments after Oliver stepped out of the precinct. Oliver recognized the voice, recognized the nickname the moment he heard the man on the other side speak.

He called him 'kid', and there was only one person who did that. And if you asked him ten minutes ago about his former friend Oliver would have swore on his life that Slade Wilson was dead. He would have been wrong.

Because the older man was still very much alive. And back for revenge.

"She is quite lovely... your Felicity. Your soulmate. " Slade taunted him, "Such a pity you didn't keep her safe. Maybe if you did she wouldn't be bleeding now. So much blood. What do you think? Would she survive if I gave her a dose of Mirakuru?"

"What do you want Slade?" Oliver tried to keep his voice neutral, not reveal how terrified he felt right now. Yes, he was angry... he was furious. But the fear for Felicity's safety, for her life, was slowly overshadowing everything else he felt.

"Empty warehouse on the corner of 14th and East. One hour. You do not get the time to come up with a plan how to save your soulmate when you sentenced mine to death."

"Shado wasn't your-"

"I loved her!" Slade roared, "She was mine!"

In the next second all Oliver could hear was the beeping of the disconnected call. Slade said what he planed to say.

Diggle who stood by Oliver's side the whole time, and who managed to hear both sides of the conversation due to Slade's loud voice, watched as his friend squeezed the cell phone in his hand and was ready to take it from his grasp before it broke and the sharp pieces stabbed Oliver's hand.

But instead of breaking him Oliver scrolled through the contact list and dialed a number. He knew he
Sara stood at the abandoned dock with her eyes closed. It was cold, but she welcomed the freezing wind right now. It was better than being downstairs in the basement below Verdant, in the large, and currently empty, space that served only as a reminder that she messed up all over again.

From the phone conversation she overheard between Diggle and Felicity she knew the blonde woman was returning to Starling today, and knowing how diligent she was it was to be expected she'll join them on their other job tonight, and not take the night off and start again tomorrow.

That also made her hope will help with the tension in the lair.

The training she received after joining the League of assassins improved Sara's perception of the world around her, of the smallest changes in the air that happened when someone approached her. And no matter how silent they were she could feel them.

That is how she knew someone joined her, even without opening her eyes.

"Ta-er al-Safar."

It was just one word, but Sara instantly recognized who it was that approached her. No one in Starling knew it, or called her by that name. They called her the Canary, without ever learning why she answered to that name.

She didn't even share that little detail with Oliver who became her lover, her boyfriend. Maybe because deep down she knew it wouldn't last, how could it when they were both meant for different people.

"Why are you here Nyssa?" finally Sara opened her eyes, but didn't turn around to face her visitor.

"My father sent me. He orders for you to return to us, where you belong." the dark-haired assassin spoke calmly.

Sara just shook her head, "My home is here... my family."

"You are a member of the League. You were not given leave."

Finally, after few moments of silence Sara turned to face her former lover. Nyssa saved her life, brought her to Nanda Parbat, and taught her how to fight properly, how to survive. How to kill. But she couldn't teach her how to do it without feeling remorse.

That is why Sara eventually escaped the clutches of the Demon, and the League.

"Then release me yourself."

She watched Nyssa closely, watched her every movement and face expression. She looked so different right now, in daylight and in civilian clothes. Sara couldn't remember when was the last time she saw her like this, and not in her usual League's uniform and hidden among the shadows of the ancient passages of the compound in the desert.

"I can not do that."

"And I can not go back." Sara responded, "I'm sorry."

"As am I." Nyssa's words served as a warning, and Sara knew it. And just moments later several
black garbed assassins appeared seemingly out of nowhere and cornered her.

Each and every single one of them held a sword in one hand and a dagger in the other. They were ready to kill her, and bring her dead body with them to Nanda Parbat if they don't succeed to bring her back alive.

It was almost comical, their response, as the first ones that attacked instantly stopped when a loud, and rather irritating, melody started to play. If her life wasn't in serious peril right now Sara would have laughed. But instead she plucked her phone out of the pocket and opened the message that just arrived.

And all color vanished from her face.

Oliver's message was short, but contained all the information she needed.

"Slade is alive and holds Felicity hostage. Warehouse, 14th and East."

Sara returned her phone in the picket and faced her former lover. Nyssa watched her closely, tried to understand what was going on. And at the same time the assassins were watching Nyssa, waiting for an order.

"There is a madman on the loose, and he holds an innocent hostage. I'm going to help my friends save her." Sara said hoping her plan will work, "You are free to follow me and kill me later if you so desire, but I am not leaving Felicity at the mercy of a monster. I owe her that much."

Nyssa merely nodded and the assassins returned their swords in the sheaths.

"We will accompany you Ta-er al-Safar."

For months Felicity complained to Oliver about his tardiness. There wasn't a single early-morning meeting he didn't arrive at least 5 minutes late for. Usually he would put on a charming smile and say it was expected from Oliver Queen, but a single glare from her usually resulted in him saying he'll be on time for the next meeting. He never was.

Today was probably the first time he arrived early.

But then today it was a matter of life and death.

Slade was already waiting when Oliver entered through the side entrance. Oliver's former friend, a brother that trained him and helped him survive some of the most brutal days on the island. The man Oliver thought was dead.

But it seemed the serum Slade once got kept him alive. And kept him insane.

"Imagine my surprise when I heard about a vigilante that fought against criminals with a bow and arrows. And in Starling city no less." a gasp escaped Felicity's lips when the one-eyed man pressed the knife he was holding closer to her throat.

"I'm here Slade. Let her go." Oliver tried to remain calm, but the sight of his friend, his partner, being used as a human shield, threatened, it angered him. And it terrified him.

"Do you remember what I promised you, kid? Do you? I promised to make you suffer. To make you pay for what you did to Shado."

Oliver closed his eyes. Her death still haunted him, and he still felt guilty for it. But at the same time
he knew it wasn't his fault, "It was Ivo who killed her. And you already killed him. You got your revenge Slade."

Somewhere behind Oliver Diggle was moving among the shadows, trying to get a good clear shoot of the madman that held Felicity. It was difficult despite his target standing ramrod straight and still. He didn't want to harm his friend, didn't want to accidentally shoot her instead.

It was frustrating. Even more so because Sara still wasn't there. Oliver was certain she would already be waiting for them when they got to the warehouse but the Canary was still absent.

"You had a choice. You chose Sara." Slade pressed the hunter knife closer and a drop of blood trickled down Felicity's throat, and moments later a tear escaped her eye. She was in pain, but she refused to make a single sound. She refused to show to the maniac she was scared and hurting.

"No. I chose to die instead of them. Ivo didn't allow that. He chose who lives and who dies that day... not me. I never would have chose Shado to be killed. She was my friend."

"She was more than that? Wasn't she?" Felicity flinched when Slade moved so his mouth was near her ear, "Tell me Miss Smoak? How much pain were you in every time Oliver here put himself first and slept with random women, completely forgetting he carried your mark?"

"I am not that person anymore!" Oliver snapped at his former friend, who just grinned at him in return.

"You're not? Because I heard you got really cozy in Russia with the woman who is after your company. Out of curiosity... were you with that bitch Sara since she returned to the city?" Slade grinned when a look of guilt crossed Oliver's face. He learned how to read the kid really well on the island, "Naughty kid. Hurting your own soulmate like that... it seems like you have absolutely no respect for her. Like you don't need her."

"I do! I do need her!" Oliver couldn't stop the panic from showing in his voice.

"Pity... cause you can't have her. I keep my promises, kid. And there is no better way to make you suffer then to let you live. Without your soulmate."

The burn came instantaneously, and it brought Oliver to his knees. A sound of a gunshot pierced the silence, but he didn't hear it. Diggle called his name, but he didn't hear it. Footsteps of multiple people echoed through the large warehouse, but he didn't hear it.

His mark burned.

And with it his heart.

He crawled, limped... he didn't know how he got to her, but somehow Oliver managed to get to the body lying on the concrete floor, before the first sob escaped his lips.

"Ollie." Sara stood frozen few feet away, unwilling to believe what she was seeing. She was late, because she led several assassins through the streets she couldn't take the fastest route and it cost her precious time.

She was too late to help, to do anything.

Diggle kneeled next to Oliver and gently reached for Felicity's hand to feel her pulse. He needed to know, needed to feel the absence. Otherwise he would never accept it.
It was gone... Her heartbeat. And her clear blue eyes were empty, and a bit of blood trickled out of her mouth.

She was dead. Felicity Smoak was lying dead in front of him with a knife in her chest.

Slade was efficient in his brutality. It went straight to her heart.

Diggle cursed himself for not shooting sooner, for not taking a chance. If only he did... than she would be alive. Smiling at them, babbling.

"Oliver." he said his friend's name softly, placed a hand on his shoulder. But received no response.

Somewhere in the distance the police sirens were heard, and they were coming closer. It seemed despite the general abandonment of this area someone still heard the gunshot and called the police.

"Diggle, you need to get him out of here." Sara got his attention, and he frowned when he saw a woman standing by the blonde's side, watching everything. Behind them were half a dozen men dressed in the same way Malcolm Merlyn once did.

"He won't leave her. There is no way..."

"Digg, he has the hood on." Sara pointed out, eyeing the green jacket Oliver put on before coming to the warehouse. It was in the bag in the trunk, and Diggle didn't understand why his friend decided to wear it, but he did and with the police on their way. It was not good.

"Come on." it took some effort, a lot of pulling and dragging, but Diggle finally managed to get Oliver away from Felicity and out of the side door.

He vaguely heard Sara saying she'll make sure Felicity is treated with respect she deserves before the metal door of the warehouse closed behind them, cutting them off from the death that ruled inside.

It was only then that Oliver started to fight back, and try to return inside and at Felicity's side.

But Diggle was stronger, and Oliver was soon inside the car and on his way to the mansion. The former soldier planed to stop along the way and get the green leather jacket off his friend before they reach the house. It wouldn't be good if someone in the staff of a member of his family saw him wearing it.

Although Diggle suspected Moira Queen knew exactly what her son did at night, Thea had no idea, and it was probably better if it remained that way until Oliver was ready to tell his sister.

"Nyssa?" Sara said gently as she kneeled by Felicity's side and gently touched her already cooling cheek.

"Yes?" the Heir of the Demon stepped forward.

Sara had tears in her eyes as she looked up, "I will return with you to Nanda Parbat. I will rejoin the League... under one condition."

The dark-haired woman knew what she had in mind, and nodded in understanding, "Only my father can allow it. You will need to persuade him."

"I will succeed persuading him. I have to."
Moira walked in the foyer just as Oliver was practically dragged in by his bodyguard. The Queen matriarch instantly sighed. It's been so long since her son returned home so drunk he couldn't even stand straight. She still remembered one instance when he and Tommy stumbled in and crashed in the table in the center of the foyer and broke a vase that was on top of it.

It was a gift from her mother-in-law so Moira didn't really grieve it's destruction, but Oliver ended up with several glass shards in his forearm, and that was one trip to the hospital she would gladly forget.

Mostly because the nurse spent too much time flirting. And because the pain medicine they gave Oliver made him nauseous and he threw up in the car on the way back to the mansion.

"Mrs Queen." Diggle nodded in her direction, after noticing her standing ramrod straight with her hands crossed over her chest, "This isn't what it looks like." he added before leading Oliver towards the stairs.

"It looks like my son returned to his partying and I will expect to see his face on the cover of every single tabloid in the city tomorrow. And it's not even 2-o-clock in the afternoon." Moira responded, "He was supposed to be at QC at this hour!"

"Ma'am... he's not drunk." Diggle looked over his shoulder, and Moira finally noticed the older man had tears in his eyes.

"What happened? What's going on?"

"She's dead..." she heard Oliver mumble, and her heart froze in her chest.

"Dead?! Who is dead?! It's not Thea, is it? Did that boy she's seeing done something to her?! Why did Quentin called you and not me?!"

"Thea is fine, Mrs. Queen." Diggle tried to calm her down before she gave herself a heart attack. In a strange turn of events a woman as calm as Moira Queen seemed to be as frazzled as Felicity at times.

"Then who?"

Dig sighed, "I'm afraid your son saw his soulmate being killed."

All she could do after hearing those words was nod her head in understanding. Her beautiful boy... he did not deserve such thing, to experience such loss, and to actually witness it.

"The police..." she started to speak, but lost the thread of thought.

"Are at the scene. I will explain everything after getting Oliver to his room."

Moira nodded, "Yes. You do that."
Almost ten minutes later Diggle entered the family room to see Moira sitting like a statue on a couch, looking at the fireplace in front of her but not really seeing it. He intentionally raised noise while walking to get her attention, and when she looked at him the sadness was obvious in her eyes.

He briefly wondered if Robert Queen was her soulmate, if she understood the pain her son now felt. But even if that was the case Oliver and Felicity's case is different, their marks linking them in the unique way.

"Her name is Felicity Smoak. You met her, I presume." Diggle started his story, and Moira nodded. Of course she knew who Felicity was. Not just cause she was Oliver's EA, but because of the time she bubbling blonde was brave enough to face the Queen matriarch and not stand down, informing the older woman she was aware of the secret Moira desperately wanted to keep hidden from her children.

"Yes, I did. She was Oliver's soulmate? Why didn't he ever mention anything? Did he even know? Did she?"

Diggle sighed, "Oliver knew, but he didn't say anything. From what I understood he didn't think he was good enough for her."

Moira snorted, a sound so strange and unnatural coming from the dignified woman, and waived her hand, "It's because of what he does at night, isn't it?"

Diggle froze the moment he understood what she was insinuating, "You know?"

"That my son is the vigilante? Of course I do. I also know you are helping him... and I'm guessing Miss Smoak does too... or did..." Moira sighed, "But I do not understand why Oliver seems so... ruined. I understand that he witnessed... did they caught who did it?" Moira suddenly chanced the subject after realizing she never asked what happened to the killer.

"He was shoot, yes. I don't know if he's dead, though." Diggle answered, before deciding he should tell Moira the whole truth about Oliver's current state, "Are you aware of an occurrence called mirror marks?"

"It's just a rumor." Moira responded, not understanding why the bodyguard was asking her about old wife's tales.

"They are real, Mrs. Queen. And your son was marked with one. His mark is a crown on his left shoulder. Felicity has an identical one on her left one."

"My son..."

"His mark felt like it was on fire when Felicity was stabbed by the man that held her captive. It's possible the pain will go away with time, but I don't really know."

"Captive." Moira mumbled under her breath, "Why?"

He didn't want to reveal that particular secret, but she deserved to know, and Diggle knew Oliver wouldn't be able to talk about it with his mother, "The man... he was on the island with your son. And he wanted revenge for something that happened there, something he blamed Oliver for."

Moira closed her eyes and sighed. After Oliver was rescued, and returned to Starling, he was admitted to a hospital to ensure he's alright. And the doctor that examined him informed her about the old injuries, about the scars on her son's skin. It was obvious things happened on that damn island he wasn't sharing with his family, and she always wondered what it was.
And it seemed those years returned to haunt her boy. To destroy him in the worst way possible.

A loss of a soulmate is painful. But in Oliver's case that pain was literal.

"Thank you for bringing him home safe Mr. Diggle. And for being by his side during him... nightly activities."

Diggle just nodded and left the woman alone to ponder about the things she learned in the past minutes. But Moira didn't remain in the room for long before getting up from the couch and going to check up on her son.

She knocked on his bedroom door and waited for his response, but there was none. Thinking that he might be sleeping Moira opened the door slightly, expecting to see her son under the cover and resting.

What she saw broke her heart.

Oliver was indeed on the bed, but not sleeping. He was sitting on the edge, his shoulders slumped forward and his head bowed down. He was shaking slightly and she could see tears rolling down his cheeks.

Her beautiful boy. Destroyed.

Carefully, not to startle him, she moved and sit next to him, before gently reaching and wiping away a tear that just escaped.

"Tell me what to do. Tell me how I can help you. Please." Moira's voice was breaking.

A whisper from her son told her, "Nothing you can do."

"I can call Thea, have her return home. She's staying with Roy, but if I told her-"

"No." Oliver cut her off, "No need. I just want to be alone."

Moira watched him closely, worried by what she saw, "Is that a good idea right now?"

"I'm alone anyway. She is dead."

It was little after midnight when Oliver gave up any pretense of sleeping. There was no rest for him, not tonight. Not when the pain was so raw.

So he pushed the covers away and stood up, before loving to the window to look outside. The sky was clear, countless of stars visible, a truly beautiful sight. But that beauty remained lost to Oliver, for he already saw the true beauty in the clear blue eyes, and bright pink lips, and colorfully painted nails.

His mark no longer burned, that pain vanished after only few hours. A different, worse kind of pain remained. The deep one, one that reached to his bones and brought with it the feeling of hollowness.

He was missing something, and he could feel it deep down in his very being. It wasn't like missing a limp, but like missing a part of who he is, part of his very essence. He was Oliver Queen, but incomplete.

A strangled sob escaped his lips, and he fought against the tears that threatened to fall once more. He wanted to keep her safe, away from any and all danger. That is why he held her at arms length, why
he decided not to reveal the shape of his mark to her, despite seeing her own and knowing they were identical.

And now he had to live with that decision. With the knowledge his cruel choice made no difference.

She was still hurt. She died. And he will never know what it felt like to be loved by her.

He kissed countless women, yet the taste of hers will remain unknown to him. Too many lovers had him in their bed, but he'll never know the felling of being tangled in sheets with his own soulmate. He bought gifts for passing flings, and yet the most important piece of jewelry he was meant to pick will never decorate Felicity's finger.

He grieved for the wasted past. And will spend the remaining years of his life wishing for a different future.

Wishing for their first date; for days he would spend trying to find the perfect Hanukkah present; for asking his mother to see the Dearden jewelry in hope the perfect ring is in there somewhere.

Oliver crumbled to the floor as more and more wishes occurred to him. More and more things he will never experience with Felicity.

There will be no wedding day, no children. No home and family. He will remain alone.

He tried to remain silent, didn't want to disturb his mother or sister. He didn't even know if Thea knew what happened yesterday since she only returned home an hour ago, and sneaked past his room. It was okay that she didn't know, he didn't want her to worry or pity him.

He will live.

No.

He will merely exist, there was no real life without her.

Morning found Oliver asleep on the floor under the window. That sight broke Moira's heart all over again. As a mother she wanted to protect her children from everything that might harm them or cause them pain. And now she was helpless to do so.

Gently she placed a hand on her son's shoulder and leaned forward, only to see him wide awake and staring at the wall. There were dark circles under his eyes, and his cheeks had traces of dried tears.

"I'm so sorry Oliver. I came to wake you up because of the meeting in QC, but it's obvious you are in no condition to attend."

Oliver blinked few times before sitting up suddenly, his face expression morphing from sadness to anger.

"She was in on it." he said through clenched teeth, "Felicity found it when going through her background. Isabel Rochev, the woman that is trying to get QC, had an affair with dad. She expected him to abandon us for her. He didn't and now she wants revenge. So she worked with him."

"With whom?"

Oliver mumbled the name like it was the worse curse, "Slade. The man from the island. The man that killed Felicity. She knew about the marks. She told him."
"Do you have evidence?" Moira instantly asked. If that woman was really involved in all that then Moira will personally make sure Isabel pays for it.

"Lance has it."

"Good." gentlest of touches on his cheek made Oliver focus on his mother, "Get some rest. In the bed. I'll handle the meeting today... and for as long as necessary until you are ready to go back to the company."

The man that was the vigilante watched his mother march out of his room like a woman on a mission. At the moment she looked more intimidating then he was in his days as the Hood. And if he hadn't wished for Isabel to pay he would have pitied the shrewd woman.

Maybe ten minutes after his mother left Thea barged in the room, a wide grin on her face ad she waived a box in her hand, "It's here!" but the sight of her brother still sitting on the floor made her pause, "Ollie?"

"What's here, Speedy?"

Once his sister was kneeling on the floor in front of him Oliver finally raised his eyes to look at her, "What's wrong? What happened? The gel arrived. You know, the one to remove the tattoo from your soulmate mark."

Thea noticed her brother flinching the moment she mentioned his mark, and she gently squeezed his hand that was clenched into a fist. She wanted answers, but she didn't want to question him. He was distressed, and she worried about him.

"It's not important anymore." he mumbled under his breath.

"Of course it is!" she protested instantly, "You have to get it removed so your soulmate-"

"She'd dead, Thea."

The young woman gaped at him in shock, refusing to believe his words. Because if it's true then her brother lost the most important woman in his life. Her shoulders slumped forward, "I am so sorry, Ollie." she whispered.

Oliver just shook his head, not saying anything for a few minutes. Just finding some solace in his sister's presence, in the company of one of few people he loved.

"You should get downstairs." Oliver spoke finally, "Get breakfast."

But Thea didn't want to eat anything, her stomach was in knots, and she wanted to do something, anything really, to help ease his pain. But she honestly didn't know what to do.

And then the weight in her hand reminded her why she was in his room in the first place, and she knew exactly what to do.

"Here's what we're going to do. You are going to remove your shirt, and I'll put the gel on that tattoo of yours."

"Speedy, I already said-"

"Ollie, we are doing this!" Thea interrupted him, "Before you wanted to do it to prove to Felicity that you care. Now it will be so you could remember her in the way she deserves; as the woman that
carried the identical soulmark. Don't hide it anymore, don't hide her.”

Several board members shared a surprised look when the doors opened and Moira Queen entered the large room. She decided after her release not to return to the company, and instead left her son to run it. It wasn't the best decision, since Oliver wasn't exactly the most capable CEO, but the company went forward nevertheless.

When the Queen matriarch took her son's place at the head of the table a snort came from the other end and all eyes turned towards Isabel Rochev.

The young woman watched Moira with a mixture of amusement and irritation for a moment, before finally speaking, "How nice. The CEO skipping an important board meeting that could decide the future of the company, and his place in it... and instead sending his mother. To be honest I expected this to happen."

But Moira just watched the woman for a few moments before a shadow outside of the door told her everyone was in place, and then she smiled coldly.

"You expected this to happen because you worked with the man that planed to kill my son's soulmate. Do not try to deny it, there are enough evidence that confirms it, and the police will deal with you shortly. I am actually here to inform you the owner of Stellmoore international knows his company's money is being used for personal vendetta. Money you got access to after sleeping with the CEO, and then blackmailing him." Isabel opened her mouth to protest, to say that wasn't true, none of it was, but Moira cut her off, "I know of your affair with my late husband. And I also know you managed to delude yourself into thinking he would leave his wife and children and run away with you. But he didn't, and now you want Queen consolidated to have some sort of revenge over a dead man that loved his family more then you."

"That is preposterous!" Isabel finally shrieked, her calmness vanishing as the board members started to whisper among themselves. She was just about to accuse Moira of sabotaging her with a bunch of lies when her phone started to ring.

The Queen matriarch just smiled sweetly, and said, "You should get that, it might be important. Maybe it's your boss, informing you that you are fired."

Quentin Lance knocked on the large door of the Queen mansion, and a housekeeper let him in. He needed to talk to Oliver about what happened the previous day, about what the police found. And what they didn't find.

The always cocky and overconfident man now looked like a shadow of himself, and the police detective couldn't help but feel sorry for him. Despite their past, despite the dumb decisions Oliver did in the past, he didn't deserve something like this. No one did.

Lance didn't know the extent of what happened the previous day in the warehouse until he got a call from Moira Queen a few hours ago. That was when he found out who the man they found was. And what happened with the blonde that was ran off from the road.

It was a truly tragic end for such a lovely young women.

"Detective." Oliver finally got the attention of the older man that stared at him for a minute without saying a word.
"I'm sorry to do this, but I need to ask you a few questions. I need clarification about things that happened yesterday."

And in broken voice Oliver told him what was going on, from the moment he got a phone call to the moment his worst nightmare became real and he lost Felicity.

"I keep hoping I'll wake up, and realize it was all a dream." he said to finish his story.

Lance nodded in understanding. That was what he thought countless of times after his younger daughter became lost at sea. But he didn't voice that thought to Oliver, he didn't want to place that guilt on top of the one he already felt for not being able to save his own soulmate.

Felicity Smoak; Oliver Queen soulmate. Lance shook his head. Who would have thought?

"We managed to identify the man by his fingerprints. As you know his name is Slade Wilson. Since he has no living relatives to take the body he will be cremated." the detective informed Oliver after they sat in a complete silence for a few minutes, "And now to the hard part... I have to know. Why didn't the man have a head?" the question caught Oliver by surprise, and the shock was obviously apparent on his face cause Lance instantly knew this was new information for the young man. He had no idea until Lance told him.

"He was shot in the head... but he still had it when... I was dragged away." Oliver said, before quietly adding, "I didn't want to leave. She was there, and I didn't want to leave."

"Why did you?" Lance asked out of curiosity, and when Oliver looked panicky he knew, "You were in your green getup."

"I don't know what you're talking about, detective."

"Yes you do, and it doesn't' matter. Not right now." Lance said with a week smile, before his face became serious again, "You were dragged away, I'm guessing by your bodyguard, but what happened to Miss Smoak?"

"We left her there." Oliver mumbled an answer. He was feeling ashamed that they just left Felicity lying next to a man that killed her for the police to find.

Lance watched him carefully, trying to gauge if he was lying or not. But when it became obvious he was telling the truth he informed Oliver of something that confused the police.

"There was only one body in that warehouse, that of a headless man. There were signs of struggle, proof that someone was being kept there against their will. But no other body. No one else but Slade Wilson."

"Sara." Oliver said weakly, "She send she'll take care of it... of Felicity."

Lance shook his head, "Then we have a problem... because Sara is missing too."
Sara stood few steps behind her former lover and watched the large stone building carved into the very face of the mountain. Very few people saw the outer walls of Nanda Parbat, and walked its torch illuminated hallways.

It was a privilege only the members of the League had. A privilege, but also a punishment. For with each passing day it felt like the walls of the ancient building sucked out the souls of those who inhabit the place, until they are remorseful servants obeying the words of a Demon.

Sara would gladly die, before stepping into that damned place again. She would have chosen death, she did choose death, but then things went from bad to worse, and something worse then her death happened.

A death of an innocent.

If there was one person who deserved never to feel any pain it was Felicity Smoak. But she did, countless times, and Sara knew she was responsible for a fraction of that pain.

The guilt, the self-loathing, the regret. She felt all of it after learning the truth behind the crown shaped mark on her friend's right shoulder. And she knew Oliver felt it too.

And much more.

The sight of him falling on his knees as the boundless pain burned through him will be forever burned into her memory. The sob that escaped his lips will haunt her dreams for years to come.

That is why she decided to do the one thing she swore never to do again, why she chose this damned existence as an assassin that traded a part of her soul for damnation with each kill.

A glance back towards the old airplane they arrived with informed her one of the assassins that arrived in Starling in Nyssa's company was handling their precious cargo with utmost care and respect. And the look he sent her, when he saw her looking, was that of contempt.

She understood him. She felt the same way about herself, about her choices.

Some things were unforgivable.

Ra's Al Ghul, the Demon, was standing in front of a large pool of clear water, in the chamber at the very heart of their compound. The messenger informed him about his daughter's return, with Ta-er al-Safar in tow like she was ordered.

He walked out of the chamber with the pit, the League members bowing their heads in respect as he walked past them. After centuries of being the Demon his rule is coming to an end, the pit no longer functioning in preserving his body as it once did. He will have to chose a heir soon, and considered the old prophecy of the one who would survive certain death in a battle against him.

But it has been years since anyone stood up against him, and the last person paid for that foolish decision with his life. He was undefeated, and it was no surprise. Many centuries were behind him,
many teachers that were overshadowed eventually.

He had already decided, in case the prophecy proves to be false, that his daughter would inherit the title and the ring. Nyssa was strong, in body and mind. She will make a good Ra's Al Ghul.

Her only mistake was bringing the outsider into their folds, train her, and make her her lover, only for Ta-er al-Sahfer to leave Nanda Parbat without permission, and evade, and kill, those sent to retrieve her before.

Now that mistake was corrected, and the Canary was back where she belonged.

And despite not being an overly curious man, Ra's had to admit he was actually interested in why the woman that was once Sara Lance chose life with them, when everything suggested she would rather chose death.

The flames in the hanging lanterns flickered as the large double doors opened and a group of assassins walked inside the large chamber. Leading them was Nyssa, in her normal regalia of black and red. His daughter.

Behind her walked the Canary, and Ra's observed her every movement carefully. She was tense, and her hands were clenched into fists. Even when they stopped just several feet away from where he stood she did not raise her eyes to look at him, not even to glare. She did not wish to be here, that much was obvious, but by the fact she was still alive he knew she came voluntarily.

Nyssa bowed slightly in respect, "As you have ordered, Ta-er al-Sahfer has returned to Nanda Parbat."

"You have done good, daughter." Ra's responded, his dark eyes never connecting with his daughter's form, and instead remaining focused on the blonde behind her.

And then he noticed one of the men Nyssa took with her was carrying a large item wrapped into fabric. He recognized the shape, as well as the linens used to protect what is underneath. But a quick glance through the men in front of him told him all those who followed his heir to Starling city had returned.

His gaze then finally landed on his daughter, a silent question and an order to explain in his eyes.

Nyssa turned slightly and nodded. Instantly Sarab, who carried the body, stepped forward and dropped it at Ra's feet.

"Ta-er al-Sahfer." Nyssa said, and the Canary made a single step forward, before finally raising her eyes to look at the leader of the league, but only a moment later they were dropped at the wrapped body in front of her.

"I have agreed to return to the League, to obey the orders of Ra's al Ghul, as I have once pledged. But in return I request for the women we brought with us to go into the pit."

He watched the blonde for a moment before answering shortly, "No."

The Canary closed her eyes and nodded slightly. She expected such an answer, he could see it in her face.

"Then I chose death. And I hope you will return her body to Starling, so that her soulmate may bury her with honors she deserves, and has a place where he can go to mourn her death."
"Who is she?"

Sara gulped, she already explained some things to Nyssa in the airplane on the way to Nanda Parbat, and the response she received from everyone gathered told her she had done something far worse than she believed. The feeling of shame at the looks of disgust was still strong.

But she was willing to endure much worse if that meant Felicity will have another chance to live and to be happy.

"Her name is Felicity Smoak, she was my friend. But I was not hers. I have hurt her terribly when I was with her soulmate. Now she is dead and her soulmate in suffering, and I am gladly giving away what is left of my soul to the Demon for a chance to correct things."

Ra's looked at his daughter and noticed she did not once look at her former lover while she was explaining. Instead she stared at the wall behind him.

"Where are their marks?" he asked, suspicion entering his mind as he watched the tenseness of gathered assassins.

"Her's is on her right shoulder. Her soulmate carries his on his left."

Instantly Ra's took a step back, and turned away from prying eyes of those in front of him. His hands were still behind his back, and he clenched his fists, as he took in the entire situation that was presented to him.

"Ealamat Almaeakis. Opposite marks. What you did was shameful Ta-er al-Sahfer, you have brought an innocent a great pain." he turned and focused directly at Sara, and held her gaze for a few moments before telling her something not many knew, "Over the years it happened that our designated mark had such a soulmate. In that case the person was spared. For the opposite marks have been sacred to the League since it was formed, long before my time."

"I know what mistake I made. And I wish to repair it by returning her to her soulmate. If staying here, and rejoining the League, is what I must to than I will do it."

The silence surrounded them for several minutes while Ra's took Sara's words in consideration. The Canary was a good fighter, her will to survive was great and she had showed it from the moment she entered the compound. And here she was, with her will and spirit almost broken, ready to comply to his wishes, in exchange of another soul being returned to the world of the living.

Under different circumstances he would have remained by his previous decision.

But these were special circumstances, and the woman lying dead at his feet was undeserving of being punished for the actions of another.

Ra's looked at his daughter and made an order, "Inform the attendants to prepare the body for the pit."

Sara was sitting on the bed inside the room that was months ago designated to be hers. Every member of the League had his own space, equipped with a bed, a desk, and a wardrobe for both the uniform and civilian clothes that are needed to blend with the world outside of the walls of Nanda Parbat. The fact the room was waiting for her told her Nyssa was certain she would return with them when they came to Starling to retrieve her.

It felt like a prison cell before, now it felt like the most fitting space for her.
The doors squeaked a bit upon opening and a dark haired woman made a single step inside before stopping and focusing on the figure sitting on the edge of the bed and staring at the wall.

"Is it time already?" Sara asked, turning to look at her former lover.

"Not yet. The attendants are still preparing your friend for the pit, washing away the blood and changing her into a gown." Nyssa responded before sighing and pushing the door shut. Sara watched her actions with interest. She expected the heir to just come to retrieve her for the ceremony, not to visit her room for no apparent reason.

It seems their past didn't matter to Nyssa anymore. Yes, she obviously still cared, but from the moment she learned what Sara had done she became cold and distant. And the blonde couldn't blame her for it.

"You despise me." she finally spoke, her voice breaking slightly.

"I could never despise you, Ta-er al-Sahfer. I love you, despite knowing we are not right for each other. We are not soulmates." Nyssa looked away, out of the small window that allowed the warm desert wind inside, "I have met him many years ago, and I saw his death. It was deserved for a monster like him. That woman, the one you called a friend, did not deserve death. Nor did she deserve the pain you have brought her."

"It wasn't just me." Sara suddenly became defensive, "Her soulmate had many lovers before me. Countless women that paraded in and out of his bed."

"And he has paid for that mistake. I was there Ta-er al-Sahfer, I saw him shatter." Nyssa slowly moved towards the bed, before taking a seat next to Sara, "Have you truly not known who she was to him?"

Sara shook her head, "I saw a part of her mark when she wore dresses with strange cutouts on the back, but I never made that connection. Until the moment I was wiping away the blood from her back and saw the mark was identical to the one on Oliver's back."

"Blood?" Nyssa asked. She did not perceive the woman with glasses as a fighter who gets injured fighting off an attacker.

Another wave of shame washed over Sara as she remembered that night. As she remembered how she thought Felicity looked like she was playing dress-up because she wore a black leather jacket.

"She saved my life. A madman would have killed me that night if she didn't pushed me aside, and she got shot in the process. The bullet... the bullet hit the edge of her mark..." Sara let the first tears escape her eyes as Felicity's words from the Foundry echo in her mind, "She was hoping now that her mark was damaged she would no longer feel it... when Oliver sleeps with another. She was high on pain medication and just laid it all out."

"Sara..." it was one of the few times Nyssa called her by her true name, but the blonde didn't want to know what he had to say. Nothing, no words, could repair what she had done. Only actions.

So she will act.

Ra's al Ghul stood ramrod straight in front of the Lazarus pit. The attendants have prepared the body of the woman and she was brought in the chamber on the special stretchers they will then use to lower her into the waters of the pit.
His dark eyes observed the fragile looking body with interest. This woman in front of him looked weak, and yet she endured more pain than most of his men had over the years, because she was unfortunate enough to be linked with an Opposite mark to a man that did not respect their unusual bond.

His decision to lower her into the pit was one without precedent. Never before was an outsider granted this privilege, and he did not believe it would happen ever again. But today he felt generous, he felt it was right to do this for the blonde woman lying dead at his feet.

The blood was washed away, but the wound is still open. The one who ended her life was efficient in his killings, the blade of the knife he used went directly between her ribs and into her heart.

Nyssa informed him the man was dead. First injured by a man that knew the woman, and then finished off by Nyssa herself. The man's head was thrown away into the desert once they arrived, and Ra's agreed with that decision.

Someone kills only one with the opposite mark, and leaves the other one to suffer deserves nothing less than the winds eating away the flesh from his bones.

The doors behind him opened and several people entered. Ra's knew many wished to witness the return, but he only granted that right to a few.

Sara moved to the very edge of the pit and reached for the rope that was connected to the stretcher Felicity was lying on. She did not believe she was strong enough to lift it, and then gently lower it into the Lazarus pit, but she refused to ask for assistance. This was her task, her responsibility.

The gentle chanting filled the chamber as the body was slowly lowered in the water, the prayers and blessings for the safe return of the soul that departed far too soon. But the truth was it was not up to them. Everything depended on the power of the soul, on it's strength to fight off death and find it's way back to the body it used to inhabit.

The surface of the water began to bubble, steam raised to the high ceiling.

And slowly, one slow step after another, a woman walked out of its depths. Her blond hair was dripping wet and cowering her face, the white dress clinging and making it hard to walk. Her hands shook slightly and her breathing was erratic gasps.

But she was alive.

She walked out of the Lazarus pit like no one ever before, not with a wish to attack and to kill. But with a grace and calmness of someone still untouched by the darkness that long since consumed the members of the League.

Blue eyes looked up, away from the hard stone floor she was walking on, and focused on the man in front of her.

Her sight was hazy, her glasses missing, and she couldn't recognize him. But she knew he wasn't the one she was hoping to see. But she needed to ask, she needed to know where he is.

Sara gasped when a small weak voice just said one single word, "Oliver."

Blue eyes looked around in wonder. The room looked like nothing she ever saw, and she grew up in Vegas and seen a fair share of gaudiness that supposed to be inspired by the Arabian Nights tales, but looked cheap and tacky.
This room was the real deal.

The wide open door led to a small balcony that had a breathtaking view of the desert illuminated by the full moon. Felicity spent a good ten minutes enjoying the cool night air before stepping back inside.

Just as she took a step inside a knock on the main door informed her she was getting a visitor. The person on the other side didn't wait for permission to enter, instead he pushed the hard wooden door and entered the chamber.

"I have ordered food to be brought to you in a short while." Ra's spoke, before taking a seat on the couch in the center of the room.

"Thank you." Felicity responded with a small smile, before carefully taking a seat on the other end. Her body still felt a bit strange, like it wasn't listening her completely.

"Tomorrow my daughter will accompany you back to your home. As much as I would like to keep you in Nanda Parbat, for you seem like a person with a great potential to be as lethal as Nyssa, I must send you back. It is only right."

Felicity gaped at him. Sara didn't talk much about her time in the League, she hated to even think about it, but she did occasionally mention the Demon who was in charge of the assassins. She always described him as a cold and calculating man, as heartless. And Felicity had a serious problem connecting what she heard about him with this man that sat next to her.

"I don't understand." she said honestly, "I expected I would never be allowed to leave, that I would have to join the League like Sara was."

"Ta-er al-Sahfer came to us under different circumstances, and unbound. You on the other hand have an Opposite mark. We call it Ealamat Almaeakis." Ra's eyes suddenly became cold, "I would never dare to go against something so sacred."

"Is Sara returning with us?" she asked carefully. Part of Felicity wanted for her friend to remain free of the League, while a part feared Sara would get back together with Oliver. Despite everything that happened, everything that was said and done, she was still unsure about her place in his life.

Yes, she was certain she had a part in the team, and a job as his Executive Assistant, but other than that she didn't know what to expect.

"The Canary will remain where she belongs. She had made a pledge, and she will respect it until her death or release from the League." Ra's spoke seriously, "That was the condition of you going into the Pit."

"So I owe her my life." Felicity muttered. It was strange to put it that way, but not unthinkable. She knew Sara would have risked her life to save her, after all the opposite happened and she took a bullet to save the Canary. It was how things were in the team.

But to know she agreed to remain in a place she hated, and to do it so that Felicity would get a second chance... that is a whole other matter.

"You do not owe Ta-er al-Sahfer anything. What she did was shameful, and she can consider her rejoining the League as a penance. And your life will not be the same ever again. The second life gifted by the Pit does not come without consequences." the Demon stood up and moved to the open balcony door.
As always he stood ramrod straight, his hands behind his back. Dressed in black garment with a long sleeveless coat over he looked regal. But then again he was a ruler, even if his kingdom was an ancient compound in a middle of a desert, and those he ruled over highly trained assassins.

His words finally registered and Felicity stood up as well, and turned to face the older man, "What kind of consequences?" her voice wavered as she considered all the possibilities, as she feared them.

"The bloodlust." Ra's said the word like it was the worse curse possible, and Felicity wondered if maybe it was. He turned towards her, and noticed she was wringing her hands together in nervousness, "It is a side-effect of the Pit, the urge to kill. I do not know how it might affect you, perhaps your mark will ease the bloodlust, perhaps it will remove it completely. But you must be aware that the desire to kill might appear at any time."

"Is there a cure for it?" she had to know. If there was something, anything, she could do to fix this condition she would do it, "I am not a killer. I don't want to be one."

"Not everything has a cure." Ra's words were like a ball and chain around her ankle for Felicity, like a lifetime sentence. But she took a deep breath and reminded herself that she would at least be alive. The Demon watched her face expression change from shock and fear into acceptance and couldn't help but admire the young woman, her spirit is strong and she will prevail.

"When can I go back?" she finally asked, "Starling is in trouble. The madman that kidnapped me-"

"Is dead." Ra's interrupted her, "My daughter killed him. Perhaps by making your city safe she had done you a disfavor, for the only thing we know that can ease the bloodlust is to kill the one who killed you. But as you said already you are no killer."

Felicity nodded. She was comforted by the knowledge the man is gone. She will forever remember what he said after kidnapping her, the rants she heard against Oliver, the accusations. He was completely unhinged, and that made him dangerous.

A knock on the door broke the silence that spread through the chamber and Ra's gave the permission to enter before Felicity managed to collect herself and do it. A woman of unidentifiable age entered, bowed at Ra's and lowered a platter with fresh fruit and cheese on the table in front of the couch.

She left as silently as she entered, and the Demon followed, he was leaving Felicity to eat and rest, but she spoke to stop him. She wanted him to know.

"Malcolm Merlyn." the name made the older man pause just as he was about the exit the chamber. Instead he stopped and turned to face Felicity again, silently giving her a command to continue, "He was a member of the league, yes?"

"Al Sa-Her, the Magician. He was released from service years ago under the condition he will continue obeying our codes." Ra's expression suddenly turned cold, "I have heard what he had done."

"He is dead." Felicity said, and then rushed to explain, "He was killed the night of the Undertaking. It was Oliver who did it... my soulmate. He is the vigilante known as the Arrow."

Ra's watched her silently for a moment before nodding, "I have heard about the archer in green. His skills are admirable, but he should not have won against the Magician."

"It was... luck... karma... Oliver, he... he used his arrow and pushed it through his shoulder and into Merlyn's chest." Felicity shivered at the memory of that damn night, "We almost stopped it. I led a police detective to where the earthquake machine was set up, and instructed him how to disarm it. I
had no idea there was a second one, it wasn't mentioned anywhere."

"Where is his body?" Ra's asked. He was getting more and more impressed with this woman. She
truly had a strong spirit.

"He is buried in an unmarked grave at the very edge of the graveyard, as far away from his wife and
son's graves as possible." Felicity answered, before a thought entered her mind and made her panic,
"You are not asking cause you plan to resurrect him, are you?"

"No. Some evils are better left buried and forgotten." Ra's words were as comforting as possible,
considering who they were coming from, "Rest now Miss Smoak. There is a long trip in front of you
tomorrow."

Chapter End Notes

For sneak peeks of chapters that are still to come, as well as previews of the other stories
that are under constructions check my Tumblr side-blog:

arienhod.tumblr.com
Thea pushed the wooden door open without knocking on it, and peeked inside her brother's bedroom. She expected Oliver to be either asleep, or standing in front of a window and staring outside. It seems those were the only two things he did lately.

The young heiress sighed when she saw he was sitting at the edge of the bed, his elbows on his knees, and his face hidden behind his hands. It was a look of complete helplessness, and she didn't doubt that is how her brother felt right now.

His soulmate was gone, and there was absolutely nothing he could do to change that.

You can not cheat death.

"Speedy?" he called softly, and Thea pushed the door open a bit more and enter the large room.

It was early morning, and the strong sunlight illuminated the bedroom through the tall windows, even making the tiny specks of dust in the air visible. She's been in it countless times, but this was the first time she took a moment to look around and notice all the little details described Ollie who he was.

And then she wondered how many of those details still mattered to her brother, how many of these things still described the man he was today. Certainly not the ship model on the mantle, since Thea doubted her brother would ever again step on board of any naval vessel. Or the drink cabinet built into the bookcase that she knew now contained business papers, rather than bottles of expensive alcohol.

Ollie Queen did in fact die when the Queen Gambit went down, it was Oliver Queen that returned from the desolated island. He tried to pretend he was still that careless playboy, but with time the foolish boy faded away, and the strong man he became, due the unthinkable trials thrown at him during the five years on Lian Yu, remained.

And Thea couldn't help but wonder how much of Oliver Queen died with his soulmate, how much of her brother was lost to them for good.

She took a shaky breath and approached him, "Morning, Ollie. I thought... I could put the gel on your tattoo before you get ready."

"What do I need to get ready for?" he asked tiredly, "I'm not going anywhere."

Thea sighed and sit down next to him, her head leaning on his shoulder. She understood he didn't want to leave the cocoon of his room and face the world in which she didn't exist, but today he didn't have a choice. He was Oliver Queen, and there were certain things, certain obligations, he couldn't avoid inevitably.

Technically, he could, but neither she nor their mother would allow him to. Both Queen women were willing to do anything to help him recover at least a bit from the loss, and because of that they refused to allow him to sink into the darkness he would probably never recover from.

"Mom said you need to go to QC today." Thea spoke slightly as she, gently, applied a sticky gel to his left shoulder. The ink dragon was still covering his mark, and it will probably take weeks until it was faded completely.

"I'm not going." Oliver answered coldly, making his sister sigh again.
"There is a board meeting, and you need to be there. The whole power struggle over the company is over, and the board members require to see a strong CEO on top. And that is you. Mom did a good job in the past few days, but she doesn't run QC, you do."

Oliver lowered his head and closed his eyes as tears burned and threatened to fall. A shaky breath escaped his lips, and instinctively Thea's hand squeezed his shoulder in comfort.

"Wanna know a secret?" his voice wavered as he spoke.

"Sure." Thea responded, before slapping his gel covered tattoo and informing him, "We're done with this right now. Wait for 15 minutes before showering and getting ready for work. So... what's the secret?"

"The only reason I was the strong CEO on top was the woman that made sure I'm on time for meetings, who ensured through threats and bribery that all the paperwork is signed, who sabotaged the coffeemaker on the executive floor just so she wouldn't have to fetch it."

Thea giggled, she knew who her brother was talking about, and she for the hundredth time wished she took the time to get the blonde better. Felicity Smoak seemed like an interesting person, and she had no doubt they would have been great friends.

Diggle was waiting in the foyer when Oliver walked down the stairs. Both men could see Moira approaching down the hallway, her gaze firmly on her son. She was worried about him, she always will be, after all she is his mother, and right now she was looking for even the slightest sign that he wasn't alright and she would send him back to his room, the board meeting be damned.

But Oliver managed to give her a weak smile and greet her. And that was more then he accomplished yesterday.

"I'll be at Queen Consolidated in an hour. You only need to sit at the meeting, I'll take care of everything else until you are ready to go back." she informed him.

Oliver instantly sighed. He appreciated his mother's care and the fact she took on to herself to deal with the family company for the time being, but that was his responsibility. And he will have to face the reality and return to his office.

The world didn't stop turning just because he lost Felicity.

"It's alright, mom. I'll remain in the office and deal with everything today... and probably return to work permanently. I can't just stop... I have to keep going."

Moira nodded with a smile. She was proud of her boy, of the man he had become. She wanted to make things easier for him, that was why she took onto herself to lead the company for the past three days, but she wasn't the CEO and they both knew that.

Still, she thought about one thing she might do that would ease things for him, "I left a document on your desk yesterday, it needs your signature of approval. It's for a slight change on the executive floor."

Oliver frowned. He tried t remember if the floor required any upgrade or repair but he honestly couldn't remember anything, "What exactly is changing?"

"The glass wall that separates your office to the rest of the floor. I thought a milk glass would look nice there, give you some privacy."
Instantly Oliver knew what his mother was suggesting. It wasn't about privacy, it was about obscuring the EA desk with the wrong person sitting behind it. It was a small change, and he doubted it would really help him, but he was pretty certain he would sign for the alteration to be made.

He kissed his mother's cheek, both in thank you for her consideration and in greeting, and informed her he would be back in time for dinner and left the mansion, with Diggle following him out.

Both men were quiet for the first ten minutes of the drive, before Oliver sighed and leaned forward in the back seat, "Did you hear anything from detective Lance? He hasn't called me since the initial interview."

"I talked to him last night. It was brief, just a few minutes." Dig responded as he stopped at the red light and glanced at his boss and friend in the rear-view mirror, "Why?"

Oliver shrugging, "I'm wondering if anyone informed Felicity's mom about what happened. She has the right to know her daughter died."

Diggle shook his head, "I don't think they did. The police doesn't really have any evidence that Felicity is dead."

His friend obviously didn't agree with that statement, because he exploded, "No evidence?! We were there! We told Lance what happened! What else do they need?!"

"That was off the record, man. No one other then Lance knows we were there." the older man silently agreed with Oliver, but he was also more logical between them, "There is no evidence in the warehouse that she died there, only body they found was Slade's. They are being careful. It would look bad for the SCPD if they informed Mrs Smoak that her daughter died only for her to turn up alive."

Oliver angrily brushed away a tear that threatened to escape, "That won't happen. There is no miracle cure that can bring her back."

Diggle didn't know what to say after that exclamation, so he remained silent.

Sara was leading the small group down the fleet of metal stairs into the cold and dark basement that was so different from the loud and illuminated area above it. While Verdant was filled with life and colorful lights, there was no one down here in the hidden lair of the Starling city vigilante.

There hasn't been anyone down here in three days.

Oliver couldn't force himself to enter the Arrow cave, he barely managed to get out of bed each morning. And the mansion wasn't even filled with too many memories of what he lost.

His lair, their lair, was the home Felicity rebuild to suit them better after the destruction caused by the Undertaking. It was home, and she wasn't there.

So he didn't want to be there either.

Sara slowly moved in the complete dark until she reached the pillar with the large industrial switch and turned on the electricity in the whole room. Within seconds the long fluorescent lights came to life and revealed everything was the same as it was the day Slade made his move. Only new thing was a thin layer of dust that covered everything.
Slow footsteps made the Canary turn, just as Felicity walked past her and towards the bank of computers. There were no searches running, no facial recognition program trying to find one face in the sea of millions with the help of the street surveillance cameras. There was no picture of her in the corner of the screen, one taken from the Queen Consolidated employees badge.

They didn't look for her.

"Everything happened so fast." Sara's voice got her out of her thoughts, "Ollie just found out you were taken when Slade called him with a time and place for a meeting."

It was as if Sara read her mind, and knew exactly what she was thinking about. And Felicity just nodded in understanding, before looking away from the computers.

From somewhere in her League's uniform Sara pulled out her cell phone and sent a short text. It was late, so the workday was done for pretty much anyone in QC, apart from the whomever worked the night shift in IT department and the night guards.

She actually expected they would find Oliver and Diggle down here, either training with metal pipes, or getting ready to go out and kick some lowlifes ass. But as she thought about it a bit more Sara realized it was not surprising to find the basement empty.

"Dig!" Oliver called his friend who was moments later at the office doorway, his right hand on the gun holster.

But instead of any kind of danger he just saw Oliver standing behind his desk and staring at the screen of his cell phone. A million possibilities went through his head, from a kidnapping and ransom request, to police figuring out who was hiding under the green hood.

"What happened?" he asked, noticing the kid that was still in the position of the EA standing up from his chair. He too figured out something happened, and it was big.

"I got a text from Sara." Oliver responded before grabbing his suit jacket from the backrest of his chair, "Gerry, if I have any meetings left reschedule them!" he instructed on his way towards the elevator.

The replacement Executive Assistant stood in the deserted space trying to figure out what happened for a moment, before shaking his head and doing as ordered. Luckily there was only one meeting scheduled for today, one with Applied science, and that was easily moved for tomorrow.

"So she's back in town?" Diggle asked once the elevator doors closed behind them, "Did she mentioned where she was? And what happened to..." he paused for a moment, not knowing how to phrase the question, but there was no way to ease the sting, "...Felicity's body?"

"No. She just wrote that she's in the foundry and we should get there ASAP."

Diggle observed Oliver's hands clenching, his expression becoming a emotionless mask. He was mentally preparing himself for the meeting and for the answers he hoped to finally receive.

The drive to Verdant wasn't as long as it appeared. It only took half an hour, but it felt like half an eternity, for both of them.

Oliver didn't wait for Diggle. The moment the car stopped he pushed the door open and got out. He knew his friend would follow, but he just couldn't wait for a second longer. He was already typing in the code to the basement door when Dig walked through the back entrance of the club, and moments
later both men were walking down the metal stairs into the basement.

The lights were on, clear sign someone was down there, and Diggle instinctively placed a hand on his gun. He was a soldier, he learned it was better to be safe than sorry. There was no such thing as being too careful when being on the wrong side of the law every night.

"What the-" escaped his lips as half a dozen men dressed in black appeared from the shadows once they stepped on the concrete floor of the lair. He recognized those uniforms, how could he not. The Dark archer haunted Starling for months, until he was placed two feet under.

These people around them were members of the League of assassins.

"It's alright, Ollie." Sara stepped forward, "They accompanied me back to the city."

"Where were you?" Oliver didn't waste any time before demanding answers, "And what did you do with-"

Blue eyes widened as, what could only be, a mirage stepped from behind a black garbed assassin. Instead of short bright dress, he was used to see on her, she was wearing a long black gown, decorated with gold embroidery, that pulled slightly on the concrete floor as she walked closer.

He gaped at her, his brain refusing to believe what was his eyes were seeing, but his heart skipped a beat when a small smile appeared on her face.

The dull pain he felt, once the burn that brought him to his knees eased, was still there. The feeling of something missing, something he couldn't quite name.

But Oliver was ready and willing to suffer any pain, and burn, right now. Because despite the fact it was impossible it still happened.

"How?" he heard Diggle ask quietly, but to be honest he didn't care about the answer. Not right now.

There was time for explanations later. Right now he wanted to bask in her presence.

"Oliver?" she called his name as she stopped just few steps away from him.

He didn't even tried to stop a tear that escaped as he said her name like the only prayer that was ever answered, "Felicity."

She was the miracle that he didn't believe was possible.

Yet she was here in front of him.

Alive.
"Oliver?" she called his name as she stopped just few steps away from him.

He didn't even tried to stop a tear that escaped as he said her name like the only prayer that was ever answered, "Felicity."

She was the miracle that he didn't believe was possible.

Yet she was here in front of him.

Alive.

The silence spread through the foundry, the black garbed assassins stood still like shadowy guards protecting the impossible. They were the same group that accompanied the Heir of the Demon when she went to retrieve the Canary, they had seen the death of the blonde that now stood alive once more in front of her soulmate.

Finally Oliver closed his eyes and took a shaky breath. He was certain once he opened them again she would be gone, like a lovely dream that taunted him, like a fantasy of what could have been.

Maybe when he opens them he will be in his room, lying on the bed, and Thea will enter soon.

Or maybe he will find himself staring on the ruined remains of the plane above him, at the roof of his shelter that did nothing to protect him from the coldness of Lian Yu. Maybe the past two years were nothing but a fever dream, a spirit of Christmas future showing him what could be. Maybe he was still stranded on Purgatory, and hadn't met her yet, hadn't hurt her over and over again, even after realizing the mark she carried was identical to his own.

His hands clenched into fists, his yaw tense, his mind ready to admit it was all a mirage... Oliver opened his eyes.

And she was still in front of him.

Despite the large group gathered in the foundry it was so quiet his footsteps echoed in the large area, as his steps led him closer and closer to the woman in front of him.

Oliver took one last deep breath and slowly, like he was afraid sudden movements would scare her away, reached and cupped her cheek. Her skin was soft and warm under his calloused palm, and a shaky sigh escaped his lips.

Last time he touched her she was already lost to him, her heart silent and still, and how she stood right in front of his eyes, alive and healthy, and with a small smile on her lips. They weren't painted in a bold color like always, and neither here lips. And her clothes was all wrong too.

But she never looked more beautiful then she did right now.

"How?" Oliver eventually repeated Diggle's question.

A shadow separated from the others and stood slightly behind Felicity.
"Your soulmate has been returned to life using a secret waters of the pit known only to the League, a rare privilege granted to her by the Demon. He sends his regards, Oliver Queen, and his thanks for removing the threat that was the Magician. He had broke the code of the League and was punished accordingly thanks to you." Nyssa spoke calmly, like she was discussing the weather.

Oliver frowned at her. The assassin that was after Sara before was ruthless and focused, and Oliver was certain that was a reflection of the League's leader. So for someone like that to just return someone from the dead as a thanks just didn't add up. There was more to the story, and he wanted to know what other conditions are there.

"Why else?" he asked, and Nyssa frowned at him.

Sara sighed and Oliver turned to look at her, "It was a fair exchange." she said calmly, "My soul for Felicity's."

Diggle mumbled something under his breath, but Oliver didn't hear nor care what his friend said. Instead he moved swiftly, grabbed Sara's forearm and dragged her away from the group to talk to her in private.

Several assassins tensed at his obviously rude handling of one of them, but they knew Ta-er al-Sahfer could protect herself just as any other trained by the League. If he dragged her away, it was because she allowed it.

It was obvious he was upset, but some of them didn't understand why. He had his soulmate back, the one marked with a Ealamat Almuaeakis. After the way he broke down next her dead body he should be happy that she was once more alive.

One of the men cloaked in black shook his head. This had a potential of ending badly for his old friend if not handled properly. The return through the pit was not without consequences, and those where were brought back were never the same.

Felicity gasped as strong hands wrapped themselves around her, before she recognized the familiar hug of her friend and teammate. Dig was there when she needed him, every single time. He knew her just as she knew him, and because of that it was impossible to hide things from him.

"What's wrong?" he asked gently after she pulled back from the hug too fast and pulled back into herself. He placed a hand on her shoulder and bend down slightly to look in her eyes. It should count as exercise since, due to the fact she was dressed in a gown provided by the League, she wasn't wearing high heels as usual and was therefore even shorter then he was used her being.

"Don't Dig..." she mumbled under her breath.

"Felicity." he said her name silently, and she shook her head, a tear escaping her eyes. He noticed it and pulled her closer. She seemed so tiny and fragile in his arms, and when he looked up he saw Nyssa observing them closely, before she glanced at the assassin somewhere behind Dig and nodded barely noticeably.

Sara was in a middle of an explanation about what happened after they arrived to Nanda Parbat when she tensed and looked at the assassin that was moving in their direction. It was only thanks to her training that she even noticed him approaching silently.

Oliver sighed and was about to inform the newcomer to move away and give them privacy to talk when the black garbed assassin removed the hood and showed his face.

Blue eyes widened in shock and disbelief at the familiar face. At the face he had not seen in years.
His friend, the man who accepted him into his home and into his family, the man who was supposed to be in Hong Kong with his wife... he was standing here in the basement below a night club dressed in an uniform of the League.

"Maseo... what...?"

That man that was once Maseo Yamashiro allowed himself to remember the past for one short moment, before speaking, and then he would push it in the back of his mind once more where it would not torture him with every breath he took.

"My soulmate is lost to me, my Tatsu... she passed away less then a year after Akio left this world. And while I would give anything, even my own soul, to have her back I would not make her go through all that pain just so I would have the comfort of her presence."

"I am sorry, Maseo." Oliver said. He liked Tatsu, even though she didn't always like him. She saw him as spoiled and privileged, and she was right. But instead of giving up on him, like some might have done, she taught him things. Taught him to be more then a man who didn't even know how to fold a shirt, "Her death is a great loss."

Sarab, the man he was now, nodded before his expression changed from sorrowful to serious, and slightly angry, "Because you were once my friend I will say this... appreciate the precious gift you have been given, for a second chance comes rarely. You got your soulmate back and you should cherish her, instead you are hurting her all over again."

Oliver opened his mouth to deny his claims, to say it wasn't true, but behind his friend he noticed Felicity, noticed her posture and the way she wrapped her arms around her middle, like she was trying to prevent herself from shattering.

Mentally he scolded himself, called himself a fool, and walked to her side. But as he came to her side and reached to touch her, to place a hand on her shoulder like he did so many times before, she stepped away.

Away from him.

And Oliver closed his eyes and sighed.

"I needed to talk to Sara." he started to speak, to explain why he pulled his ex girlfriend away into a bit more private corner, "I need to know why she would go along with this exchange when she made it clear she didn't want to be a part of the League."

Diggle groaned instantly after hearing his words, and a gasp escaped Felicity's lips. His words were like a new stab wound in her heart, only this one didn't kill her. It left her alive and in excruciating pain.

"Undeserving fool." Nyssa muttered through clenched teeth, and Oliver instantly focused on the dark haired assassin that was glaring at him.

"He didn't mean it that way." Sara instantly came in Oliver's defense, and he turned to look at her for a moment, before focusing back at Felicity. Sara stopped at his side and smiled sadly at the blonde that looked far to pale, and the Canary wondered how much was it due to tiredness and how much due to a wrongly worded sentence that obviously hurt her, "You know Oliver. He didn't think before he spoke and-"

"You are wrong. I thought I knew Oliver, but I don't." Felicity's blue eyes moved to the man that was meant for her, and she saw him watching her sadly. But she couldn't control the anger that was
raging inside of her. It was like an inferno that was burning everything in front of itself. "Felicity..." Diggle tried to get her attention after noticing how tense she suddenly became, but she didn't even hear him. Instead her eyes moved back to Sara.

"Maybe it will be better if we change places. You can stay in Starling, and I'll join the League instead of you."

"You can't go." a barely heard whisper that escaped Oliver's lips made her look at him again and frown. He was regretting his words, but that regret came too late.

"Why not? You made it sound like you preferred Sara by your side. Like you wished she didn't suggested the exchange despite it meaning your soulmate would be returned to life."

"No!" he snapped, "Felicity, I would never-"

"Maybe I should take Felicity home." Diggle decided to cut in.

"I agree." Nyssa agreed and Dig looked at her in surprise, "Felicity needs a familiar place, somewhere she feels welcome and at peace enough to calm down, and nothing is better than her home."

"Foundry was my home... and then it wasn't." all eyes turned towards Felicity, and she ignored them and instead focused on the concrete floor under her feet.

"The Foundry will always be your home." Oliver spoke with so much sincerity in his voice she almost believed him, but the anger that was slowly simmering down burst once more, as he added, "And you will always be welcome here."

Felicity snorted, before her eyes locked with Oliver's. In the past two years he knew her he never saw that much anger hidden in her eyes, and he actually took a step back.

"For how long Oliver? A week, a month? Basically until you bring yet another ex girlfriend down here. Maybe Laurel will join the team, to take over her sister's mantle, and you can fuck her on my desk as well!" the hurtful words escaped like a flood from Felicity's lips, her anger at his past choices engulfing her, until she couldn't even think clear.

But once it was all out of her, once she said the words she never would otherwise, and revealed something she swore to herself never will, Felicity's mouth fell open and she gaped at Oliver in shock.

A touch on her shoulder made her look to her right where Nyssa stood and observed her carefully. After few moments the Heir of the Demon nodded, and smiled kindly, "My father warned you about the consequences of the Pit."

"I never felt so angry before." Felicity mumbled, mortified that she snapped like that in front of so many people.

"The bloodlust does that to those returned. Although it also came with the wish to kill, one you do not have. Perhaps because of the Opposite marks, perhaps because of your true innocence."

"So I'm going to have anger management issues and just snap at people who don't deserve my anger?"

"Let's not get hasty here about not deserving your anger." Diggle deadpanned, but his dark eyes sent
a glare at Oliver, before focusing on Felicity and kindness returned to them again.

"I want to go home." Felicity finally muttered and he nodded. He would take her wherever she wanted, and he would stay with her until she told him to leave. She was his friend, and he was glad to have her back.

Oliver remained standing surrounded by assassins, staring towards the stairs that would lead him outside and closer to where he should be right now. But he couldn't make his feet move, they felt like made out of lead. He was stuck in this damn place wondering how a wonderful moment could turn into a disaster so fast.

He understood what he said wrong, understood that by questioning Sara's sacrifice he made it appear like he wished she didn't do it.

The truth is he wished she didn't have to.

The truth is he would have done it himself if he knew of the possibility.

He would have looked the devil in the eyes and give him his soul if that meant he could get Felicity back.

"Ollie..." Sara called his name, but he just shook his head. He didn't want words of comfort. He wanted the presence of his soulmate.

He didn't tell her goodbye, just asked her to take care of herself and stay as safe as possible. He thanked her. And then he was walking away. He was already on the top of the stairs when he heard the group's leader, Nyssa, ordered everyone to move out and head to the airstrip.

The assassins were leaving Starling city, and Sara was leaving with them, for good this time. Silently he wished her good luck again and pushed the basement door open.

The night air was cool and Oliver tensed momentarily. He was still dressed in a suit he wore to work, not the best suited clothes to wear when on a motorcycle, but it wouldn't be the first time.

Instantly he remembered the time he chased the Dodger, and a feeling of complete dread washed through him. Felicity, his soulmate, had a bomb collar around her neck. And then there was the time she walked into an illegal casino with the intention of getting caught counting cards. And he also left her alone in the Foundry during the Undertaking, and afterward when he went to CNRI to rescue Laurel instead of returning to help her out of the basement where she was stuck due to heavy debris.

At any of those times he could have felt the excruciating pain of his mark burning with the loss of his soulmate, and he wouldn't have even known what was going on. He wouldn't have known she was his other half, not until it was too late.

He took a shaky breath and straddled his bike. He needed to see her.

Desperately.

It took only ten minutes of way to fast driving for Oliver to arrive in front of Felicity's building. Since she was never pronounced deceased by the police, due to the fact her body was missing from the crime scene, her apartment was left undisturbed. Despite not wearing his green leather suit this time he still followed his usual route into her home. He could have gone to the front door and knock but he didn't want to disturb her right now, he just needed to see her.
Pushing the window in the short hallway, that led to the fire escape stairs, he muttered about better locks and instantly found himself staring at the barrel of a gun.

"Damn it man." Diggle said through gritted teeth and lowered his weapon, "I was just leaving when I heard the window opening. I could have shot you, and to be honest you would have deserved it."

"You aren't saying that because I broke in." Oliver said calmly, and his friend shook his head.

"You know I'm not. Come on."

The two men moved to the living room and stood opposite of each other. They could have easily sat down and talked things through, but that wasn't how they operated. Of course in this setting beating each other up with metal pipes wasn't an option either, but they silently agreed that was coming as soon as they got a few free hours in the Foundry.

"I messed up." Oliver said the moment his friend sent him a glare, "I don't... It wouldn't matter to me if Sara was still in Starling, and not back with the League, if Felicity was... dead. Nothing would have mattered, and for three days nothing did matter. I couldn't even function properly, you saw it all yourself, Dig."

"Then how could you say something so stupid, when the answer to your question is perfectly obvious? Oliver, the League already sent one of their own after Sara. Remember him, the guy she killed before revealing to us she basically ran away from them? From what I understood she had a choice between returning to them or death. And according to Felicity..."

Oliver suddenly stood straighter, "You two talked? What did she say?"

Dig sighed, "I thought you discussed things with Sara regarding her choice."

A look of regret told the former soldier they didn't actually got to that part of the conversation.

"Felicity asleep?" Oliver finally asked, after the silence spread for too long.

"Yeah. She was out the moment her head hit the pillow. My guess is she was so excited to return to Starling she didn't get any sleep since she was... you know."

"Brought back to life." the words sounded so surreal to Oliver, and then he wondered why he was so shocked by the possibility. He certainly saw some really incredible, and sometimes beyond comprehension, while he was on the island. So why was he so surprised that there was a miracle water that can raise the dead?

Diggle watched him closely for another minute before sighing, "I'm going home, get some rest. I'm guessing you are staying here tonight?"

Oliver nodded silently, and looked around. There was a decent size couch in the middle of the living room, so he could crash here. But that was too far away from where Felicity was sleeping and he couldn't see her from this position, so the couch won't do.

He'll have to think of something else.

"Thank you." he finally said when his friend turned to leave, "For being there when I was a destroyed mess."

"Get some rest man. You'll have a full day tomorrow." the look he received told Oliver tomorrow, among other things, he will have to explain the little detail Felicity mentioned tonight. His idiotic
decision to completely disrespect others, first and foremost Felicity, and sleep with Sara down in their base, their home away from home.

And what made it worse was that one moment of weakness that his soulmate obviously knew about.

When the click of the lock signaled Diggle was out of the apartment and the doors were locked with the spare key Felicity gave him months ago, while Oliver was on Lian Yu, he looked around once more for the perfect place to sleep. And moments later he found it.

It won't be comfortable, but then there were nights he slept on the cold ground. Besides, Oliver didn't planed to sleep for a second, despite what Diggle suggested. Sleeping would mean he would have to close his eyes, and he refused to do that. He refused to do anything that would make him lose sight of her sleeping form under the warm comforter.

From somewhere in the distance he would hear music playing, a song that was completely unfamiliar to him, and he realized he didn't close the window after entering. But moving from his spot was no longer an option.

Still, she could sleep peacefully, and without worries. He will guard her tonight.

He will guard her always.

Chapter End Notes

You can find me at arienhod.tumblr.com, posting some sneak peeks of the next chapters and a few ideas here and there.

To all those who read the AU idea I posted there and got a case of feels, I am so sorry. Also I do not plan to write that fanfic, ever. I probably couldn't from all the tears anyway.
Felicity heard shuffling coming from down the hallway and smiled.

When she first woke up and saw her bedroom doors were open she was close to freaking out. Despite living alone for years now she still had a thing about privacy and always closed both her bedroom and bathroom doors.

Her initial thought was someone had broken into her apartment, but she wasn't a heavy sleeper, and thieves aren't the most quiet people when moving around unknown places. She learned that when she first moved to Starling and lived at the outskirts of Glades. The kid that broke into her apartment also broke a whole set of wine glasses when he bumped into a sidebar. And as a result he almost ended with a broken cranium when she took a swing at him with a baseball bat.

She didn't saw his face clearly, he ran way too fast for that. And probably told his buddies about the crazy woman in a pajamas and a military jacket that shrieked like a banshee, cause she was left alone after that one incident.

She no longer had the jacket, but the bat was wedged between her bed and bedside table, and therefore at hand.

But the moment she turned the light one she noticed a figure just outside of her bedroom. And she wasn't sure if she should feel flattered or annoyed. Or maybe a bit concerned.

It was the third option that won, and she ended up picking her other pillow and the blanket she kept on top of the chest at the foot of her bed, before quietly moving out in the hallway.

Oliver surprisingly didn't wake up when she gently lifted his head and pushed the pillow beneath, or when she covered him with a warm cotton blanket. She actually expected him to grab her wrist and demand to know what she was doing.

The fact he remained asleep told her he was far more tired than he appeared.

And Felicity couldn't help but wonder if her death had anything to do with it. If it tortured him so badly he couldn't find any rest.

Before returning to bed she closed the window he used to get in, no need for someone to see it open and think of it as a invitation to enter. There was only place for one guy who commits breaking and entering in her life.

Minutes after she heard him move Oliver walked in the living room. His suit was rumpled, and his tie was peeking out of his suit jacket pocket. He looked nothing like the confident CEO others get to see.

And that thought made her smile. The thought that she saw things others didn't, she knew things about Oliver Queen that will never be public knowledge. But in the next moment the reality hit in and the memories of last night reminded her things weren't as simple as she want them to be.

Oliver was stiff and several of his muscles ached from sleeping on the floor. Despite getting used to finding rest at the oddest places while on Lian Yu, after his return to the civilization he once more got
used sleeping in his own bed. So last night was a hard reminder of how drastic the changes were in his life. From a spoiled brat, to a shipwreck survivor, and back... sort of.

He liked to believe he was no longer that idiot he once was, the dumb kid that got drunk almost every night, caused problems for his parents to fix, and had meaningless flings and didn't even remember with whom the next morning.

He still had his moments, he still made some wrong choices, and let others clean up his mess. Last night he made one such choice.

And this morning, when he entered Felicity's living room and saw her standing at the kitchen peninsula, he did what he should have done yesterday in the Foundry.

Felicity tensed for a moment after two strong arms wrapped around her, but a heartbeat later she relaxed in his hug and let her hands wrap around his waist while she leaned her head on his chest. Without her heels the height difference was even more drastic, but it was perfect right now.

She leaned her ear against his chest and heard his heart beating steadily, before he pulled her in even closer and placed a kiss on top of her head.

"Oliver..." Felicity mumbled his name and momentarily his heart sped up. That was the effect she had on him, and didn't even know until that moment.

"I should have done this yesterday." the anger at his own actions was obvious in his voice as he spoke, "I should have wrapped my hands around you and never let you go."

"It would be difficult driving home like that." she blurted out before squeezing her eyes shut. That was a really idiotic thing to say when Oliver was trying to be... romantic?

Oliver chose to ignore her words, he was used to her babbles, and despised the silence that lacked her voice during those three days when she was lost to him.

"I am sorry for hurting you. I know the words aren't enough, they can never be enough... and I want to offer you so much more than an apology but I know it would be too soon."

Felicity's heart started to race too at his words, at the promise hidden in his words. A promise about more.

"And I'm sorry for what I said last night. My anger was out of control, and I just lashed out at you."

Oliver pulled back and instantly missed her warmth. He placed his hands on her shoulders, and Felicity looked up at him, when she smiled weakly, he leaned down and kissed her forehead. It was the most he was willing to do right now, the most he deserved at this point.

He did not believe he was worthy to taste her lips just yet.

"You didn't say anything that wasn't truth. Although, I wasn't aware you knew... something that you mentioned." Oliver looked away as he was saying those words, the shame at his actions kept him from looking her in the eyes.

She knew what he was talking about. And a shiver went through her at the memory of that night, at the pain that surged through her and prevented her from even driving herself home. Instead she sat in the front seat of her Mini behind Verdant, her eyes not leaving the doors that led to the basement for a second.
"You didn't even noticed I was there..." she mumbled.

"Felicity." Oliver called her name, tried to stop her from dredging out that particular event, but at the same time he wanted to hear what she had to say. He wanted her to rage at him like she did last night, wanted her to tell him how much pain he caused her so he can suffer for it as well.

"I get it that you didn't noticed me, considering where your face was at the time. Or that Sara didn't, considering where your face was at the time... but it was my desk Oliver. Sara's naked ass was on the keyboard I was supposed to use the next night to track down a leader of a drug distribution ring." Felicity pulled away from Oliver completely and turned away, but he still saw the tears that trained down her cheeks. He hated this, she wasn't supposed to be this meek, she's supposed to use her loud voice on him. After taking a shaking breath Felicity finally continued, and revealed one last detail about that night, "It was then that I connected the dots, that I figured out you were my designated soulmate, but I still didn't know why my mark burned. I stayed in my car for hours, in the parking lot behind Verdant. Eventually you and Sara exited through the back door and left. You didn't even noticed my car was still there."

Oliver didn't know what to say to that. He didn't know the words, despite speaking several languages, that could express how much he regrets his decisions.

He watched her walk away from him until she stood in front of a window and looked out on the street. Despite the windows being closed he could hear children laughter from outside. It was early, and they were most likely on their way to school. little boys and girls, full of life, with hopefully a bright future in front of them.

His future was once like that too, or at least he thought so.

Now he future was tainted by his past.

"What can I say... what can I do to make things even a bit better?" he asked her. He was willing to do anything, everything, to become worthy of her.

Felicity turned back towards him, and their eyes locked. She gave him a small smile before once more making the same request she did almost two weeks ago, "Stop denying me."

Instantly Oliver thought of what Thea was going every morning and evening. But he didn't want to tell Felicity yet that he was in the process of removing the dragon tattoo so that his mark was visible once more. He wanted to surprise her.

He approached her slowly, like he was afraid to startle her, and gently cupped her cheek, "I will... I have. You are my soulmate, and I am yours. You will never feel the burn of my betrayal again."

"You promise?" he asked meekly, and Oliver's heart broke. She had the same expression as Thea when she asked him to promise he'll be back in a month from China. He broke that promise, and his sister believed him dead for five years.

He would never break a promise he gave to Felicity.

"If I ever even consider straying I will inform you and you can shout at me like you did last night." his words were supposed to ease the tension a bit, and worked perfectly, cause Felicity blushed and bit her bottom lip.

"That was the bloodlust." she said with a shrug.

It was the same term Nyssa used last night, but no one bothered to explain exactly what that was.
"Only that it was a side-effect of the Pit."

"What is that anyway? Can it be cured?" he asked, cause if there was a way to help Felicity he wanted to know.

As a response Felicity shook her head, "Ra's said it was an urge to kill, and all those who return have it. It can only be eased by killing the person who killed them. He also said he doesn't know how it will effect me because of the nature of our marks. So far I didn't get the urge to end someone's life, and for that I'm glad, I can handle the urge to be brutally honest in a really loud manner."

"Slade is dead." Oliver pointed out after a moment. The one person who could cure her of this thing is a pile of ash.

"I know." she responded, "Nyssa killed him herself. League sees Mirror marks as sacred, and when Slade killed me she saw you shatter and most likely figured out what happened. So she killed him in retaliation. Afterward Sara confirmed her suspicion."

"So you are stuck with this bloodlust now?"

"I'll try not to yell at you too often." she gave him a small grin and Oliver had to fight back the urge to kiss her.

"I'll tell you what. From now on the Mirror marks will be sacred to me as well."

The wide smile she gave him was blinding. The look of pure happiness on her face was the most beautiful sight he ever saw. And Oliver swore he would do anything in his power to make her smile so brightly as often as possible.

And the first thing he'll do is use the door to go home and change into a different suit, and not a window he used to get inside. It was early and he had little over an hour to get to work.

She won't be joining him yet, despite his wish to see her in her usual seat. Felicity had other things she had to do today.

Namely talk to detective Lance.

Moira Queen was used to her son not spending his nights in his own bed. Oliver was a wild teenager and tested his limits, and soon realized his parents failed to set any. That was when drinking and general debauchery started. There was no high profile party in some random club that Ollie Queen and Tommy Merlyn didn't attend.

But because Robert was too busy with the company, and she was preoccupied with different charities, no one really tried to stop him. All they did was damage control after something stupid he did became public knowledge, and that was far too often.

To this day the tabloids are dragging out the story of Oliver peeing on a police car. People of Starling have become so used to the heir of Queen fortune to be a careless playboy they sometimes refused to see him as anything else.

But he wasn't, not anymore. He changed.

Which was why she was quite surprised when the front doors opened and her son walked in. He was still dressed in the same suit he was in when he went to work yesterday, only now it was rumpled, and the top two buttons of his shirt were open. Where his tie ended she had no idea.
It was almost eight in the morning, and the fact he was just now returning home in yesterday's clothes no less, instantly reminded the Queen matriarch of the times before the island when he would stumble inside, and barely drag himself to his room, only to sleep until almost nightfall.

"Your father was an expert in staying late at work, but I fail to remember the time he actually slept in the office." Moira crossed her hands over her chest and Oliver paused on his way towards the staircase. He obviously didn't see her when he entered and was caught of guard.

"I didn't sleep in the office." he mumbled loud enough for her to hear.

"And where exactly did you sleep? Or should I ask with whom?"

Oliver opened his mouth to answer that simple question before closing them again. He was about to tell his mother he stayed at Felicity's place, which she would believe, with Felicity sleeping in her own bed, which she would not believe. But it was the truth, no matter how unbelievable it sounded.

"Where is Thea?" he asked instead, and Moira frowned at the change of subject.

"She stayed at Roy's place, and informed me about that before. Unlike you." the older woman sighed, "Oliver, I understand that you lost your soulmate, but it does nothing for her memory if you just jump into another woman's bed. Isn't that what-"

"Mom, no! I was not... I would not... you won't believe me when I tell you."

"Try me. I know I failed as a mother too many times, but I don't want you-"

"Sara texted me last night. She came back to Starling briefly to... bring something back. Someone actually." he took a deep breath and just laid it all out, "Felicity is alive. Sara returned to the League and they brought Felicity back to life with a help of a -"

"Lazarus pit." Moira interrupted him and smiled at his surprised expression, "Malcolm told me about it. That is how he got me to cooperate and help with the Undertaking. He said he could bring you back. So I ordered the search for the Gambit."

"But I wasn't in it when the wreckage was found, and you kept it in a warehouse as leverage against him." now it was time for Moira to look surprised.

"Little good it did to me. Malcolm figured out where it was and had it moved, and most likely destroyed. How did you learn about it?" when Oliver only shrugged in response to her question his mother just smiled, "I am proud of the man you have become. And I am sorry for hurting you that night when you came to QC. You were right, I have failed the city."

"You know. For how long?"

"Several months. And I know you don't operate alone. You have a team, people you rely on. Is Miss Smoak one of them?"

A little smile appeared on Oliver's face, "She's remarkable. If it's on the Internet she can find it."

"I am glad you have her by your side. She is strong willed, and proved that when she faced me and demanded I..." Moira trailed off, not knowing if Felicity did in fact told Oliver the truth that she face Moira with that day. Her son never mentioned it to her.

"That you tell me the truth about Thea." Oliver finished his mother's sentence, and she looked taken aback, "Felicity told me what happened, what you said to her. And I glad she did. I'm tired of lies in
He didn't let Moira say what she wanted. Instead informed her of his opinion, "You need to tell Thea."

"Tell Thea what?" the young woman in question paused at the doorway and looked between her mother and brother. They were so focused on their conversation they didn't notice her pushing the door open and entering the foyer. She sighed and repeated her question, "Tell Thea what? What is going on? What secrets are you two hiding from me this time?"

Quentin Lance was extremely proud of himself for preventing his bottom jaw from unhinging when the doors of his office opened and Felicity Smoak walked in.

When one of the uniforms informed him Miss Smoak was here to see him his first thought was he will have to face Donna Smoak and inform her that her daughter is missing, and according to a witness she was killed. And considering he went through Felicity's file and knew she was an only child and that her father was deceased it was not a conversation he wanted to have. Ever.

It was the worst part of the job.

The question remained how Mrs. Smoak learned about her daughter's disappearance. Perhaps she tried to call her cell phone, the one that was turned off and lying in police storage. Perhaps Queen called and informed her what happened.

But that particular conversation never came, because of a middle aged woman that he expected a young one walked in. A dead one.

"What the hell?" he mumbled under his breath, but apparently loud enough for her to hear him, because Felicity gave him a smirk.

"It's good to see you again too, detective." she responded, the humor obvious in her voice, "You look well."

"So do you Miss Smoak, especially for someone who is dead."

"And that would explain why one of your colleagues walked straight into the corner of his desk. That will leave quite a bruise."

"But I don't see any on you."

Felicity took a seat opposite of Lance and took a deep breath. It was time to clear things up. The first time will be easy, the second part not so much. She knew he would want to know what happened to his daughter, and where she went to after suddenly vanishing from Starling.

"I was fortunate, I guess."

The detective leaned back in his chair and observed her for a moment, before pulling out an old fashioned tape recorded from his desk drawer. Felicity flinched when she saw the ancient contraption, before smiling. This was a bit like the old movies her mom adored. Only without a lamp pointed straight in her face. She hoped anyway.

"Since you were officially reported missing, and unofficially dead, I will need a statement from you
regarding the events from four days ago. Starting with the car accident. We can do it here, rather then
in an interrogation room, since you are not a suspect in any crime." Lance then checked there was a
tape inside the recorder, before pressing the two buttons, and started the official part of the
conversation, "Detective Quentin Lance performing an interview with Felicity Smoak. Date is
October 7th, 2014. Miss Smoak, what do you remember about the morning you were kidnapped?"

"I just returned from visiting my mother in Las Vegas. I was driving back to my apartment, and was
driving through a intersection, when a van rammed my car. It kept going forward until my car was
pushed off the road completely... my car is totaled isn't it? There is no way it can be fixed. Frack, I'm
only halfway through with paying it off."

"What else do you remember?" Lance chose to ignore her usual babbling and focused instead on the
important things. Honestly, the tape just isn't long enough to record everything if he lets her lost the
thread of the thought and babble.

"Not much. The air bag activated, and broke my glasses. I remember being pulled out of the vehicle
and I was hoping it was a good Samaritan who saw the crash and ran to help. It wasn't."

"Do you know who kidnapped you, Miss Smoak?"

"A man with an eye patch. I only saw him briefly when he locked me up in a room in a warehouse
somewhere in the Glades. I don't know his name."

"The man was found dead four days ago, just several hours after kidnapping you. What do you
know about that?"

"Nothing. I was locked in the room until last night. The Arrow rescued me."

Lance right away sat up straighter. He believed Queen when he said Felicity was killed in front of
him, one does not fake that kind of anguish. It confirmed his suspicion that she was laying, one does
not look so healthy after being locked up for several days, and that made him extremely curious.
What was the truth if she couldn't say it for the record?

"I will need the exact location of the warehouse, the clothes you wore, and an explanation why there
are no signs of ligature marks."

Felicity looked down on her wrists, and rubbed a finger over flawless skin, before looking back at
the detective in front of her who observed her with interest, "I wasn't bound. Just locked up. Guess I
wasn't seen as much of a threat, one that required being handcuffed to a chair or something. Um... I
threw the clothes in the dumpster. They should still be there unless the garbage truck already passed
through the street. And as for the location..."

"Yes?" Lance asked, wondering how she'll talk her way out of that one.

"There were no street lights around the warehouse, so I don't really know where it was. Usually I'm
really good at orientation and remembering the way, but after I refused to go to the hospital and face
like a thousand of tests that required needles the Arrow drove me home. On a motorcycle. Detective,
he drives like a maniac! If the police wasn't already after him for several bigger crimes, they would
for the whole array of traffic violations. If the drive was any longer I would have threw up in his
quiver! Not sure what, cause I was starving, but I would have!"

Quentin Lance hoped his snort won't be noticeable on the audio recording. She was good, he had to
give her that. She came a long way from a woman who said hacking was a hobby.

"So you don't actually know why you were kidnapped?" he finally asked, after it became apparent
she was done with her over-exaggerated tale. As if the vigilante would drive recklessly with her as a passenger on a bike.

Felicity shrugged, before remembering the detective was recording their conversation, "No, I don't. I never did anything that could result with my kidnapping. Well, other than digging into Miss Rochev's past, in an attempt to figure out why she was so eager to get control over Queen Consolidated."

"Yes, your phone and tablet were found at the scene. The information the tablet contained were crucial in Miss Rochev's arrest. As well as her possible involvement in your kidnapping."

Lance didn't wait for Felicity's reaction. As far as he was concerned the interview was done, and everything was cleared. So he pressed 'stop' on the recorder, took a deep breath, and leaned forward, his hands folding on top of his desk.

"You want to know the truth." Felicity said calmly.

"The whole truth, Miss Smoak."

"I died, detective. Slade Wilson killed me. One clean stab straight into my heart. It was instantaneous." she took a deep breath and looked away, focused on an old Police academy photo on the wall. He deserved to know what happened next, especially considering it was about his younger daughter. But to tell him what Sara did, what choice she made, was difficult, "Several members of the League of Assassins were present. You know Sara was a member, right? Well, they returned to bring her back. She didn't want to go, her family is here. But she went anyway... because she planed an exchange. The League, they have this thing that brings the dead back. I won't go into details, it's actually a top secret thing and isn't to be talked about. The leader agreed to use it to bring me back to life, after Sara agreed to rejoin the League. I'm sorry, detective Lance... you just got her back and already you-"

"My daughter was always stubborn, Miss Smoak. Once she made up her mind there was no way she could be persuaded to change it. There is no reason for you to feel sorry, or apologize. It was Sara's life, and her choice. I'm only glad her return to those people brought at least one good thing with it."

It was around noon when Felicity returned home from the police precinct. She had to fill a few forms to get her phone back, but her tablet was still considered evidence and therefore they had to keep it. It wasn't a terrible loss, she had a spare one on her bedside table. Now if the police got their hands on that one that might cause some problems for her, considering the software that was on it and she didn't supposed to have it.

Law enforcement agencies were very possessive of their things.

She planed to order something for lunch from an Chinese restaurant a block away, and just enjoy a rare Friday off. She planed to call Oliver later and see if she was needed at the company tomorrow, but that can wait.

But her plans were foiled when Felicity noticed a figure sitting at the floor, leaning against her door. She had to blink a few times, and if she had her glasses she would have wiped them in her shirt, just to make sure she wasn't seeing things.

Thea Queen lifted her head when she noticed someone approaching, and she smiled weekly, when realizing it was the person she was waiting for. After everything that was revealed to her this morning she didn't want to stay at the mansion for another minute, instead drove off to clear her
head. And then she called the last person she ever expected she'll need to talk to. Her brother's bodyguard.

"I'm sorry if I'm intruding, but... can we talk?"

"Of course." Felicity responded, and when the young heiress got up from the floor, unlocked her door and let her inside the apartment, "Can I get you something? I'm not sure what I have in my place, I wasn't exactly home for the past several days. I was... um..."

"You were dead." Thea finished her sentence, and Felicity paused on her way to the couch and turned to look at her guest in shock, "I know."

"What exactly?"

Thea shrugged, "Everything. I over heard Ollie telling mom she should tell me, but I never imagined... she told me who my father is. And Ollie said you were the one who told him, even though mom was trying to prevent you. You didn't lie to him. I wish people were that honest with me as well."

"I'm sure they are." Felicity said before flinching. That wasn't the case. There was still Oliver's green secret.

"When they are cornered and don't have a way out. My mom, Ollie... they say it's to protect me, but I'm no longer a little kid. I can handle the truth." Thea sighed and leaned back on the couch, "I suppose Ollie figured it out cause he told me... you know... what he does at night."

"He told you?" Felicity wasn't sure if she should be surprised or pleased that he finally did it.

"Yeah. That's why I came to you, I asked Mr. Diggle for your address, probably freaked him out. I wanted to thank you for everything you did, both for my brother, both sides of him, and for QC. Isabel Rochev is behind bars, her career and professional image are ruined. And..."

"And?" Felicity asked carefully, because the wide grin that spread on the younger woman's face made her suspicious she was up to something.

"And now that you are back, and the city and QC are safe, and also my brother's head is no longer in his ass the two of you could go out on a date."

Felicity was just about to point out Oliver didn't ask her out in the hours since she's been back in Starling. In fact they talked mostly about the past, not the future. But a knock on the front door cut her off before she even managed to open her mouth.

"Oh." escaped Felicity's lips when she opened the door and found a delivery boy standing there, a potted plant in his hand.

"Felicity Smoak?"

"Yes."

He handed her a slip to sign, before giving her the plant with numerous red flowers that was sent for her. It was a strange delivery for the kid. The first, and probably only, time the tip was ten times higher then the price of the item he was delivering. But he wasn't the one to question his luck.

"Ollie is stepping up his game." Thea commented with a cheeky grin, and Felicity laughed. It was the truth, Oliver wasn't wasting any time. And considering she recognized his handwriting on the
note that came with the flower, he send it in person, instead of tasking someone else to do it for him, "Do you know what it's called? The flower, I mean."

Felicity shook her head, "No. Do you?"

Thea nodded, "Mom had them for a charity event once, she loved how the flowers looked. They are called Bleeding heart orchid. Although, I heard Mrs. Altman call them Burning heart orchid."

Felicity observed the beautiful heart shaped flowers with a small smile. She knew why Oliver picked this particular plant. And she loved his choice.

Finally she opened the note and smiled brightly as she read what he wrote. It was simple, short, and to a point.

"Felicity Smoak, would you have dinner with me?"

Chapter End Notes

This chapter turned out longer then anticipated, but I am pleased with it.

If you would like to read sneak peaks of the next chapter you can do so on my Tumblr side account arienhod.tumblr.com
First one will be posted in a few days.
Chapter 9

Thea gaped at the unfinished text message as Felicity's words finally registered.

The young heiress was so giddy when she found out what the note that came with the flower said that she didn't want to wait until Felicity dig out the phone out of her bag, turn it back on, and then send her answer to Oliver. Instead she chose to do it herself.

And then came the answer.

"What do you mean 'no'?" she asked the blonde.

"Thea."

"You can't say 'no'. You can't not go on a date with Ollie."

"Thea."

"He was so lost without you. And now you're back, and you can go on a date, and get engaged, and marry, and move into the mansion, and."

"Thea!" Felicity used her loud voice and startled the brunette, "Sorry... but you are already making plans for the future, and... I'm not sure that's a good idea when the present is uncertain."

"Oh..." was all that left the younger woman's mouth before she moved around the couch and plopped on it. Felicity watched her, noticed how dejected she got when faced with the possibility that there will be no fairytale ending she imagined for her brother and his soulmate.

Felicity sighed, glanced towards the drawer where the takeout menus were stashed, and decided lunch will have to be postponed a bit. Instead she sat on the armchair opposite of the couch and made herself comfortable. There was a big chance this might take a while.

"I'm guessing Oliver told you the nature of our marks." when Thea nodded in confirmation Felicity continued, "Then you know about the burn."

"Ollie felt it when you died."

"First time I felt it I was eleven." Felicity admitted something not even her own mother knew, not the whole story anyway. She didn't know what was going on, and didn't want Donna to worry, not after already enduring the loss of her soulmate, "The pain came suddenly and I ended up falling of my bicycle and passing out. My neighbor saw it and called the ambulance. My mom was freaking out when she arrived at the hospital. My dad died in a car accident, and she was under impression I was going to die too cause I hit my head. They had to sedate her." Felicity closed her eyes and sighed, "After I told the doctor what happened he said because I'm a girl I should expect the pain in my mark to come back, but he didn't tell me why. Guess he didn't know how to tell a kid her soulmate just lost his virginity. But he was right about it coming back. A lot."

"But you had boyfriends before, right? You must have-"

"No." Felicity cut Thea off, and the younger woman gaped at her.

"So, you're a virgin?"

Felicity nodded silently, before suddenly standing up, "Do you want to stay for lunch? I'm going to
order something. What would you like? I'm thinking Chinese. Or maybe Thai. Pity Big Belly doesn't deliver."

Thea turned on the couch and watched her silently, seeing her brother's soulmate in a whole new light. The few times she met Felicity Smoak she came to a conclusion the blonde was perpetually cheerful and nothing could make her sad. Now she wished that was true.

She heard Oliver's side of the story a two weeks ago, and thought it was awful that his soulmate had to endure the pain. But sitting opposite of the woman that felt the burn, learning how it affected her early age, she didn't think it was just awful. It was horrifying.

Felicity went through different menus, choosing one, changing her mind, and putting it back on the pile she took out of the drawer.

"How about pizza? We can go to Big Belly tonight, continue the unhealthy diet. We deserve it after the day we had." finally Thea asked, and Felicity looked at her in shock, before she nodded, and the young heiress smiled at her, "I love pizza with extra mushrooms and cheese. You? Just don't say pineapple."

"Mushrooms, cheese, and pepperoni."

Thea grinned, "I'll call Mario's on 3rd. Have you tried their pizza? The crust is perfect, and I'm seriously considering scrapping a sample of the tomato sauce off the pizza and get it to QC. Is is possible to run a sample somewhere in all those departments and find out what it's made of?"

Felicity instantly snorted and Thea gave her a curious look. She shook her head slightly to compose herself, but a giggle escaped anyway. That made the younger Queen sibling even more curious.

So Felicity took a seat in the armchair again and took a deep breath. It was time to tell Thea Queen the tale of the hangover cure in a syringe.

"Oh good, you're here."

"Did something happened?"

"The Advanced Technology department budget needs to be approved, but that won't happen any time soon if Mr. Queen keeps checking his cell phone every five seconds like a teenage girl waiting for her crush to call and ask her to prom." Diggle actually grinned at the younger man's words.

"I'll take care of it. Why don't you go grab something to eat? It's past noon already, so they probably already started the lunch menu in that restaurant down the street you mentioned a few days ago."

Gerry nodded, thankful for the assistance, and grabbed the jacket from the back of his chair. When the elevator doors dinged, signaling they were once more closed, Dig shook his head at the younger man's antics.
Now that QC is safe he hoped Felicity will get transferred back to IT, or to some other department, where her knowledge, and passion for everything technological, could be put to good use. But at the same time he doubted Oliver would want to move her away from his sight, especially after everything that happened.

Diggle moved towards the glass wall that separated the CEO office from the rest of the floor and stopped at the open doorway.

The man behind the desk didn't even noticed his presence yet, a surprise considering Oliver was always aware of his surroundings. Instead his gaze moved from the paper in front of him, to the cell phone by his right hand. The screen just went black again, before it was unlocked again, and the process got repeated again and again.

No wonder Gerry thought the budget will never get approved if Oliver continues what he's doing.

So Diggle cleared his throat to get the younger man's attention, and actually started him in the process. That never happened before, and it was proof Oliver was really distracted by something. And it probably wasn't the file in front of him.

"Dig, when did you get here?"

The older man shrugged, "Some fifteen unlocks ago."

"What?" Oliver frowned.

Diggle moved into the office and sat on the chair opposite of Oliver. Instead of answering he commented, "You are waiting on an important phone call."

"Yeah." Oliver said back, "So?"

"Felicity's phone is in police evidence locker."

"What makes you think I'm waiting for Felicity's call?" the look Diggle gave him after he asked made Oliver sigh. Yeah, his friend wasn't buying it, so he finally clarified, "Lance called earlier, after Felicity went to see him. She told him she was being held captive in some warehouse somewhere in Glades, and the Arrow rescued her. That is the official story for the police."

"Case closed then. Good." Diggle leaned in the chair, "Now will you tell me what's going on? Cause Gerry was right, and you are like a teenage girl waiting for her crush to call. I actually expected you to check if the lines are working. What makes you think Felicity will call?"

"Because I sent her a plant." Oliver responded, and go a strange look as a response from his friend. "A plant?"

"A potted plant, yes. It lasts longer than a bouquet."

Diggle snorted, "Unless the person spends a lot of time away from home, like at work for eight hours, and then in a basement under a nightclub. In which case the plant will last for maybe a week."

"She can bring it to the Foundry." Oliver pointed out before checking his phone, ignoring the sigh from his friend. He didn't care how ridiculous he may seem.

"The only plant that can survive in such low light is a fern, and I'll take a wile guess and say you didn't get her-"
"I got her an orchid." Oliver cut him off, "Can we stop talking about that now?"

"What got you so wrung up?"

"I'm waiting for her answer, okay? I asked Felicity out on a date, and I'm waiting for her to call me."

Diggle remained seated when Oliver stood up from his chair and walked around the desk to stand in front of the large floor to ceiling windows. His posture revealed he was agitated, on the edge. He was hoping she'll answer right away after receiving the delivery, but it's been almost half an hour now since he got confirmation she accepted the flower, and still nothing.

A sigh and scraping of the chair on the marble floor told him Diggle got up too, and moment later his friend was standing next to him, looking out at the city they protected at night.

"I'm going to be straight with you." Diggle said calmly, "You can not expect Felicity to just jump at the opportunity of a date with you after everything that happened, and you know it. You need to wait for her to be ready, man."

"I do know that. I just thought... I don't know... that I should make the first step, reach out and prove to her that I was serious about us. About become worthy of her."

"Then become worthy of her. Don't pressure her."

Oliver sighed, "I need help, Dig. I know relationships, but not the ones that are meant to last longer than a week. My last relationship was with Sara and-"

"And that never should have happened." Diggle interrupted him mid-sentence, his voice not hiding the anger he felt at what happened right under his nose. He knew Felicity doubted herself, her place in the team, he heard her say so. Back then he called her irreplaceable, but she needed to hear it from Oliver.

"I know that you are angry at me because of what happened, because of the choice I made. Yes, I saw Felicity's mark and knew it was identical to my own, but it was on the wrong shoulder and I didn't know what it meant. I had no idea I was causing her pain."

"That's not why I'm angry Oliver!" Diggle snapped at his friend. His dark eyes observed the younger man closely, saw the look of regret on his face, but he had enough of the excuses. 'I didn't know' isn't good enough, not after everything that happened, "You saw her mark, you knew she was your soulmate. It doesn't matter if you thought she was too good for you, or you weren't worthy of her, or you didn't want for her to get hurt by whomever... None of it matters. If you didn't want to be with Felicity you should have been honest with her from the start. Instead you kept it a secret from her, and you screwed around."

Oliver looked at the floor. He needed to hear those words, needed for someone to be brutally honest with him and tell him exactly how much he messed up. But it didn't make things any easier for him now that the truth was just laid out in front of him.

"I didn't know how to face Felicity, tell her that I'm her soulmate, but that I am not interested in having a relationship with her at the time."

"Well you should have. Because if you did, if you were honest with her from the start and simply explain you weren't ready, she would have respected your decision." Diggle shook his head, he couldn't believe Oliver could be so dense sometimes, "But you didn't do that. Instead you jumped
into a relationship with Sara, quite ironic since you just said you weren't interested in having a relationship at the time, and paraded it in front of your soulmate. And don't think I won't bring up something that Felicity said in the lair last night. Did you and Sara seriously-

"Yes." Oliver answered before Dig managed to even finish his sentence, and a feeling of shame washed over him. Felicity's words from this morning were replaying themselves in his mind, the revelation that she walked in on the lovers and suffered the burn of her mark at the dark parking lot behind the Verdant.

Over the year he made too many questionable choices, but none of them reached this level of horrifying.

The retired soldier sent him a glare before he started the pace around the office. He comforted Felicity several times in the past months since Sara Lance joined the team, told her she has no reason to feel insecure of her place in the Foundry. But to have confirmation that her place, the desk that housed her babies was used for-

Diggle clenched his fists, glared at Oliver again, and continued his pacing. And the younger man never moved from his spot in front of the windows. It was a good spot, if Dig ever lost control over his anger and chose to push him out. But that would hurt Felicity, and he would never intentionally cause the blonde pain.

"If Felicity were to wake up one morning, and decide your sorry ass isn't worth the wait, and that she's moving on with some other guy... she would have every right to do that."

"I know." Oliver responded so quietly Diggle barely heard him.

"No, I don't think you do. Fuck man, she loves you. Not because you are Oliver Queen, not because you are her soulmate... she loved you for months, long before she learned the truth. And she got nothing but pain in return. She's not Laurel Lance, she won't take you back over and over again. You have one chance, and you only deserve one, just to be clear." Diggle crossed his arms over his chest and looked at Oliver seriously, "You have to make an effort, but don't push before she's ready. And be ready to back off if she decides that she doesn't want to be with you."

Oliver nodded silently. He knew that was the possibility, and frankly he would understand if Felicity came to a decision she didn't want to be with him. Not after everything, after all the damn mistakes he made.

He wasn't sure what he would do if that happened. He would accept it, maybe try to change her mind, to give him yet another chance he may or may not deserve.

Maybe he would leave, escape to Lian Yu again, and surround himself with solitude of the island. At least there he won't be able to cause her any more harm.

Oliver moved back around his desk and sat down. The cell phone was still silent, no message arrived despite him desperately waiting for one. But then again no answer is also an answer.

"Give her space, but don't lost hope. That girl still loves you, she just needs time." Oliver looked up at Diggle and with a sigh leaned back in his chair. He had work to do, but didn't have any desire to actually do anything.

"Thanks man."

Dig shrugged, "No problem. Just don't forget my secret identity is your black driver, not your love guru."
Oliver snorted, "I'll keep that in mind. Although I might slip during a mission and call you by that name."

Thea was lying on the couch, an empty ice cream container on her stomach, and a spoon in her hand. Lunch was good, desert was better. She couldn't remember when was the last time she had so much unhealthy food for just one meal.

But she deserved some comfort food today, especially after the bombs that were dropped on her just hours ago. First her true parentage, and then her brother's nighttime hobby that could have gotten him killed too many times, one time even by their mother.

Luckily Mr Diggle answered when she called him, and without questioning her motives gave her Felicity Smoak's address. And here she was, on the slightly uncomfortable couch, in her brother soulmate's living room. With the blonde lounging in the armchair, with her feet on the coffee table.

"Do you love him?" she blurted out and watched as the blonde froze for a moment.

Felicity's blue eyes focused on her guest before she casually asked back, "Whom?"

But the attempt didn't fool Thea. They both knew whom she meant, and Felicity trying to be evasive didn't work in the least. But she played along and clarified, "Ollie? You love him, right? When did you figured out that you love him?"

"I never said I love him." Felicity pointed out as she moved her feet from the coffee table, and placed them in front of herself on the armchair before wrapping her hands around. It was a perfect body language example of someone who didn't want to continue the conversation.

The truth was she couldn't really answer Thea's question, not the way the young heiress wanted her to. She didn't really know what she felt for Oliver, not anymore.

Before she thought that maybe it was love, but how does a person knows they are in love with someone anyway?

Do they feel happier when the other person is around? And do they want to spend more time with that person because of that feeling?

And what happens when you still feel the same way, but at the same time can't stand to be in the same room as the other person because the way they hurt you?

"You are his soulmate." Thea pointed out in a matter-of-face voice, "You have to love him."

But Felicity just shook her head. It didn't work that way. But when the younger woman sat up on the couch, dropped the empty ice cream container on the floor, and placed a hand on Felicity's knee the dam broke and she told Thea what she refrained herself from telling her earlier that day.

The whole truth.

"If it worked the way you say it works then he would have loved me back. But he doesn't." Thea opened her mouth to say that wasn't true, to say her brother loved the blonde, but Felicity continued speaking, "Considering the dresses I wear he could have easily seen my mark months ago, even before the Undertaking. He could have known the truth since then, and he probably did. But that didn't stop him from..." Felicity took a deep breath, she struggled to finish that sentence.

"Look, I know Ollie isn't a saint." Thea said gently, "He told me what he did, and that you felt the
burn every single time. But he didn't know."

"And what? I'm supposed to just forget everything that happened because Oliver didn't know that screwing Sara on my desk, next to my computers, will cause me pain? Because he's Ollie and... and can we talk about something else please?"

"Felicity, Sara returned to the League so they would bring you back alive. So that you and Oliver could get the second chance." Thea leaned back on the sofa and observed the stubborn woman. She refused to believe that Felicity had no remaining feelings for her brother, and that Olicity, as she started to call them in her head, will never happen.

But Felicity just snorted at her words, "Are you certain that Sara didn't do that to ease her own guilt over what happened between her and Oliver?"

"She is your friend!" Thea snapped at her.

"I don't know who my friend is anymore!" Felicity snapped back, before standing up and starting to pace the length of her living room, "Why can't you understand that I don't want to go on that stupid date?"

"So you don't love him." Thea whispered.

"I never said that either." Felicity responded, "I just know I can't go on a date with him, and act like everything is peachy, when I'm not sure if I can trust him with my heart."

"You can. He will never cheat on you again. Ever." Thea stood up too and moved until she stood in front of Felicity, "You have to know that."

But Felicity shrugged, she didn't know anything anymore. Sure, Oliver was remorseful this morning, but even while knowing he felt sorry for everything she wasn't sure where to go from now.

"Thea, I-"

"Just take things slow, okay? No date in the near future, not until you are ready. But how about a... family dinner? Or partial family, anyway."

Felicity looked at her in confusion, "What?"

"I got an idea." Thea responded with a wink, "Please don't be angry at me because of it. I just want... I just want you and Ollie to be happy. You both deserve to be happy."

Oliver just entered the Foundry before Diggle when his phone chimed with the new text message. It was the first one today, and he hoped it was the one he was waiting for. If it was her, and she agreed, then he'll contact the manager of Tablesalt and get them a last minute reservation. It was one of the perks of being Oliver Queen.

But after fishing out the phone from his suit pocked, and seeing the sender, Oliver sighed.

"You okay man?" Diggle asked after flipping the main power switch.

Seconds later the lights came to life and the computer fans started to hum. It was a sound both men got used to in the past year, and both men missed during the days when neither of them could handle going down here and face the fact they were one member short.

Felicity was the light that shone brighter then the fluorescent tubes that illuminated the damp
"Got a text from Thea," Oliver said, and his disappointment was obvious in his voice.

Dig shook his head. He was surprised those two hadn't made all his hair turn gray by now. They were worse than he and Lyla ever were.

"Is she still at Felicity's place?" he asked and Oliver turned to look at him so fast Diggle was expecting he got a whiplash. Before his friend got to demand an explanation to that statement Dig elaborated, "She called me this morning. Wanted Felicity's address. Didn't say why, but I'm guessed something happened when she muttered about lies and jerks who think she needs protection."

"My mom revealed to Thea that Malcolm was her biological father." Oliver said as he took a seat in the office chair before the desk that housed the computer station. The grimace that Diggle made was exactly how he felt when Felicity revealed the truth to him, "And then I made the decision to be done with lying to my family and told her I was the Arrow."

"How did she take it?" Dig asked. Considering what Thea said when she called he was pretty sure he had his answer.

Oliver shrugged and leaned back in the chair until he was staring at the concrete ceiling of the basement, "First she hugged me and said she was proud of me. Then she punched me and called me an ass for lying to her this whole time. And then she stormed out of the mansion."

"Yeah, younger siblings can be like that." a snort followed Diggle's words. He remembered the arguments he and Andy had, both as children and later as adults. And he remembered the words he wished he could take back.

Finally Oliver clicked to open the message and instantly sat up straighter. And then he reread the words for the second, and then the third time, before he was certain he wasn't just seeing what he wanted to see.

But he wasn't. His sister was actually inviting him to Big Belly Burger for dinner with her. And with Felicity.

It wasn't the romantic date he hoped to have with his soulmate, but he understood that at the time this was all he was going to get. And he should be satisfied with it.

While Oliver was staring in the screen of his phone his friend was observing him closely. And he saw when his expression changed, when a spark of happiness appeared in his eyes. Whatever said in that message wasn't the bad news he was expecting to get. Thea didn't inform her brother she never wanted to see him again, or anything so drastic and melodramatic, It seemed to be something completely opposite.

"Dig..." Oliver raised his gaze and focused on his friend who was leaning on the med table with his hands crossed over his chest.

"Let me guess... we're taking another night off. Lyla will certainly appreciate it, four night off in a row."

Oliver sighed, "I know I should be out there, that the city needs us."

"You gave so much of yourself to keep the city safe. You deserve some time for yourself, first to grieve and now to... what? What's going on, anyway?"
"Dinner with Thea and Felicity."

The older man smiled, "Your sister's work, I'm presuming. She's helping you out to win over your soulmate."

Oliver shook his head, "I'm going to have to buy her a new car for her Birthday."

"I'm off then. Do you need a ride?"

Oliver looked towards the shelf where he kept a duffel bag with spare clothes. He had everything he needed right here, and didn't need to go back to the mansion to change out of the business suit.

His bike was at the mansion though, so if he wanted to go to Felicity's apartment he would need Diggle to drive him. But he didn't want to keep his friend away from his pregnant girlfriend for any longer than necessary.

"Nah, I'll catch a cab and meet the girls at Big Belly."

Diggle shrugged, "Suit yourself. I'll see you tomorrow morning man, unless there is an emergency."

By the time Oliver walked out of the small bathroom in the back of the Foundry the basement was empty. And he was alright with that. This was one of the times when he appreciated the silence, craved it really.

When he walked down the stairs tonight and saw the computer desk an old memory was triggered. And now he understood.

A month ago, after work, they walked into the Foundry and found it reeking of disinfectant. It was so bad Dig claimed his eyes are starting to burn and he needed to leave. Back then Felicity said she had no idea what happened, and why their secret base smelled like a bottle of bleach. She even checked the security camera she installed herself at the entrance and didn't get any answers.

Back then he didn't question the fact she didn't have lunch with Dig at him in QC but always, but instead chose to eat out. If she wanted to have lunch with some friend then she could, he didn't have the right to stop her or question her where she was going and with whom.

A feeling of shame threatened to swallow him whole as he took a seat in front of the computers and looked down on the surface of the desk covered with a fine layer of dust.

That strange event happened the day after Sara and he decided their one month anniversary was something worth celebrating, first down here and then in the clock tower that was Sara's base before she joined his team.

Until last night, and the confirmation this morning, he didn't know Felicity arrived just in time to catch them in the act.

She could have, and should have, threw it all in his face the following day in front of Diggle and Sara. Hell, he deserved it for her to say it in front of all board members and the most important investors.

But instead she kept it all in herself, and didn't say anything, until she lost control over her bloodlust. The fact she was willing to give him another chance was a miracle.

And Oliver was prepared to do whatever it takes to prove to her she didn't make a mistake when she
"I'm buying you a sports bottle for your next Birthday," was the first thing Thea told her brother when he walked to the booth they were occupying for the past few minutes.

Despite the fact he was closer to the restaurant Oliver still managed to arrive after them, and he was absolutely fine with that. Upon entering the first thing he was was his sister smiling widely at something Felicity saw.

And Felicity... she was sitting turned away from the entrance, so while he couldn't see her face he could see something else, and he presumed his sister had her fingers in that particular decision. His soulmate wore a dark blue long-sleeved shirt with a plunging neckline, but at the back. And Oliver gulped at the sight of her.

Her mark, the dark crown on her otherwise pale back, was fully visible. It was prefect, no sign of the scar that should have ruined the mark that connected them together. And for that Oliver was grateful. He hated the fact that he harmed her in the past with his wrong decisions, but the thought that she might have marks on her skin, scars that serve as a reminder of the pain she felt... he didn't want that for her.

Thea noticed him first and waived him over. And that was when she made a joke that told Oliver the worst possible thing happened. His sister and his soulmate hae became friends. He was screwed.

He turned to look at Felicity, and she just laughed as she saw his face expression.

"She wanted to know how we met." she said through laughter, and Oliver couldn't help but look at her in awe. Her laughter, her happiness, was more addictive than any substance he tried in his teenage days. And if jokes on his account were what it took for her to always be this happy... than he was ready and willing to share with her all the humiliating moments from his childhood. Everything.

Just to hear her laugh a bit longer.

Thea grabbed Oliver's arm suddenly and pulled him in the seat next to her, and stuck her tongue out at him when he turned to glare at her. He narrowed his eyes at her for a moment before turning towards Felicity again.

"Wanna know about Thea's first encounter with horse manure?"

"Do not dare to tell her that story." his sister muttered through clenched teeth.

"It's only fair, Speedy. The two of you have made fun of me the whole afternoon, it's only fair I return the favor, at least partially."

"Actually... we didn't make fun of you the whole afternoon." Oliver looked at his sister when she whispered under her breath. It probably wasn't meant to be heard, but he was close enough to hear her anyway.

Carly interrupted the suddenly tense atmosphere, greeting Oliver and Felicity as she stepped next to the table. She already knew what the two of them were ordering, apparently they were regulars in Big Belly. And that made no sense to the young heiress.

She suddenly poked her brother in the stomach, making him jump in his seat, before he turned to
glare at her, "Speedy, what...?"

"There is not a gram of fat on you. How is that possible when you eat greasy food often enough that you have a usual?"

"Salmon ladder." Felicity answered, in a tone of voice that could only be described as dreamy. The look Oliver gave her after that made Thea giggle. She had a feeling it was some sort of internal joke of the team, but now that she knew the secret she hoped she'll also get an explanation.

But she was out of luck. Because neither Oliver nor Felicity wanted to explain that answer. But a bright red blush on Felicity's cheeks told her that maybe it was better if she doesn't know.

There were some things about her brother that she just didn't want to be privy of.

"So..." Thea started the conversation, after taking a bite of a burger that could only be described as divine, "Licity and me came to a conclusion you are an asshole, but an asshole that somehow managed to earn himself one more chance. Honestly, Ollie... her desk? That's just... nasty."

Oliver sighed. It wasn't anything he didn't know already, and agreed with, but to hear his own sister describe him as such was a bitter pill to swallow.

"What Thea meant to say was I have forgiven you, but I haven't forgotten." Felicity leaned forward and reached to touch Oliver's hand. His clenched fist, the result of his sister's words, loosened and readjusted it until their fingers became interlaced. It was such a intimate touch that Thea felt the urge to look away because it felt like she was intruding.

"I understand." Oliver answered honestly, "And I don't expect you to."

"Than you also have to understand that I can't and won't just jump into a relationship with you. I believe I already told you that this morning, or maybe it slipped my mind, but... Oliver, I'm not ready. Not yet."

A small squeeze she felt made Felicity smile. Oliver wasn't exactly a tactile person, he didn't like physical contact, and she had a feeling it was a result of one of those things that happened on the island. But from time to time he initiated a hug, especially when it was obvious she needed it for whichever reason. He would offer her comfort with just a touch on her shoulder. It was their thing. Not hand holding.

Never hand holding.

But it felt right.

"You'll let me know when you're ready?" there was a dash of apprehension in his voice, like he feared she might never be ready, that the things he never had with her will remain nothing but a wishful thinking of a grieving man.

"You'll be the first to know." Felicity said with a small smile, and squeezed his hand back.

Neither of them noticed Thea was watching them with a goofy grin on her face. She was witnessing two soulmates making first steps towards each other, and it was sickeningly sweet.

Seriously, if the amount of sugar she ate today, the ice cream, a packet of cookies she found in Felicity's kitchen cabinets, and the chocolate milkshake in front of her, didn't give her cavities these two definitely will.
The moment was interrupted when Oliver's phone buzzed, and with a sigh he let go of Felicity's hand. Someone had a really bad timing. And the alert message told him it was an armed robbery in progress.

"So much for another night off." he muttered under his breath, before looking strangely at his sister.

Thea moved on the bench until she was sitting right next to him and looking at the screen of his phone. When she noticed he was watching her she raised her gaze at him and innocently asked, "What?"

"What are you doing?"

"Checking up what's going on and if it's necessary for the Arrow to show up? So, is it? Cause I really want to see the Arrow cave." the sweet smile she gave him instantly reminded Oliver of the little girl he left behind when he went abort of the Gambit. He was glad she was still there, or possibly his sister was just trying to butter him up to get what she wants.

"Yeah, we should go." Oliver answered before turning towards Felicity, "Sorry."

The blonde just shook her head, "It's no problem. I'm looking forward to getting back to my babies. Momma's been away for far too long."

While that response confused Thea, Oliver just smiled at her. He was used to the monicker she had for her computers.

Felicity was walking towards Thea's car, and putting on her jacket, when she heard a strange sound. The two siblings slightly in front of her obviously haven't cause they didn't even paused. Since permanently paranoid Oliver didn't react she figured it was nothing and rushed to catch up with them.

And she was just in tome to hear Oliver inform his sister, "Stop using that name. We don't call it the Arrow cave."

Thea frowned at him, "Then how else are you calling it? The Quiver?"
Chapter 10

Thea was muttering under her breath as she walked down the stairs into the basement below Verdant. When Oliver agreed for to to come along, and see their base, she imagined it be on the top floor of a skyscraper, with the view of the entire city, or possibly an underground bunker that was made during the Cold war. Something cool, and exciting.

Instead Oliver stopped the car at the never used parking lot behind Verdant and got out. At first she thought he was messing with her, but with something going on there was no time for him to play a prank on his younger sister. Right?

When Felicity got out too the young heiress realized it wasn't a joke. So she pushed open the car door and rushed to follow them. Two beeps told her Oliver locked the car after she got out, and for that she was grateful. She crashed her first car, she doesn't need to get her second one stolen. And behind her own club out of all places.

The lights were already on when they stepped in, Diggle beat them to the Foundry since he was in the area, and Felicity instantly moved to the computer system to get info about what was going on. She did a double take when a bag on the med table caught her attention, before she grinned at Dig.

The former soldier just shrugged, "What can a man do when his girl is pregnant? Keep his mouth shut and go buy what she craves."

"Shouldn't you be on your way to deliver her the goods?" the blonde asked, her fingers already moving on the keyboard, "What's in there anyway? It looks like Oreos and..." she took a quick glance towards the groceries bag, before she turned to look at the monitor, "...pudding, and sunflower seeds."

"Lyla's usual order. For your sake I will not tell you how she eats that." Diggle responded with a small smile. At first the food combinations freaked him out, he was certain some of them were potentially lethal, or would at lease give his partner heartburn. But two months into the craving frenzy and Lyla was still enjoying eating worst combinations of food possible, "If all goes without a hitch I'll deliver the goods just as she wakes up from her nap."

"What came first, the chicken or the egg?" Thea suddenly asked, making everyone turn to look at her. Even Felicity who raised her hands from the keyboard to check on the young heiress who seemed to have gone off the rocker.

"What?" Oliver was equally confused by the question, trying to figure out what his sister was talking about.

"Did you open the club to hide this base, or did you made the base under the club cause it was convenient?" she rephrased her question, before moving towards the glass case that housed the green suit.

No one can say Thea Queen is shy or holds back, but right now she wasn't sure where to go and what not to touch. Well, she probably shouldn't touch anything. Like the glass stand with arrow she wanted to touch to see if they were as sharp as they looked, but it would have been pretty stupid if she cut herself on it and left blood evidence. She also wanted to get her hands on the bow her brother used, but at the same time she wasn't all too eager to hold the weapon that was used to kill people.

That thought was sobering. She just realized that her brother wasn't just the Arrow, he was also the
man that used to be the Hood. The killer that ended lives without remorse.

She was vaguely aware Oliver was answering her question, explaining he made the lair in the old Queen factory basement, and then opened Verdant to explain his absence from home and presence in the Glades.

"You okay kid?" a voice startled her out of her thoughts and Thea saw John Diggle standing right in front of her, observing he with dark eyes that seemed to look right into her mind and know what was going on in her head right now.

"I just realized... what I didn't want to realize before. About who Ollie was after he got back from the island." she turned to look at her brother as she spoke, and saw him next to Felicity, looking over her shoulder at the computer monitors in front of her.

"When I first found out he just saved my life. I thought he completely lost his sanity on Lian Yu." Diggle admitted, "And then I stopped to think, and I couldn't deny he was making some progress in stopping all the bad things that were happening. Unlike the police he didn't chase the foot soldiers, he went straight after the generals. After those who were pulling the strings."

"He killed Malcolm Merlyn... Who turned out to be my father..." Diggle nodded, that was the truth. But Merlyn was also the one who started the events that resulted with destruction of a good portion of Glades, and death of over five hundred people.

He wasn't sure if the young girl realized something else, but he just had to point it out, "Oliver was also shot and almost killed by your mother in QC. He went there to talk to her, to get answers, and even after that he refused to believe she was actually involved in the Undertaking. Only until it became impossible to deny it any longer, after Felicity got evidence she knew Walter would get kidnapped."

Thea rubbed her face with her hands, completely disregarding the fact she had makeup on, she suddenly felt so tired. And to think that half an hour ago she was enjoying a nice juicy burger. She looked at Diggle and sighed, "It took less than 12 hours for my family life to become completely messed up, Mr. Diggle."

"It's Diggle, or Dig." he responded with a small smile, before placing a gentle hand on her shoulder in comfort, and then stated, "Your family life was a mess even before, you just didn't know it."

"I suppose it's true that ignorance is bliss." Thea muttered under her breath.

Oliver looked away from where Diggle was talking to his sister and focused back at the middle monitor in front of Felicity. She was grumbling something too low for him to hear, but then again he didn't have to. She was agitated, that much was obvious. The alert he got said there was an armed robbery in progress, but so far Felicity didn't find any signs anywhere that something of that nature was going on in the city.

So either the alert was a false alarm, which was unlikely since Felicity herself created the application that sent alerts from the Foundry computers directly to their phones, or the robbers were smart.

When Felicity sighed for the second time, before starting to click one key repeatedly for some reason, Oliver focused on her hands, her delicate fingers, and brightly painted fingernails.

And then on the keyboard she was using. And he had to stop himself from flinching.

"The keyboard..." he started to speak, but paused for a moment to collect his thoughts, "That's not
the same one from... that night. Cause I know you cleaned the desk, and-

"Of course it isn't. I switched it." Felicity responded without pausing her typing.

Oliver nodded in understanding, "With a new one." he presumed.

"With the one from your QC office." Felicity corrected him, and if she felt him freeze completely behind her she didn't show it in any way.

"You're not serious, are you?" he asked, mortified at the thought.

"She was your girlfriend, surely you touched her ass before. Using the keyboard is just secondary transfer."

"What happened?" Diggle suddenly asked, and Oliver turned to look at his friend. A friend who was watching him with hands crossed over his chest, and a stormy expression, "What did you do this time?"

Before he managed to answer Thea surprised him by jumping on the desk next to the left monitor and crossing her ankles. She turned to look at Felicity, who merely raised an eyebrow at her sudden action, and sweetly asked, "I can sit here, right?"

Felicity muttered something that sounded suspiciously like 'just keep your underwear on', before she punched a key forcefully and then fist-pumped. An action that startled Thea for a moment, before she laughed.

"I got a possible location, but something weird is going on." Felicity said as she turned on her chair to look at Oliver, "So be careful." she added gently.

"I will."

By mid-morning the next day the city was buzzing with the breaking news that were published on the cover of Starling Scandal, the most notorious tabloid in the city what is considered trash, but everyone is still reading it. Especially when the city's most famous playboy is featured in the main story.

But instead of a dumb choice, like getting drunk and peeing on the cop's car, the tabloid posted one story they have been waiting for for years. The money shot the main editor wanted since the heirs of Queen and Merlyn empires reached the age when they became interesting to the people of Starling.

It was made by accident, the photographer was actually waiting to catch the member of the city council leaving a very exclusive massage place that is rumored to offer happy endings for their clients who were willing to pay a bit extra.

Instead he caught Queen siblings leaving Big Belly Burger, with Oliver Queen's executive assistant in tow. Since CEO having dinner with his sister and EA wasn't such a big deal he was going to ignore them, but then a black speck caught his eyes, and he was fortunate enough to get a photo of it before the blonde put on her jacket and got in the passenger seat of a nice black Audi.

Only when he got back to the office, and checked out the shoots he got, did he realize he just earned himself a nice bonus with a single photo.

Instantly after informing the editor the story about the naughty council member was pushed to page 20, and the cover was now decorating a photography of a blonde woman walking away, a crown-
shaped soulmate mark perfectly visible on her right shoulder. Next to it was a smaller photo of Oliver Queen, taken at a party some seven years ago, when he got drunk and took off his shirt, giving everyone an opportunity to learn what his mark looked like.

The bold letters below the photos said it all, "Mark of a Queen", and below that in smaller font, "Oliver Queen's soulmate revealed. What will the other women think?"

That was what Laurel Lance found on the desk in her office when she arrived for work that morning. She didn't know who put it there, but she had a good guess. She was successful at her job, won a case after a case against some of the best defended criminals, and that got her a position of the ADA. A fact that didn't sit all to well with a few individuals who were aiming at the position, like it would bring them fortune and prestige, and not a overflowing schedule and potentially an ulcer.

She was about to throw the magazine into a trash bin next to her desk when the realization hit. Laurel was certain she had met this woman before, she was positively certain that was the blonde with glasses she met one evening in Verdant. The same blonde Oliver made his EA after returning from his trip and took over the company.

Curiosity won and Laurel found herself turning the pages until the same photo as the one on the cover took over almost half the page. Next to it was a smaller one, zoomed in photo, that clearly showed the shape of the mark the blonde had on her right shoulder. Laurel knew it was identical to Oliver's. How could she not? She had seen it plenty of times during those three years they were dating.

But she was absolutely certain his was placed on his left shoulder.

Despite believing it was a waste of time, and that she would be better off not reading the article, she just couldn't help herself.

And instantly certain lines popped out.

"The rare occurrence is refereed to as 'Mirror marks' and, considering what several scientific papers have to say about how they effect those who have them, they might as well be considered a curse. Miss Smoak may have bagged a billionaire, but let's not forget the previous flings of Starling city playboy Ollie Queen. His relationship with the older Lance sister was as stable as a chair with a missing leg, a proof of that were numerous parties Queen left with a new girl on his arm. Meaningless flings that continued after Oliver Queen's miraculous return from the dead."

The several photos they published with the article showed different women that Oliver was with. And somehow they got their hands on a photo of Laurel and Sara hugging, only it was edited to appear divided in half, with each sister on one side. The text below was even worse.

"Every single one of these 'other women' have done a huge disfavor to Miss Smoak. Because the 'Mirror marks' are unique in a way that those who have them feel the burn every time their designated partner cheats on them. Last in the long line of Queen's bedpartners was no other than the younger Lance sister. The same one that went on the disastrous boat trip, when he was still officially dating her sister, and has only months ago returned to Starling. Since then she had continued her relationship with Queen and was frequently seen in his company. But that is more important she was also seen in Miss Smoak's company."

With a shaking hand Laurel took the phone out of her purse and dialed her sister's number. She hadn't seen Sara in days, and wanted to give her a heads-up about the article.
But instead of her sister's voice an automated voice calmly said, "This number has been disconnected."

She tried again, but with the same result. Sara wasn't just ignoring her, something bigger is going on. Laurel was just about to call her father when the ending of the text caught her attention.

"Who knew the whole truth in this love triangle: the soulmate, the cheater, or the fuckbuddy? Did Oliver Queen knowingly ignored his intended, and returned to his pre-island playboy days? What is the estimated amount of times Felicity Smoak felt her mark burn? (a college says the number could easily go pass a hundred)

Will Sara Lance still act like a good friend now that the truth is out? And which women, from the long list of meaningless weekend-relationships and one-night stands, will face the one they wronged and apologize?"

Laurel was fuming. She was ready to call the editor of that waste of paper, and shout at him, perhaps threaten with a lawsuit if they didn't retract their article. Instead she forcefully threw it in the trash bin and dialed her father's number.

"I can't get Sara on the phone, I tried calling but it keeps saying her number has been disconnected." she said before Quentin Lance even managed to greet her.

He sighed. His younger asked him for a favor, one he was reluctant to agree to do. Still, he did as she asked and now had to face the music.

"Sara left, she returned to the League of Assassins."

"She what?!!" Laurel stood up and started to pace her office. A few people turned to look at her, wondering what caused her to freak out, but no one wanted to walk in and check if everything was alright. Not when the ADA looked particularly agitated.

"She went to that place... what did she call it? Nana Parrot, or something?"

"Why would she do that? She just got back. We just got her back after six years."

Detective Lance sighed. He wished Sara went to talk to her sister when she returned to Starling, with the members of the League, to return Felicity Smoak home. But she didn't even come to see him, he only leaned what happened to his younger daughter when Felicity came to see him in the station, and give a statement regarding her disappearance. And he couldn't help but wonder if the fight that happened between two sisters was a cause of that.

He didn't supposed to know about that. But Laurel's neighbor stopped him in the hallway, when he went to see her one day, and informed him of a argument he overheard. Apparently it got so loud he considered calling the building manager, or even the police, and report the disturbance.

And even though he didn't know what was said that day, Lance knew when it happened and what the probable cause for it was, or rather who. And he also knew Sara moved out of her sister's apartment after that and lived in the basement below Verdant; also known as the Arrow's base, one he knew nothing about of course.

"You know how your sister is, stubborn beyond and doing whatever she wants." Lance chose not to share the complete story with Laurel, not to tell her about the deal Sara made, about the exchange. In
his mind he was doing it for her own good, and he hoped, if she ever learned the truth, she will not hold it against him for lying to her.

"But she hated the League. She hated being forced to kill." Laurel pointed out. Sara rarely talked about her time with the assassins, but a few times she mentioned it she claimed it was the worst thing that ever happened to her. So for her to go back willingly, it just didn't make any sense. And that made her consider another opinion, "They threatened her, didn't they? They forced her to return."

"It's possible, honey. I don't really know. Last time she mentioned it, a week ago or so, she said..."

"Dad?"

Lance sighed again, "She was questioning her choice to return to Starling, said she did less damage there. And that those she harmed while in the League actually deserved it, unlike what she did after coming home. I think she meant... she learned about that mirror mark thing mentioned in the Scandal. Detective Perez mentioned it this-"

Laurel didn't wait for her father to finish what he wanted to say, instead she disconnected and sat on the small couch she had in the office. Her mind was going a mile a minute, trying to process everything she just learned.

She just couldn't wrap her hear around the fact Sara went back to that damn place. Not when she heard her sister saying she wasn't going back under any circumstances. She even muttered she would rather die, something Laurel didn't suppose to hear but did anyway.

A knock on her door made Laurel look up to see who it was. A part of her hoped it was Oliver, that maybe he had seen the dribble that was published, and came to talk to her. But instead it was one of the interns that worked in the DA office.

"Sorry to disturb you, Miss Lance, but DA Donner wants to speak to you. He's waiting for you in his office."

"Thank you, Carrie. I'll go see what he needs right away." Laurel responded and instantly stood up. She wasn't going to waste her time thinking about some idiotic tabloid, she had more important things she needed to focus on.

Felicity felt extremely self-conscious when she entered the full elevator. She had a feeling everyone was looking at her, and she looked down for a moment to check if perhaps she arrived to work without her pants on. When she got confirmation that her worst nightmare didn't in fact happen, she came to a conclusion that the damn story spread through QC like wildfire.

The only reason she knew about it was because she programed her tablet to inform her if Oliver's or hers name appears in an article. And this morning her tablet pinged twice.

Few people smiled at her before exiting the elevator, a young intern in the IT department even gave her a thumbs-up. That one made Felicity laugh, which earned her a curious look from the head of HR.

The man was efficient and serious, but a bit old-fashioned. The elevator doors just closed, leaving only two of them in the metal box, when he spoke.

"I will be making preparations for Mr. Jones to be permanently moved to the position of Mr. Queen's Executive assistant."
Felicity turned to look at the older man, not sure what he meant by that, "Do you know something I don't, Mr. Doyle?"

With a small laugh he answered, "Why, you are Mr. Queen's soulmate. It would be absurd to think you will continue working."

"Has Mr. Queen contacted the HR department and discussed with you my future as the employee of QC? Until he does I will continue coming to work, and sit at my desk, and make sure the paperwork is done, and that the coffeemaker on the executive floor continues malfunctioning for no apparent reason. I might be Oliver Queen's soulmate, but I'm not his girlfriend, or fiance, or a wife. And even if I was I would continue working in QC, and not be a kept woman, despite my mother being thrilled if I chose that particular path... I believe this is your floor, Mr. Doyle."

The older man was confused for a moment, long enough for the elevator doors to start closing before he exited. Felicity reached out and stopped them from doing so, giving him enough time to just nod at the blonde before he rushed in the direction of his office.

Felicity huffed after the doors closed. The preposterous old man, thinking she'll turn into a high society woman and attend tea parties, or whatever they do, and live off Queen's fortune. Like hell she'll do that. She didn't go to MIT to sit at home and plan what to wear to the next gala she was obligated to attend.

Nope. Not her.

The elevator dinged and the doors opened on the executive floor. Felicity exited the metal box and instantly heard voices coming from the office. Diggle wasn't on his usual post outside of the door, instead he was inside discussing things with Oliver.

Felicity stepped to the doorway, and observed them closely.

Diggle was facing away from the doorway, his feet wide and his hands crossed over his chest. He was tense, and it made her wonder what they were discussing that caused that.

A quick glimpse around the taller man and she saw Oliver standing behind his desk, his posture matching Diggle's.

"And how is this any different from all the other times when you were in a spotlight and the whole city followed your every movement?" Diggle asked.

"It's different." Oliver almost growled back, "Before I was watched because of my dumb choices."

Dig snorted, "From where I'm standing it still looks like you are watched because of your dumb choices."

"You're not helping."

"I have no intention to help, you need to do this on your own."

"If I mess up, and hurt Felicity again, there will be an angry mob demanding my head!" Oliver snapped.

"If you mess up, and hurt Felicity again, I will give the angry mob your head!" Diggle snapped back.

"Whoa! Whoa! Hold it!" Felicity chose this was a good time to announce her presence, and she did so by walking into the office and waving her hands, "No one is decapitating anyone!"
Oliver instantly focused on Felicity, on her hair in the usual ponytail, her brightly painted lips, colorful shirt and white slacks. She was so bright, even on the darkest of days.

Reluctantly he looked away from her, and back on Diggle. His friend was watching him closely, and Oliver sighed.

"If I mess, up, and hurt her again, I won't even fight you." he added to their previous argument.

Felicity huffed, "What did I just say? No one is making anyone a head shorter, do I make myself clear?

"Just looking out for you." Dig said with a small smile, but got a frown in response.

"I don't need you, or the people of Starling, looking out for me when it comes to Oliver." she told him before facing her soulmate.

"Felicity." he called her name, in a way only he did, and her insides twisted into a knot. He had that effect on her since their first meeting, and she took a deep breath to calm down. There were things that needed to be said, and now was the perfect opportunity.

"I read the article, and I hated it, for one simple reason. They went about shaming your former partners. But who holds more blame for my pain, a hundred women who fucked Oliver Queen or Oliver Queen for fucking a hundred women? That number is provisional, of course, cause I didn't cut notches in my bedpost every time my mark burned, and even if I did it wouldn't be correct cause you must have been with some women several times, after all you were in a quasi-serious relationship with Laurel Lance, and..."

"Breathe, Felicity." Diggle placed a hand on her shoulder and earned himself a smile.

"And there is a better, and more efficient punishment for you, if you ever hurt me again in the same way."

"Felicity, I won't repeat my mistakes. If your mark burns ever again it will be because I died... I will never again betray you."

Felicity closed her eyes and sighed. She wanted so badly to trust him, she was certain that she could, but at the same time she was too afraid to do so. She straightened her posture, proudly lifted her head, and locked her eyes with Oliver's.

"Good, because there is only one thing I can do to, apart from leaving Starling city. And that thing involves copious amount of alcohol, a hotel room, and a random guy. And if you really mess up that random guy just might be Max Fuller, who I'm guessing will jump at the opportunity to-"

Before Felicity even managed to blink Oliver was standing in front of her, his hands closet to her shoulders, but be stopped himself from touching her in the last moment. Instead he lowered his hands and sighed.

"If I ever hurt you... leave... and don't look back. Leave, find someone who will love you the way you deserve, and hurt me with him. I will gladly endure the pain. But please... don't taint yourself with someone who was just like me."

Felicity reached up and wiped away a single tear that escaped Oliver's eyes. She remained silent, not knowing what to say after hearing his words.

Diggle, who watched them silently, shook his head. The nature doesn't make mistakes, people do.
The intended soulmates are always a perfect match for each other, but unfortunately sometimes personal choices destroy the harmony.

The pair in front of him was a perfect example of that.

But Felicity was forgiveing and patient, and Oliver was regretful and determinant. It might take time, but they will eventually heal, and come out of this mess stronger than ever.

And if someone tries to come between them they will have to answer to him. And it won't be pretty.

Laurel got behind the wheel of her car, and turned it on. This was a waste of time, something she didn't expect. Moira was always a big fan of hers, always supportive and helpful. Today the Queen matriarch was polite, but not willing to involve herself any further into the issue.

The brunette only allowed herself a quick glance in the rear-view mirror, one last look at the mansion she once believed would be her home before it was out of her sight, hidden by the trees that grew on the giant property.

She reached the highway in a few minutes and took a turn towards Iron Heights, the max security prison a few miles outside of the city limits. The file Adam Donner gave her this morning was in her briefcase on the passenger seat. The case might not be as strong as initially believed, but the DA had the final say in the manner. And he had made his decision.
"You okay?" Diggle asked once Oliver left the Foundry and left him and Felicity alone in the basement. Thea was upstairs, she waived at the camera in the corner of the club a few moments ago, making the blonde that manned the computers smile. It was the first real smile on her face that day.

"What?" she turned to look at him before nodding, "Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine. Really, I am, Dig."

"Right." he said with a frown before grabbing a folding chair that was leaned on the wall behind the medical table and placed it next to Felicity's fancy office chair that she insisted on when they were renovating the lair.

"Diggle, I really am fine." she repeated, more slowly this time. She was convincing in her claim, but he was her friend. He knew her.

"I'm going to take a wild guess and say it's linked to the damn tabloid and the story they published. It's not the way you wanted the truth to come out, I know, but-"

"No, Dig, you don't understand. I didn't want the story to come out in any way. Not in a tabloid, not in more respectful newspaper, not in a perfectly written statement by Queen Consolidated PR department. I didn't want anyone to know." Felicity said it all in one breath, and then paused to calm herself down. All the while he was observing her closely, silently asking for an explanation, "The moment the truth came out I stopped being Felicity Smoak, and became Oliver Queen's soulmate. The girl he cheated on, the girl that felt it every time he cheated."

He had a feeling that might be what was bothering her, but Dig felt no satisfaction for being right, "Do not let being Oliver's soulmate defines you."

"Didn't you hear what I just said, Diggle?!" Felicity snapped as the newly familiar feeling of rage bubbled inside of her, "I am already defined as such! It doesn't matter what I accomplished, it doesn't matter how smart I am, or what I am capable of! I am now nothing more than girl that 'bagged the billionaire', as the Scandal nicely put it! It doesn't matter that I am last on his list of importance, or that all the other before me got at least some of his attention! I-"

"Felicity." Dig called her name, and placed a hand on her forearm, and in a heartbeat she was blinking at him in confusion. Like she didn't understand what just happened.

"I'm sorry. I-"

The older man just shrug it off, like it wasn't of importance that her bloodlust just spiked, "Do you really think that you are least important to Oliver? Because I know for a fact that isn't true. After he witnessed your death-

"And before that, Dig?" Felicity cut him off, her usually warm blue eyes now ice cold, "Before, when he took my presence in his life for granted? Expecting that I'll just be there, in the background, while he continued going from one woman to another, all the while knowing the mark he saw on my shoulder is also on his own. I told him I had forgiven him, but I don't think I did. I don't think I can."

Diggle didn't wait for the first tears roll down her cheeks before he moved and pulled her into a tight hug. And when she gripped his shirt tightly, and started to sob, his heart broke for her. Someone as
bright as Felicity Smoak deserved nothing less than someone who would cherish and adore her. Instead she got someone who was far too selfish to know how and who still had a lot to learn.

Yes, Oliver was changing. The burning pain, and the knowledge of how his life without her would be like, finally made him admit what he refused before. That he did care for Felicity, maybe even love her. But just admitting it wasn't enough. Not after everything.

"I have not, and will never, justified Oliver's actions. He acted like he was still Ollie Queen, the dumb kid that didn't care about anything but instant gratification. And that guy doesn't deserve your forgiveness." Diggle spoke gently, and felt Felicity nod her head in agreement. He kissed a top of her head and she pulled back, wiping away the tears from her face.

"Do you think there is any hope for him? That he'll change." she asked meekly, like she was afraid to voice her fears out of fear they might come true, "Or am I just wasting my time."

That was the first time John Diggle was at lost, not really knowing how to answer that one. A part of him wouldn't care who she was with, as long as she was happy. He didn't care if Oliver got hurt, if he felt the burn in his mark, if it meant Felicity got someone by her side who treated her like she was precious.

At the same time he remembered Oliver's words from earlier today. The fact that Oliver thought that same thing he did. It wouldn't matter to him that she found that happiness with someone else, as long as she found it.

That kind of thinking showed Diggle Oliver was finally maturing. And it was giving him hope that the two will eventually find their way to each other.

"He was wrong not to tell you the moment he realized you shared a mark. I will defend him only this once and remind you that at the time he was still the Hood, the killer that only cared about the list. And I have my suspicion he didn't expect to survive this mission he was on, based on something he said back then. So maybe-

"What? He didn't want to tell me in case he dies?" Felicity asked with a frown, "Just leave me to hope I'll find my soulmate someday, not knowing he was right there and didn't say anything? That is completely idiotic, and rather selfish."

"I'm sorry." was all Diggle could say.

A few blocks away, on the roof of a crumbling apartment building, stood a man. If someone was to pass by and look up they could easily spot the Starling's vigilante who appeared to be standing guard over his city.

But looks could be deceiving.

After just a few words Oliver realized that the conversation he could hear over the comm wasn't directed at him. He could hear worry in Diggle's voice, and apprehension if Felicity's. And then came the painful truth.

The gloved hand clenched the bow tightly, and at the same time it felt like Oliver's heart was clenching too. Because over the comm in his ear he heard something he never wished to hear.

It took all of his power not to return to the Foundry right away and pull Felicity into a tight hug. Because the sound of her crying, of her sobbing, broke his heart more than anything ever before. He wasn't a fool though, he knew his presence wasn't wanted right now, and he didn't have any right to console her when he is the reason for her tears.
When he heard Felicity asking Diggle if he believed she was wasting her time waiting for Oliver he wanted to speak up, promise her time and time again that she wasn't making a mistake. That he will become a man worthy of her affection. Yet again he remained silent, just listening to her pain.

When Diggle mentioned the Undertaking Oliver was brought back to the time before the earthquake destroyed not just houses, but lives. He knew what his friend was talking about, he did mentioned in a conversation that he doubted his skill to defeat the Dark archer and that he expected to possibly die from the wounds received in any of the future battles against the man in black.

"What? He didn't want to tell me in case he dies?" Felicity's anger was clearly heard in her voice, "Just leave me to hope I'll find my soulmate someday, not knowing he was right there and didn't say anything?"

"I'm sorry." Diggle responded, and Oliver knew he was the one who should be saying those words, over and over again. But he could repeat them a million times and still it wouldn't be enough.

It might never be enough.

Felicity mumbled something Oliver didn't understand, and Diggle snorted. They became great friends while he was on Lian Yu, and Oliver couldn't help but feel envy. His friend had what he desired, what he once had, what he lost.

"Do you know what hurts the most Oliver?" Felicity saying his name startled Oliver, and he realized he was wrong. She knew the comm line was active, she knew he was listening.

"What?" he asked, apprehensive of her answer, but needing to hear it nevertheless.

"Is the possibility that you won't survive an altercation against Merlyn, and what he was planning, that drove you into Laurel's bed? A thought that you might die so why not have one last hurrah with the love of your life?"

Oliver wiped his face, not feeling the wetness of the tears due to his gloved hand, "She isn't the love of my life." he responded finally.

"Could have fooled me." he heard her mutter.

"I'm coming back to the Foundry." Oliver finally said, before turning towards the fire escape that would take him down in the alley where his bike was stashed, "We'll take face to face then."

"No." the way she spoke made him pause. Finally Felicity sighed, "It's easier this way, not looking at you. Last night was a fluke, Oliver. Thea said it was a partial family dinner, but I know she planned it to be a date with her as a buffer. It won't happen again soon, maybe never. I can be your friend, I was your friend from the moment you welcomed me into the team... maybe even longer. But I don't know how we can be anything more than that. Not after everything."

Silence followed Felicity's words until Diggle finally informed him he would be manning the computers for the rest of the patrol. It wasn't a surprise, Oliver expected it. And the wrongness of having Dig in his ear didn't escape his notice.

And the thought that this might be his future, this lack of Felicity, was terrifying.

Moira Queen was still awake, and looking over some documents for QC that her son left in the office, when she heard the distinctive sound of the front doors slamming shut. Since Thea returned home at a normal time for a change, and left the task of closing the club to her main bartender, she
knew only one person could be coming back at midnight. She closed the file regarding some new invention by a particularly bright young man that worked in Research and Development department, and moved to intercept Oliver before he hunkered down in his room until tomorrow.

The visit she had today was surprising, but Moira knew she should have expected it.

"Mom?" Oliver paused just as he reached the stairway and saw Moira approach him.

Knowing eyes looked him up and down and the older woman could see something was wrong with the way he was holding himself. At first she suspected it was linked to a physical injury, but since she knew the truth Oliver promised not to hide from her any serious injury he might receive from whichever criminal faced the vigilante. So if it wasn't physical, it must be...

"Is everything alright with Felicity?" she asked. She actually worried for the young blonde, not only because she was linked to her son in the most unusual way, but because she started to admire the strong-willed woman.

"She's fine... just... disappointed I suppose... with me. With who I was, and the choices I made." he admitted slowly, and Moira sighed when she saw tears welling up in his eyes. He was her son, and she adored him, but she understood Felicity's reluctance. Oliver had made so many questionable choices in his youth, but also since his return.

Today was the first time since she was employed in the Queen mansion that Raisa bought a tabloid, and the cover photo told her why. It wasn't yet another story about Oliver's drunk escapade, but one that involved his soulmate, and dragged out the names of several of her son's former paramours and painted them in a truly bad way.

"There you are!" Thea's voice echoed through the foyer, and Moira sighed. She has long ago stopped trying to prevent her daughter from shouting inside the mansion.

"Speedy, what...?" Oliver tried to ask, but his sister just grabbed his arm and pulled him to follow her up the stairs.

"I need to put the gel on your shoulder, come on. I want to go to bed before 1 so I can meet with Roy early tomorrow. We have big plans."

"One second, Thea. I need to talk to your brother." Moira stopped her children from leaving, and they both turned to look at her.

Instantly Thea frowned, "Is this about the visit this morning?"

"I thought you already left by then." Moira said, and her daughter shook her head in response.

"Visit?" Oliver asked with a frown that matched his sister's. He was already running possible scenarios in his head, making plans if that 'visit' was actually someone threatening his family.

"Laurel came to see me." Moira told him and his eyes widened. That he hadn't been expecting, "She wanted to talk to you."

"Why did she come here? I leave for QC at eight. If she came to the office I would have made time to talk to her."

Thea snorted, but made a straight face when her mother scowled at her. Still, the young heiress couldn't keep her opinion for herself, "Maybe because she is pissed off at being portrayed as the 'other woman', but at the same time doesn't want to face Felicity."
"Thea." Moira scowled her again.

"Mom, I was just leaving when she arrived so I decided to stick round and you know... eavesdrop. Anyway..." Thea turned towards her brother, "Laurel said she was going to Iron Heights on DA business, but decided to come to the mansion first cause it was on it's way, you know." the sarcasm in his sister's voice made Oliver snort. The prison was on the other side of the city from their home, so that excuse wasn't fooling anyone, "Apart from asking about your whereabouts, she chose to remind mom that she was once a main supporter of you and Laurel as a couple, and that she once thought Laurel was your perfect match, despite the fact your marks don't match."

When Oliver tensed and looked at Moira his mother sighed, and took over from Thea, "She didn't ask for my assistance to win you over again, and I never would have helped her even if she did. She did however asked for my public support of her because the article might influence her career."

"You skipped the part where she said the only reason she took Ollie back after he cheated was the fact you said she should." Thea pointed out.

Moira sighed yet again, this conversation didn't go the way she planed it, "I once told her to have patience with Oliver."

"So, what exactly does she expect then?" Oliver finally asked.

"It doesn't really matter." Moira responded, "Everything I felt before became irrelevant after you vanished, and Laurel started to date Tommy. And it became even more irrelevant when your soulmate was found. I do not care what was before, only what comes in the future. But it seems Felicity cares, and that is understandable."

"Okay, no more talk. I need to get that gel on you Oliver." Thea said and pulled her brother's hand, and this time Moira didn't try and stop them. This time the siblings went upstairs into Oliver's bedroom. And while Thea chatted the whole time about things, she was unaware her brother's mind was elsewhere.

He was processing things, the info he got from his mother, and more importantly the words Felicity said earlier that evening.

Thea pushed her brother to sit down on the edge of the bed, and without being told he removed his shirt. He didn't hear his sister rummage through the bathroom cabinet to find the gel, or reentering the bedroom. He didn't noticed when she climbed on the bed behind him, or heard when she mentioned how the tattoo looked paler and his mark was becoming visible under the lines that created the dragon.

Only when did the cold gel landed on his skin did he showed any signs of actually being aware of his surrounding. At that moment Thea sighed, like her mother did just a few minutes ago. There was something going on, and while her brother became more open with her about things, particularly matters concerning his soulmate mark, he still tended to shut himself from the world. And she suspected this might be one of the times she had to drag the information out of him.

Oliver turned his head slightly after she called his name, acknowledging that he did in fact heard her, but he remained silent. He mind was far away, and she wasn't having any of that. He was her big brother, and it was her task to look out after him just as he looked out after her.

So, resolved, she said the only thing that she was certain would get some sort of reaction from him, "I told Roy you are the Arrow."
Oliver instantly froze, as her words registered, before turning slightly to send her a glare, "That is not your secret to share, Thea. I don't want your boyfriend to get a dumb idea that I will trying him as my sidekick or something."

Thea shrugged, "Well, he would probably look good in leather. I'm thinking red, since he prefers that color. His handle could be Red Arrow."

"That just means he can't make a right turn."

Thea snorted, "You're right. I'll have to come up with a better one."

"I know what you are doing, and it isn't working." Oliver interrupted before she managed to suggest another codename.

"And what am I doing, brother dear?" Thea asked sweetly.

"You are fishing for information. But I'm not in the mood to share right now. And I'm also not in the mood of you spilling the beans to your boyfriend."

Thea sighed and leaned her head on his right shoulder, "That bad? I really thought the dinner in Big Belly was a good idea, that it might help you to move in a right direction."

"I don't think there is a right direction for Felicity and me." Oliver admitted out loud his biggest fear, "I don't think we can move past everything that happened and be more than friends. And maybe it's better that way."

Thea hated when her brother got this way. When he couldn't see the light at the end of the tunnel. His situation may seem helpless at times, but she honestly believed things could get resolved, and the estranged soulmates could find happiness together.

"Tell me your worst fear." Thea suddenly said, and Oliver tensed.

"To lose her." he whispered, like he was afraid to say it any louder because then it might happen, "But at the same time I would prefer that to... I don't want her to be like all the previous girls, she deserves more. So much more. That's why losing her wouldn't be the worst punishment."

"Ollie..." Thea whispered her brother's name in shock.

"I want to be with her. I want a happy future, I want it all. But it feels like being with Felicity would taint her." Oliver recalled his words from earlier that day, when Felicity said she would sleep with Max Fuller if he ever cheated on her again. She was innocent, and Max was just as bad as he was, sleeping around with numerous girls. His former friend was even engaged to a woman who wasn't his soulmate, but a wedding fell through because Oliver was with the future bride the night before the ceremony.

He described Max as tainted, and a voice in his head screamed that those exact words described him as well.

Thea moved slightly, and Oliver looked down to see her hands wrapping around him. The hug was strong, his sister giving him her support and strength.

"There is a simple solution to that, Ollie. If you want for her to be different from the other women, than give her more then you gave them. Don't jump in a bed with her like you did with Laurel, and Sara, and Mckenna, and... all those others."
"Thea..."

"Marry her, Oliver." the seriousness in her voice was unlike he ever heard before from his sister, "Wait until she is ready, and then become hers, and only hers."

"She might never be ready." he pointed out sadly.

"Just keep waiting."

Oliver flinched then the thunder rolled in the distance. Before the island he didn't mind the stormy weather. He didn't mind many things, but Lian Yú changed him in so many ways. He grew up, became more serious and aware, became resilient. Time there taught him to pick his priorities carefully, to rely on his instincts.

Ollie Queen didn't have any instincts though, unless knowing which girl will fall for his charm easiest counts as such. Because those were his priorities before.

And now he was paying a really high price for the kind of life he was leading, and the choices he made.

Lighting flashed, illuminating his large room for a moment, before the thunder followed moments later. By then Oliver was already sitting, the thick cover pooled on his lap. He knew there won't be any rest that night, so it would be useless to even try. Not when the background noise might cause nightmares to plague him, cause the memories, he would have gladly suppressed, resurface.

But then there were those walking nightmares. And he was currently living in one.

Ever since Thea mentioned marriage to him Oliver couldn't push the idea out of his mind. The vision of Felicity in white walking towards him. Them exchanging vows and kissing for the first time as husband and wife.

A shaky breath escaped Oliver's lips before he pushed the cover off himself and standing up. He unknowingly repeated the same process he made that first night after Felicity's death and walked to the tall window that showed him the view of the gardens behind the mansion. But the clear sky from that night was now obscured by clouds, the beauty of the night sky completely hidden.

It didn't matter anyway. He still saw the only true beauty in the woman that carried his mark.

Oliver swallowed the limp that formed in his throat.

The happy ending was just as far away now as it was when Felicity was gone. The dinner Thea orchestrated just might be the closest to a date they will ever have. It will take a miracle for him to taste her lips. There will be no home and a family. The children that were nothing but a distant dream that night were still a wishful thinking of a fool.

Oh, he will try, he will desperately try to become worthy of her.

Diggle knew something was going on. Not exactly going on, but something was happening in Oliver's head and he was curious what it was this time. Cause it can't possibly be worse than his dumb decision to stay away from Felicity. That idea is what got him in this mess in the first place.

No. This was different. And if he was honest with himself he would say Oliver was sending some serious heart eyes towards his soulmate. And it was making the retired soldier queasy. It was just
so... sickening sweet.

And a bit weird when taken in consideration Oliver spend his nights putting a fear of God into criminals. That guy clashed so bad with this image in front of him.

Dark eyes moved towards the blonde sitting behind her desk, and he sighed. She was either unaware of the whole thing, or she was intentionally ignoring Oliver. Honestly, both options were possible. Especially after everything that was said last night.

Diggle sighed again. These two will send him to an early grave.

"Everything alright, Dig?" Oliver asked.

"You tell me." he responded, and Oliver frowned in his direction.

His words also caused Felicity to look up from her computer scrée. Her blue eyes landed at him for a moment, before moving to Oliver, and then back. And since she was more focused on him she didn't notice the small head shake that signaled to Dig that whatever it was Oliver wasn't going to talk about it right now.

Probably due to audience that didn't suppose to be privy of the things that needed to be said.

That chance for a private conversation came when just the two of them entered the Foundry that evening. Felicity ended up taking the car keys right out of Diggle's hand, with a short mumble that she needed to get something from the pharmacy, and driving off in the Queen town car.

Neither man said a thing to her about it, not wanting to cause her to say exactly what she needed to buy just to explain her actions. They just didn't want to know.

"What I'm about to tell you can not reach Felicity." Oliver said seriously.

Instantly Diggle wondered if he should get the eskrima stick off the wall and beat some sense into his friend. But considering everything Oliver went through Dig was willing to give him a benefit of the doubt. But... if he had some dumbass idea hidden behind an excuse it was for Felicity's well being, then someone will get hurt this evening.

"I'm listening." Diggle said as he crossed his arms over his chest in an attempt to look as menacing as possible. Just to make a point.

Oliver sighed and ran a hand over his face, "I talked to Thea last night. And I would like to point out it was entirely her idea... it's her opinion that I should marry Felicity."

Diggle waited for a moment to see if Oliver would add something, but it seemed that was it. So he just sighed, something that was happening more and more often since he started dealing with Oliver and Felicity and their soap-opera of a life.

"I need more information, man. Thea is a smart kid, she didn't just said it out of the blue. What was the conversation about?"

Instantly his friend looked at the floor. That gave him the impression that whatever it wasn't it wasn't necessarily good. Cause that would be too much to expect.

Oliver took a deep breath and started to clarify, "That thing I told Felicity yesterday, that Max Fuller is tainted. I know that I am too. And I... I want to be with her, but I don't want to taint her. She deserves more than me. So after explaining that to my sister Thea suggested..."
"I agree with her." Diggle said calmly. It wasn't as bad as expected, quite the opposite. It was necessary for Oliver to make some tough choices, and decide what he wants from his life, and from the bond he shared with Felicity.

"I thought you might consider it the worst idea possible." Oliver said honestly.

Dig shook his head, "Nah, man. Felicity is different, in every way. I was right here when she revealed she was still a virgin, something I do not wish to know about a woman who is like my little sister... anyway... my previous advice stands. Wait until she is ready and don't pressure her."

"Her life would be so much better if she didn't have me as her soulmate." Oliver mumbled under his breath, but he was still heard.

"Possibly." his friend responded, "But I honestly think the two of you are perfect for each other. You just need to earn her respect and love again. You have it, but you need to earn it."

"What she said yesterday... about maybe never being ready..."

Diggle wondered for the thousandth time how different their lives might have been if Oliver didn't grow up believing he was entitled to everything, which is what caused him to jump from bed to bed. If he was raised like Felicity was, to respect the mark on his body and the person it was linking him to.

"You have to decide what is more important to you. You can decide that waiting for something that might never happen is a complete waste of time and continue hooking up, or--"

"No!" Oliver snapped at him, "Waiting for Felicity will never be a waste of time!"

"Then be her friend, and someday she might be ready to be more."

The sound of the code being punched in and the doors opening stopped Oliver from saying anything else on the matter. Nothing more was needed to be said anyway. He wasn't an idiot, he knew what he needed to do. But having Diggle confirm it helped.

Felicity stopped as she reached the bottom of the staircase and noticed the both men standing just a few feet away, in the middle of the foundry, and looking at her. She blinked a few times, wondering what was going on and if she had a stain on her shirt or something. But a quick check told her her shirt was spotless, which left a question unanswered.

So she came to an only possible conclusion, "Were you two just gossiping about me?" she asked with a small grin.

"No." they answered together and way too quick.

Felicity just snorted. Yeah, they weren't fooling anyone. But secretly she was pleased. Oliver was used to keep things to himself, if he was talking to Diggle about personal matter that meant he was ready to go out of his comfort zone and ask for assistance or an advice. And that was a step in a right direction.

The computer dinged with a new alert, and Felicity marched to the desk that housed her babies. Something was going on in the city and she couldn't figure out what it was. Someone out there was covering his or hers footsteps surprisingly well. But she was Felicity Smoak, IT extraordinaire, and she had had a guy with some very pointy arrows on her side. Whomever this someone was, they were going down.
"Frack!" she snapped when the trail suddenly vanished.

"Felicity?" Oliver said her name, and she turned to look at him.

"The algorithm found a suspicious transaction. And it just vanished. Poof, right into thin air." she turned back towards the computers and glared at the screen like it personally insulted her. These were her babies, how can they let her down.

A hand on her shoulder made Felicity jump slightly and look up. The look Oliver was giving her, a smile that silently said he was believing in her and her abilities, that was everything she needed in that moment.

Last night she told him never was a good possibility for them. Now she had her doubts about that.

A coffee waited for Felicity when she entered the executive floor. It was on her desk, right next to her keyboard. She considered pointing out that it was potentially dangerous to leave a hot beverage so close to electronics, maybe remind Oliver what happened to that laptop he spilled latte on, but in the last moment she refrained. It felt like teasing him like that could easily be seen like she was leading him on, or something. And that was the last thing she wanted at the moment.

So she just smiled at him when noticing he was looking in her direction. And then Felicity paused when her brain registered that Oliver Queen arrived to work before she did. For a moment she wondered if she should pinch herself just to make sure she wasn't dreaming, but she had a feeling if she was he would have been shirtless and there would be a salmon ladder installed in the office.

Diggle, who stood in front of Oliver's desk, and was discussing the security details for the upcoming gala, had to roll his eyes when he realized Oliver didn't hear a single word he said after Felicity entered his field of vision.

Oliver's blue eyes finally snapped back at him after Dig cleared his throat, and if the older man wasn't such a professional he would have pointed out a blush that formed on his friend's face.

And possibly call him adorable for staring at his soulmate like a lovesick puppy. One that is currently in the doghouse for the unforeseen future.

A ding signaled the arrival of the elevator, which wasn't strange.

A shrill scream that followed was.

Chapter End Notes

Between my Birthday and the relatives visiting I had very little time to write. But I am glad to finally finish this chapter cause it was mostly a filler and the next ones will have more action in them.
If the desk didn't house a computer Diggle was certain Oliver would leap over it to get to the office doors faster. But it did, and Oliver was smart enough not to do anything that would damage the piece of technology, cause it would result in Felicity reading him a riot act.

Be as it is, the two men rushed to the front office and stopped in front of the EA desk, shielding the blonde with their bodies. A very brave move, but apparently unnecessary. Because while they expected some criminal, maybe high on Vertigo, who by some chance found out Oliver Queen in the vigilante and now wanted to get to him by harming his soulmate... that wasn't who was standing in front of the closed elevator doors watching them in confusion.

Not in the least.

"Mom!" Felicity's voice registered and the two men shared a look. Diggle mouthed 'mom', his face clearly showing his confusion, before they faced the surprising visitor.

Felicity ignored them, snorting a bit at the fact they were frozen like statues, and rushed to hug her mother. She missed her, despite the fact it's only been days since they last seen each other. Frankly, with everything that happened, it felt like years have passed since she traveled to Vegas to get away from the mess that was personal life.

Oliver blinked a few times, looking like a fool, while he observed the blonde woman in a bright, and maybe slightly too tight dress, who was hugging Felicity. Truth be told he never actually imagined what her mother looked like, but if he did this would be the last thing he would expect. Sure, she lived and worked in Vegas, but he never considered that Mrs. Smoak might be the walking personification of the bright city.

"Well, hello there..." Donna said as looked over her daughter's shoulder, "Honey, you have the best view in the entire city, and I'm not talking about the one from the window."

Felicity instantly blushed. Yeah, she had a feeling this was coming sooner or later. Her filter malfunctioned at times, but her mother lacked one all together.

Diggle's shoulder shook slightly as he tried to contain his laughter. Felicity looked mortified, and Oliver opened and closed his mouth a few times, obviously not expecting that kind of compliment. For a guy who spend a good part of his teenage years being chased by females it was unexpected for him to be caught of guard.

But then again none of these women were his soulmate's mother.

"John Diggle, ma'am." he introduced himself.

Instantly Donna grabbed, and tightly squeezed her daughter's arm, "Did you hear that? He called me ma'am. Such amazing manners."

"Mom, please..." was all Felicity managed to mutter, before Donna started to talk again.

"And you must be Oliver Queen. Felicity told me she works with you when she visited." he barely got the chance to confirm and welcome her to Queen Consolidated, before Donna's sparkling blue
eyes suddenly became serious, "Now, I know my Felicity is skilled, and will adapt to any situation... but I did not work 80 hours a week, in heels, to help her through college so she wouldn't have to take one of those awful student loans that suck out all joy out of you and force you to slave for years to pay them off, and... why is my little girl working as your secretary, Mr. Queen?"

Oliver blinked a few times in shock, Donna's voice went from cheerful to dead serious in a matter of seconds. She might appear all warm and bubbly, but she was just like his mother. A woman not to be trifled with.

"Like you said, she is very skilled and-

"And I didn't raised her to fool around! So if you want to be that boss that sleeps with his secretary you better find a new one! Cause my Felicity-"

"Mom, you have nothing to worry about." Felicity said after gently placing a hand on her mother's forearm. She actually did it to ensure Donna wouldn't march right up to Oliver and slapped him in the back of the head, "I am most certainly the last woman Oliver is interested in."

Felicity could see the instant change on Oliver's face, the exact moment his expression revealed how much her words affected him. And how sorry he was that she was given that impression.

Donna huffed, and glared slightly at Oliver, before she sighed, shook her head, and gave him a bright smile. The speed in which her mood changed was astonishing, and left the two men wondering what just happened.

Finally she spoke, her voice revealing none of the previous annoyance with him, "You are lucky that you are so cute. Almost as cute as Ray. And speaking of him..." she suddenly started to rummage through her purse, that was about the size of Santa's bag, before she pulled out a perfectly wrapped gift that she handed to Felicity, "He is sending his greetings and a thanks. Spoke very fondly of you when I saw him, said he had a great time during your dinner."

Felicity had a very good feeling what was in the gift and she felt giddy. She couldn't wait to open it and see if it was everything Ray imagined it to be. But first she had to deal with some paperwork before she had the time to play with her new gadget.

"I'll give him a call later on to thank him." she said with a smile and Donna nodded, agreeing with her plan.

"Do you need a ride to your hotel?" Diggle asked, eying the suitcase Donna rolled in when she entered the executive floor.

"Nope." Felicity answered for her mother, "No hotel." she marched around her desk, took her house keys out of her purse, and handed them to Dig, "My place. And no stopping to any boutique between here and there. I'll be home in a few hours."

Donna pouted for a moment before facing Oliver, and giving him another bright smile, "I don't suppose Felicity could play hooky today."

He shook his head, "Sorry. Any other day, and it wouldn't be a problem, but there is a big meeting with the board today and Felicity's attendance is crucial, she is irreplaceable."

Donna nodding, "That she is, and don't you forget it." she pointed her finger at his nose.

Diggle snickered, but sobered when Oliver looked in his direction. He was having far too much fun with this situation. The elevator doors opened with a ding, and then closed, hiding the pair, and
instantly Felicity sighed. She adored her mother, but her presence made things a bit more complicated.

Before Oliver managed to open his mouth and comment Felicity walked around him, and around her station, and grabbed a file from her desk that she held out to him. When Oliver only looked at it, without reaching out to take it from her hand, she sighed yet again, "It's not a bomb, it's financial estimation for the next trimester. Go through it before the meeting so I don't have to do all the talking during the meeting again. Oh, and you need to talk to your mother."

Oliver, who just took the offered file from her, and opened it to check it out froze, "My mother?" he gaped at her, "Why?"

"Because of the shares Isabel bought during a takeover. I called Stellmore and the CEO's EA informed me he is currently unavailable. My guess is he's trying to salvage his marriage. So she suggested calling the owner, and I instantly thought about your mother cause she seems to know everyone worth over 5 million, and maybe she can get answers from him." Felicity took a deep breath, calmed her thoughts, and continued, "Stellmore needs to decide if they want to continue with a takeover which they didn't want in the first place, and send someone to QC to take over Isabel's position as the VP, or pull back and release the shares, in which case the Queen family could buy them back."

Oliver groaned. After everything that happened it completely slipped his mind that Queen Consolidated wasn't completely safe. It was a good thing that he had Felicity by his side to let him know if something escaped his attention.

He wasn't just being polite when he told Donna Smoak that her daughter is irreplaceable. He truly meant that.

Felicity ignored the man that stood on the doorway of his office, expecting he'll finally go inside and do his part of the job, and focused on the small, perfectly wrapped gift. The paper was deep blue with a red bow, and Felicity instantly remembered the times she carefully unwrapped her gifts as a child cause she didn't want to rip the wrapping paper. She never used it for anything, and it was pushed in a drawer somewhere, but she just had to keep it cause it was so pretty.

"What is that?" a question startled her, causing her to jump a little in her chair, and instantly Felicity glared at the smug looking bastard that watched her with a small smile. Her reaction obviously amused him. But then his eyes dropped on the gift in her hands and his smile changed into a frown.

"I got a present from Ray." she answered with a shrug, like it was an every day thing.

Oliver nodded, took a deep calming breath, and asked, "And Ray is...?"

"Someone I met while in Vegas." Felicity leaned back in her chair and observed her soulmate closely for the signs she was certain would be there. The clinched fist, the tension in his jaw, the anger in his eyes.

He was upset, jealous, and she was not impressed.

"Same someone you mentioned when you called me while drunk and said you-"

Oliver stopped talking mid-sentence when Felicity suddenly stood up, her eyes clearly showing the storm that raged inside of her. Her anger was slowly growing, and she tried to suppress it, not let her bloodlust get the better of her in their workplace where someone, like a board member, might come to the executive floor and witness it.
"Yes!" she still snapped, "The same guy I considered fucking, just so you would know how it feels like when the burn swallows you whole. But I didn't, and I won't! I'm not you, Oliver! And I don't appreciate you acting like a neanderthal over a 'thank you' gift another man sent me!" Felicity took a deep breath to calm herself. So much about not letting her anger rule her.

"I'm sorry." Oliver instantly said, and he felt it. He acted like a jealous fool, when he had done much worse things, "I'm trying to figure things out. Figure out what we are, and where the boundaries are. I never done that before."

"That's cause you usually just jump in a bed with a girl." Felicity pointed out, and a lack of a smile on her face told Oliver she wasn't saying it as a joke.

He nodded, accepting her words as the truth. But he had to tell her, had to inform her that fool is gone, and with the support of his sister and a friend he realized what he had to do. What he wanted.

"I don't do that this time. I want more with you, cause you deserve it."

Felicity snorted, but sobered when noticing Oliver's serious expression, and a brief hurt that appeared in his eyes at her instant mockery of his words, "Sorry. But that sounded... it was like you were saying you want to wait till out first wedding night, and-"

"I do." he responded seriously, and Felicity gaped at him, "I want to marry you. When you are ready, when I managed to redeem myself for the pain I caused you, I want to be with you. But I didn't ant you to be like the others who didn't matter. Because you do, because you are everything. I want to make you my Queen."

Felicity was silent for a few moments, her brain close to short-circuiting in an attempt to process his words. She couldn't deny that he was completely honest with her, she learned to read him a while ago and knew when he straight out lied.

The revelation that he wanted her to be his wife was the last thing she expected to hear today, and she honestly didn't know what to say to that. Oliver Queen was her soulmate, but that didn't mean instant feelings of love. She cared for him, and she was angry at herself for months, because she was raised differently. She didn't supposed to fall for someone who wasn't meant for her.

And then the truth was revealed and she was left wondering where to go from there.

They weren't ready to be more then friends, they were miles away from that point where she would be comfortable with being his girlfriend, or fiance, or wife. Or as he said it...

"Did you just said you want to make me your Queen? That is so cheesy!"

Her initial plan fell in water once her mother showed up in QC, so instead of going to the Foundry after work, she would have some unexpected free time. That suited Felicity just fine cause she needed a few hours away from Oliver to process what he told her today.

Yeah, she was so not expecting that.

All in all Felicity was glad to see her mother again, usually she only saw her once a year when she visited Vegas around the time of the anniversary of her father's death. She was glad even if that caused her to cancel her plans of finally figuring out who was out there playing with the computers and giving her a headache. She already send Oliver out in a wild goose chase twice, and she was getting fed up.
Looking on her smart watch, the one she got as a gift from Ray, she noticed it was early enough that her favorite Italian down the street still served their dinner menu. That will make things a lot easier.

Donna was lounging in the living room, in jeans and a soft pink tracksuit top with a hood. It was such an unusual look for her mother, and Felicity actually gaped at her for a moment, not used to such a casual appearance. Well, casual for Donna Smoak anyway.

The smell of pasta spread through the apartment and earned Felicity an appreciative smile from her mother, this was basically the closes thing to a home-cooked meal possible considering their abilities.

"So..." Donna didn't even wait for her daughter to take a seat before she went into curious mom mode, "He's pretty cute."

Pretending not to know what her mother was talking about she just shrugged. Also, cute is not a right word to describe Oliver Queen. Hot as fuck seems more appropriate, but then again her mother hadn't seen him shirtless. And she was thankful for that, cause Felicity was certain she would never be able to look Oliver in the eyes if she ever witnessed her mother gushing over his abs.

"I suppose." she finally muttered, after realizing her mother was waiting for her confirmation.

"It can not be easy for you working with him every day." Donna walked to Felicity who was standing at the kitchen island, the bag with a takeaway in front of her, with the containers still inside and untouched, "Has he found his soulmate yet?"

Instantly Felicity's mind moved to the conversation they had that day, and the revelation that shocked her, "Yeah, he... he found her, and today he announced he plans to marry her."

"I'm sorry, honey. It's obvious you have feelings for him, I mean I suspected when you came to see me, but today I got to see it for myself. It's a real shame this whole soulmate thing even exists, because you two might fit good together, after he stopped with the whole skirt-chasing thing that is." Donna said, and a small pout on her face made Felicity smile, "Honestly, it's getting rarer by the minute that people are actually waiting for their soulmates. I'm just glad I raised you well. No daughter of mine will be some skank who goes after another woman's soulmate."

"Wish others wold refrain from doing that too." Felicity muttered under her breath, but Donna was close enough to hear her. And seconds later Felicity got a surprise hug from her mother, and had to laugh in delight.

What Felicity didn't know is Donna knew a certain truth her daughter tried desperately to keep from her. She knew the cause of the mysterious bout of burning pain her little girl experienced when she was eleven. And she was not happy about it, not at all. There was a jerk out there that caused her daughter pain, and someday Felicity will meet him.

And someday he will meet Donna Smoak, and hear exactly what she fought about his indiscretions.

"No more boys talk!" the older woman suddenly announced, and grabbed the food from the counter, "Grab the utensils, let's eat. And then you can tell me what's new in your life."

Felicity watched her mother move back to the living room, but didn't move to get the forks for their dinner as told. Something about her mother's words kept poking at her mind, but she couldn't figure out what it was. Just... something.

Few moments later, after Donna told her to move her cute little ass, she grabbed the silverware, and two cans of soda from the fridge, and moved to the living room. The Smoak women weren't used eating at a dining table, but instead loved to make themselves comfortable on the couches and
"Um... about what's new..." Felicity trailed off, finally realizing what was so odd about this whole visit, "I thought you knew and that is why you decided to visit me in the first place."

"Knew what?" Donna asked, "What happened? Did something happened? Were you caught in some sort of scandal with that boss of yours? Because if he-"

"Mom!" Felicity snapped, "Calm down... everything is... okay. You were somewhat correct, but it's a bit more... not exactly a scandal, just..."

"Just tell me, baby. I can take it."

Instead of actually telling her mother what happened, Felicity chose to show her. She took her spare tablet from the coffee table, and went to the webpage of Starling Scandal. Unlike the more serious newspapers, the tabloid moved along with times and were now available online as well.

"The photo was taken a couple of nights ago. I thought you knew and that was why you came to visit me. But..." Felicity paused to think about it, "But you would have said something in Queen Consolidated, and you didn't. So you don't know."

"Honey, just give me that flat thing." Donna reached for the tablet, ignoring her daughter's voice as she corrected her, and instead focused on the paparazzi photo that was published on the cover.

She knew that mark, she had seen it countless times on her daughter's shoulder. Together with the smaller photo of Oliver, and the large title in bright bold letters, it was impossible not to connect the dots. Her baby found her soulmate!

And then a horrifying thought entered her mind, "He slept with the half of the female population of Starling!"

Felicity blinked in confusion, her mother didn't react in the way she expected her lately. So she just muttered a, "Yeah." and waited.

"Oh, I am so glad I won that plane ticket. Wait till I see that boy again, I have some things to tell him about how he's been treating his soulmate. I don't care if he plans to... oh..." Donna's eyes widened, and Felicity knew her mother remembered what she told her earlier in their conversation. And the response she's been expecting all alone if finally happening, "HE WANTS TO MARRY YOU!"

A loud crash echoes through the apartment, the sound of wood splintering, as the front door was forced open. Felicity instantly jumped out of the armchair and stepped between her mother and the intruders. Armed, dressed in black, and focused on their goal.

Get the girl.

Get the leverage.

And then get the money.

Chapter End Notes

Donna Smoak is by far the most fun character I ever had in any of my stories, and I've
been writing fanfiction for 11 years now. She is truly one of a kind.
Felicity reacted instinctively. The moment her front doors were busted open she was on her feet and standing between the intruders and her mother. She knew her ability to defend herself wasn't admirable as Oliver's or Diggle's, but there was no way she would just sit calmly and accept her fate without fighting back.

Four of them, all dressed in identical black uniform, were armed with mean looking rifles. Felicity instantly classified them as foot soldiers, while the general hid somewhere in the shadows like a coward. But just cause they were cannon fodder it didn't mean they were any less dangerous.

Still, she managed to take the first one by surprise, punch him which probably hurt her more than it did him. But she fought back, she refused to go down without a fight.

Donna screamed, "Leave my girl alone!" and rushed towards the one Felicity punched after he raised his rifle to hit her with the but of it. It resulted with the barrel being pointed in her face, but the man obviously never faced a momma bear before, because before Donna Smoak got knocked out she managed to scratch his face, despite the balaclava he was wearing.

"Just kill the bitch!" the man that cradled the side of his head said, nodding towards unconscious Donna.

"NO!" Felicity screamed, and tried to break free from the goon that grabbed her forearm tightly in an attempt to subdue her. They were amateurs, that much was obvious, but it also made them loose cannons. There was no way to predict how they will react in different situations.

"He said the old one is leverage." the man standing by the door, and keeping guard to ensure they aren't spotted reminded the others.

"He can kiss my ass! She scratched me." the injured one whined.

The one who was holding Felicity grumbled at him, "Stop acting like a little pussy. Just pick her up, we have to go."

"No!" Felicity tried to break free again. The guys weren't expecting her in the Foundry tonight, and that meant no one would notice her missing until she doesn't show up for work. When the guy reached for the plastic cuffs she kicked him in the knee, startling him, which resulted in him letting go of her arm. But in a small apartment Felicity didn't have anywhere to go, not with three other men present. But that didn't mean she wouldn't try.

Her purse was still on the kitchen counter, her phone next to it. If only she managed to got to it and activate the panic button she installed and linked to Oliver and Diggle's, then she would at least informed them she was in danger and needed help.

But she only managed to make a few steps in the right direction before the forth one intercepted her, pointing a rifle in her heart. Instantly Felicity gasped, her mind replying the moments before Slade embedded a knife into her chest. She got a miracle second chance then. She was pretty confident that wouldn't happen again.

A wet cloth was placed over her mouth and she was out cold before she even realized what was
going on. Once Felicity's body hit the ground the man that knocked her out using Chloroform ripped off the balaclava off his head.

"Why do hell do we need these bitches anyway if he's as smart as he claims to be?" he was pissed. The boss said it would be an easy job, get in, threaten the women, get out. Instead they came face to face with a mother that was willing to claw someones eyes out, and a daughter that punched way too hard for an IT nerd.

"I don't care." the guard answered, "I just want the money the younger one can get for us. So tie them up and let's go."

Oliver was talking on his phone when he exited the mansion and approached the town car parked in front. Diggle was already waiting by the open back door, ready to drive his boss, and friend, to work.

The older man raised an eyebrow when he heard Oliver saying the name of the person on the other side. He actually wondered how long it would take until she contacted her ex. The tabloid article stirred quite a commotion in Starling city, and everyone had an opinion on it. Lyla showed him some online forums discussing Oliver's love life in details, and Dig was quite horrified when he saw the amount of names that were mentioned as his friend's former paramount.

"We're making a stop at DA's office on the way to QC." he said after taking a seat behind the wheel.

Oliver, who was typing something on his phone, looked up from the device and met his gaze in the rear view mirror, "No. If Laurel wants to talk she knows where to find me."

"Aren't you in the least curious what she wants to talk about?" Diggle asked, even though he had a pretty good idea what the subject of that conversation would be.

"She said it wasn't something that should be discussed over the phone, so... I think I already know." Oliver reached the same conclusion as his friend. After all he and Laurel had barely any contact since the disastrous dinner he attended with the Lance family. He was dating Sara at the time, and that caused quite a bit of tension between the sisters.

"Your own mess, man." Dig pointed out seriously, and Oliver just nodded silently. He was well aware of that.

First thing the two men noticed when they exited the elevator on the executive floor was a lack of color. Despite Oliver being fine minutes late, a personal record cause he is usually arrives at least ten minutes later than he should, Felicity was still absent. The men shared a look and Diggle went to knock on the bathroom door to check if she was present. It was a bit much perhaps, but after what happened with Slade they were both a bit paranoid when it came to Felicity's safety.

Oliver just placed his jacket on the back of his chair when his phone started to ring. He fished it out of the suit jacket pocket and took note of the name on the screen. It was Lance.

He sighed and answered it, right away getting to the point, "Laurel knows where I am if she needs to talk to me." he repeated the words he told Diggle less than thirty minutes ago, "I don't need police escort to talk to my ex girlfriend."

Diggle, who already checked the bathroom, was now standing just inside the office as the police detective replied, "I don't fight my daughter's battles. And I'm not calling cause of her. Seriously, I wish I didn't have to make this call cause she is a sweet girl, and-"
"Felicity?" all color left Oliver's face and Diggle stood up straighter, waiting for information. Waiting for the order to go get their girl.

"Her neighbor came home from night shift in hospital and saw the front door was broken in. She went in to check, but didn't found anyone. We are already pulling surveillance from the cameras in the neighborhood. We'll find her. Um... do you have a... you know... a feeling that she's alright."

Oliver knew what the detective was asking right away, "My mark isn't burning, so she's alive." those words made Diggle step forward until he was standing on the other side of the desk, "Detective, Felicity wasn't alone last night. Her mom came to visit."

"Damn." Lance muttered under his breath. That was the last thing they need. Felicity's disappearance might be just someone hoping for a nice ransom from Queen family. A second person is usually either leverage, or just taken to ensure there were no witnesses. He hoped for the first option, after all they took Mrs. Smoak with them, they didn't kill her in her daughter's apartment.

"Let me know when you find anything and I'll--"

"You'll stay where you are. It's broad daylight, so the green guy can't come out to play. Just sit tight and leave everything to the police."

Oliver huffed, "My confidence in the police department is rather lacking, detective."

"Then believe me when I tell you I'll get her back to you, alright?"

The words took him by surprise. Quentin Lance was no fan of his, and the older man wasn't shy about it. It was a well known fact in the entire city. But he had a soft spot for Felicity, he respected her and admired her abilities, especially after she led him through the process of disarming one of the monstrous earthquake devices.

"I'll be in QC waiting for your call." Oliver finally said, "Call me if anything happens."

Diggle was tense as he watched Oliver cut the call and before he began to pace the length of his office. He was supposed to focus on business right now, but all he could think of is the fact his soulmate was taken right out of her home and he didn't know.

Once more she was kidnapped and he had no idea.

The though brought forward another one. His plan to do as both his sister and best friend suggested, and take things slow. Right now he pondered how difficult would be to persuade Felicity to move into the Queen mansion where he could keep an eye on her himself, because he didn't trust anyone but himself and Diggle with her life. Hell, he would gladly get her to marry him within a week because his name and pull would provide her with extra security.

But she would never go along with that plan.

"Tell me you got something." Quentin Lance said as he entered the small room that made the IT department of Starling city police department. The equipment wasn't top notch, but they made do with things they got. The computers were a few years old, purchased after the election of the previous mayor, as a sign of appreciation to the chief of police for supporting his candidature.

Only one guy lifted his head, the others ignored the detective and continued working on their own assignments. Holt was brilliant, and wasting away in this place. But the young man never complained, just did his job as best as he could, which seemed to be almost at Miss Smoak's level.
Honestly the kid was brilliant.

"I pulled in surveillance feeds from all traffic cameras in one mile radius of Miss Smoak's building. I'm still waiting for the warrant that would get me security videos of private business which might give me something extra to work with, since those tend to be a better quality and therefore I might see the kidnappers better."

Lance nodded, "Detective Hilton already got the judge to sign one. Things move a lot faster when the victim's photo is all over the news for being Oliver Queen's soulmate. Several patrol officers are already collecting tapes."

Curtis Hold nodded. When the detective entered the room that morning and said he needed one guy to do his magic and locate Felicity Smoak who was reported as missing he instantly volunteered. He knew the woman, not personally, but by reputation. She was a genius with computers, and he hoped he'll someday have the honor of working with her. That was why he moved to Starling city a few months ago, but unfortunately QC wasn't hiring due to the fact they were in a middle of a takeover.

He actually considered moving to Central city after his application was rejected, but he met Paul, his soulmate. And during a date they bumped into detective Hall who was Paul's patient once, and she recommended he applies in the SCPD IT department.

He got a respectable job, and a stable relationship. It was a good choice to stay.

Quentin Lance personally drove Donna Smoak to the hospital. Her daughter was a lovely young woman, one he admired for her integrity, and loyalty to the man that didn't always deserve it. Because of that he wanted to make sure the older Smoak woman arrived to the hospital as fast as possible.

Her only external injury was the cut on the side of her head where one of the kidnappers obviously hit her, and she was surprisingly calm. He actually expected her to be hysterical. But instead she sat ramrod straight in the passenger seat of his cruiser, just staring out the window.

His mind went back to the team storming the warehouse that Holt identified as the place where the kidnappers took the Smoak women. The bastards didn't even try to hide from cameras. They parked directly in front of Felicity's building, and from there it wasn't a hard job following the van all the way to the decaying part of Glades. Only the police didn't find everyone they were looking for. Only two men were present, and only Mrs. Smoak was still being held in the warehouse.

For a moment Lance feared she was dead from the way she was placed in the chair, with her head slumped forward. Luckily he realized that wasn't the case, once the kidnappers lowered their weapons and lied down on the floor without a single bullet fired. They weren't prepared, which was fortunate.

But they also weren't talking, which wasn't fortunate.

A call to Hold informed him the warehouse is right over an old subway track, apparently there was a station just under it, and the other two kidnappers must have used what was left of the tunnels to get away with Felicity.

That told Lance this was a more carefully thought out plan than he initially thought. These guys took their time, investigating the remaining tunnels, checking out which ones were still standing after the Undertaking. And that made his suspicious of their actual motive.

This wasn't about kidnapping Oliver Queen's soulmate and ask for ransom. It was bigger than that.
And that worried him.

Because he only knew one person who was capable figuring out such puzzles in a short amount of time, and she was the one who was missing.

"Mrs. Smoak." he called her name to get her attention once they arrived in front of Starling general. When she turned her head to look at him, a movement which gave him a chance to notice her eyes were the exact same shade of blue as her daughter's. He nodded towards the building, "We are here."

Donna turned and looked out the window, before turning back towards the detective, "I don't need a hospital, I need my daughter to be safe."

He nodded instantly, hoping she won't become difficult and uncooperative, "I understand, but I want to have a doctor examine you just in case. If something happens to you because I didn't do my job my personnel file might suddenly say I'm deceased. And that is if I'm lucky."

Donna smiled, "Yes, my Felicity is very protective of those close to her."

"No kidding." Lance muttered under his breath.

The doctor was examining Donna when detective called Oliver to inform him about the development in the case. He knew Queen didn't have access to street cameras now that Felicity wasn't on his side, and therefore wasn't aware only one Smoak woman was being held in the deserted warehouse. The other one was moved to another location using the old subway tunnel, and therefore the police had no idea in which direction to search.

Lance wondered how much simpler his life would be if all old and abandoned warehouses were leveled to the ground and that space turned into a park or something less ominous. Seriously, the city had too many perfect hideouts for criminals of all shapes and sizes, and the police lacked the manpower to bring all those opportunists to justice.

Oliver rushed through the hospital entrance, not even bothering to ask the nurse for Donna's location or status. He was a patient enough times to know in which direction to look first. And the presence of detective Lance in front of a room door told him he was heading in the right direction.

"Detective."

"Queen."

"You said Felicity wasn't there. Do you have a lead on where-"

"I left an army of technicians combing every inch of that place for any sign of Felicity, or a clue where they might have taken her. I'm getting an update every ten minutes, but so far nothing."

Quentin Lance wasn't surprised to see the mask of calmness, one often confused with indifference, was slipping from Oliver's face. The younger man was almost shaking with nervous energy. He yearned to be out there, roaming the streets in search of his soulmate, but at the moment that wasn't the possibility.

It was a middle of the day, no time for the Arrow to be prowling the city.

The detective hoped the past won't be repeating itself. He may not have liked Queen in the past, and still wasn't fond of him, but he had seen with his own eyes how he was after Felicity was killed. He got a miracle, he got her back, and if he was to lose her again... Lance didn't believe Oliver would survive the loss the second time. He would follow her.
The doctor pronounced Donna healthy, and without any serious injury. A few scraps and bruises, and the cut on her head that luckily didn't required stitches, but those weren't anything for the woman that spends hours in high heel shoes every single night. Some tender skin around her wrist, from those bastards using rope to tie her to a chair, didn't hurt nearly as much as that time she got a blister on her heel and it broke just before her supervisor asked for her to stay for few more hours cause they have some big gamblers coming.

Yeah, this pain was manageable. It's nothing compared the pain the person who took her baby girl will be in once she got her hands on them.

She followed the doctor outside, and instantly noticed the handsome detective was no longer alone. Instantly she recognized Oliver Queen as the person he was talking to, and she just reacted.

The loud slap echoed through the wide hallway, and a few people looked around to see what was going on. But since Oliver remained silent, just watching the older woman who had the same blue eyes as her daughter, no one realized he was the one who was just slapped, rather forcefully too, by his soulmate's mother.

Eyes that were full of fire and anger, and it was directed at him. She was ready, and willing to yell, but Donna was smart enough to know Felicity would not like if she caught too much attention, and if the things she needed to say to Oliver ended up published in the tabloid cause someone overheard her and sold the information.

So she leaned closer and hissed at him, "No eleven-year-old girl should end up in an ER, screaming in pain, because her soulmark was burning. The nurse there told me what was going on, and while Felicity learned to hide the effect I knew when she was in pain. And it was all because of you."

Seconds later she hugged him, and Oliver didn't waste any time in hugging her back. She confused the hell out of him, but if she needed his comfort he would give it. He owed her after everything he made her only child go through.

"Mrs. Smoak-

Donna cut Oliver off, before he spoke some empty words of comfort, by grabbing his arms as tightly as she could, "They are going to find my girl. And when they do you will ask her out on a date."

Oliver blinked a few times, wondering how in the world Donna manages to switch from momma bear to a polite lady in a single heartbeat. And then he remembered his mother was exactly the same. A moment later he realized what she said.

"Mrs. Smoak I promised to give Felicity space so that she-"

"Pfff... let me tell you something here Oliver. When a girl says she needs space and time to process things she doesn't always mean it. Sometimes she just wants a guy to make a move and sweep her off her feat."

"Sometimes... how do I know if this is that sometimes?"

Donna shrugged, "Take a chance and ask. What's the worst thing that could happen?"

It wasn't the answer Oliver hoped for. The insight into a woman's psyche by one Donna Smoak was basically her telling him to take a leap of faith and hope for the best. Not the most comforting thing. But at least she didn't slap him again.

It didn't hurt all that much, but it did took him by surprise. As did Lance who looked quite shocked.
And also quite pleased. Honestly, Oliver wouldn't be surprised if the detective asked Mrs. Smoak out to dinner before she returned to Vegas. He'll have to give Felicity a heads up so she doesn't get blindsided by a possible date of her mother and the policeman that once brought her in for questioning.

Felicity groaned and slowly opened her eyes, before groaning once more and closing them. Her head was throbbing, it was like a really bad hangover only without the fun of having some sweet alcoholic cocktail before. Or a bottle of a nice red wine.

She took a deep breath and tried to remember what she noticed in the few seconds she dared to keep her eyes open. The single light bulb hanging from the ceiling, gray walls that looked way too close to each other, and a shape that looked suspiciously like a door.

All that combined meant she was being held in a really tiny room somewhere in Starling, more than likely in Glades, since that was a go-to place for all criminals in the city.

Felicity slowly moved her hand to check her pocket, but the phone that was usually there was absent. Then she remembered taking it out and leaving it on the kitchen counter next to her purse after returning home from work. Damn.

A gasp escaped her lips, and Felicity sat up, momentarily ignoring her headache, as she remembered her mother was also in her place where those bastards broke in. They took her mother. And she wasn't here. The small room was empty apart from her, and completely silent.

Which meant the footsteps she was now hearing were coming from the outside.

She wondered if she should call out, inform whomever was out there that she was in here, and being kept against her will. But chances are that someone already knew that. That this someone was responsible.

Footsteps seized in front of the door of the small room, and the sound of the key being turned filled the tense silence.

Suddenly the light in the room got turned off, throwing everything in complete darkness. The small sliver of light that came from below the door wasn't enough for Felicity anything. She could wave a hand in front of her own face and not see it.

Seconds later the door was pushed open, and someone pointed a flashlight at her, momentarily blinding her. It was a good way of making her worry what was going, of making her scared. Psychological games at their finest.

A chuckle made her blink a few times, before her captor turned off the flashlight. She couldn't see his features, the light was bright behind him and not giving away anything apart of his height and build. That is what told her it was a guy.

His voice told her she knows him.

Or actually, knew him.

"I'm disappointed in you Felicity. You didn't just become a corporate lapdog. You became Oliver Queen's bitch."

Felicity opened and closed her mouth a few times, her voice failing her for probably the first time in her life. Finally after what seemed like hours she uttered the name of a dead man, "Cooper?"
He approached her slowly, like she was a scared animal, until he was a footstep away. Then he crouched down to so they were at the same level. Her facial features were still obscured, but she didn't need to see them to know what he looked like. She remembered him all too well.

"I have a job for you, Felicity. And it is in your best interest to do exactly what I tell you, cause I made sure to have a leverage."

"My mom..." she whispered, before her anger bubbled up. The bloodlust she was usually keeping contained was now seconds away from exploding. But then a gun barrel was placed at her forehead, and Felicity realized this guy in front of her wasn't the same one that she believed to have died in prison after being arrested. So she took a deep breath, calming down her rage, and made sure he understood one thing, "Harm her... or harm me... and there isn't a single place on this planet where you could hide from him."

"Whom? Oliver Queen?" Cooper asked mockingly.

"No." Felicity raided her gaze until she was looking in what she hoped were his eyes. She needed him to understand exactly whom he provoked, "The Arrow."

Chapter End Notes

I fell bad for not updating sooner, but the hellish heat was frying my brain cells one by one.
But I finally finished it, and will start working on the next chapter tomorrow (hopefully).
"The Arrow?" Cooper mocked, "That green freak that's roaming Starling city? Sure I have to worry about him. He's just yearning to impale me with one of his toys."

Cooper was so preoccupied with acting untouchable he didn't notice when Felicity's gaze turned icy. She once respected her former classmate, before he showed her his true face, and even then she felt bad after learning about his death, but all that went away when he decided to mock the Arrow.

"I bet the Count thought the same." she said casually.

"Whose he?" Cooper asked as he unlocked one handcuff that held her tied to a chair, and pulled at it tightly, forcing her to move her right hand close to her left one, that was still bound, before locking it around her wrist, making the two cuffs around her wrist scrape at one another. Moments later he unlocked the cuff that kept her left hand bound, and left the spare handcuff hanging off the chair.

He didn't even have to tell her to stand up, Felicity did it on her own and with every drop of smug overconfidence she could muster. Cooper blinked in shock at the small smile that was decorating her face. He sent his men to kidnap her, she was his prisoner... and she was smiling.

"The Count... oh, he's a drug manufacturer who thought it was a god idea to threaten me. He's dead now." Felicity's voice was also confusing for her captor. She was rather flippant about the whole thing. He had no idea it was all an act, her way of shaking him up a bit, "He fell out of the 18th floor window, of course after getting three arrows in the torso. Right about..." Felicity moved her hands, that were bound in front of her body, and touched Cooper's chest, "Here."

The movement, as well as the words, made him step away from her. And Felicity barely managed to contain her laughter. Her plan worked. He was reconsidering his plan, alright.

But the greed was obviously stronger then Cooper's sense of survival, so moments later he grabbed the chain that connected the cuffs and pulled at it, leading Felicity out of her small prison. Still, her words refused to leave his mind.

The bank of computers that waited in the middle of the large space was all set for the plan. Currently all the monitors had the same image on, a fiery eye that made Felicity snort.

"What?" Cooper asked instantly, before pushing her in the office chair more forcefully then necessarily.

Felicity questioned her plan of taunting him, making him lose his cool. It was potentially dangerous, but it could also help her. If he's pissed off there is a bigger chance he'll make a mistake she could take advantage of.

"Nothing. Just realizing the years haven't changed you much. Eye of Sauron, with just a few tweaks. You can't make your own mark, any more than you could make your own supervirus."

Instantly Cooper slammed his hands on the armrests of the chair, and leaned forward until his face was only inches away from Felicity's. She could feel his breath, see the fire in his eyes, and almost feel his anger.
"I don't need mine when I have yours." he snared, "I offered you the digital world, and you refused me. And for who? A trust fund brat. All you had to do is give me access, but you refused. So I took it myself. Your precious virus."

"I destroyed the only copy." Felicity instantly responded, not amused that he would even suggest such a thing, "Bashed the drive into pieces before tossing them in the annual bonfire. There is no way-"

"For a genius you are pretty stupid. You didn't even check the drive. Cause if you did you would have found my message." he grinned at her, before pulling away and stepping towards the desk that housed the monitors and the keyboard, "I got into your dorm and replaced your USB drive with an identical one. those brain cells, and you never noticed. And now you will pay, just like I did."

"What the hell are you talking about? And while I'm asking; where is my mother? I know they took her too, and if something happens to her I will personally-"

"You will what? You can't do shit." Cooper said with a wide grin, "She is so gullible. Winning a plane ticket in a random game... please. I made sure she is right here in Starling! Me! Your precious mother is prisoner, and she will remain one until you do as I say! Disobey me and she will pay for it! Do you understand? Good. Now pay attention what I'm saying. Your virus was good, but not as good as I expected, so I got busted. It took a deal with the NSA to prevent me from going to prison for 20 years. Instead I was forced to be their little servant, follow orders like a trained mutt, and hated every seconds of it. Those five years gave me a lot of time to think, and you know what I concluded... you knew the virus wasn't as good as you claimed. Not with someone else using it. It had to be you, because you built in a safety switch. I wasted five years of my life, and now you will make sure I get compensation for it."

"Even if I cooperate and do... whatever it is you want me to do cause you are too stupid to do it yourself... you will never leave this city. I guarantee it." Felicity made sure to inform him.

But he wasn't impressed by her warning, "And who will stop me once I have the money? The incompetent police or the green freak that you obviously think is some sort of hero? Besides, haven't you heard? Rich people don't actually go to prison."

Felicity merely snorted. She was wasting her time and she knew it. Cooper has been stubborn from the day she met him in MIT, from the moment he started pursuing her in hopes she'll give in and help him. It was a dumb idea from the start, and she told him that numerous times, but he refused to listen. That was his biggest flaw, he just refused to believe someone was a bigger expert at coding than he was. And at the same time he practically demanded she helps him, trying to persuade her it was for a greater good.

Knowing what she knows now Felicity was glad she didn't use her usual tricks when creating the virus, or it would lead the FBI straight to her, and she was pretty certain they wouldn't believe her that she had no idea Cooper used it, or that he even had it.

What she didn't understand though is why he didn't tried to place the blame on her when he got busted. Why he didn't point a finger in her direction, said it was her creation and her idea, and ruined her future before it ever began. It didn't make any sense, but then again nothing made sense about Cooper Seldon.

Footsteps attracted Cooper's attention and he turned to see one of his guys walk in. The man didn't say anything, just nodded his head towards the exit. After throwing a glance towards Felicity to make sure she is bound to the chair he went to check what was going on. And the news weren't good.
"Nate isn't responding. The police must have found the first location." he whispered the information to ensure the blonde woman in the other room doesn't hear him.

Cooper merely shrugged, "They knew that was the possibility, and they agreed to the plan anyway. You all did. But this place is safer and there is absolutely no way the cops can track us here. There are no functioning cameras in the old subway."

The man touched the long scratch on his face, "And I was so looking forward to making the bitch pay for this."

"Her daughter is inside. Once she did her job feel free to show her exactly what you think of her dear old mom's move." Cooper said nodding in Felicity's direction, and the guy grinned widely. The younger blonde was just as feisty as her mother. She'll do.

"The rifles are assembled and loaded. We are ready to go at any time."

With a nod Copper turned to walk back inside the main hall where his computers were waiting, "Time to start the plan, then."

Felicity watched carefully as he started to type something, observing the screens for any clue of what he was planing and which institution he was hacking. She knew it was something with serious protection, or he wouldn't need the virus and her assistance.

It took good ten minutes before Cooper managed to get into First National Bank's system and make the changes that blocked the most used ATM in the city, making it appear as it was empty. It would cause quite an uproar from all those who couldn't gain access to their accounts, but that was the perfect distraction. The police would be so involved in calming them down all other issues will be ignored.

People were so predictable. And Cooper would reap the benefits of it.

He clicked Enter and the order was executed, the first part of his plan working flawlessly. He smirked and turned towards Felicity.

She wasn't impressed, "I can hack ARGUS's satellite faster than that."

Instantly she flinched a bit at the slip. That particular government agency wasn't as known as the usual alphabet, and general population had no idea they even existed. Cooper didn't either, which is why he mocked her, thinking she was exaggerating her abilities.

"The system is protected, so don't even try to contact the police. I will know, and I will make sure your dear old mommy pays for your attempt to undermine me. Now..." Cooper removed the handcuff from her left wrist, leaving it free, but the right one was bound to the metal bar on the desk next to the keyboard. One that looks suspiciously like the one that was on the desk in the interrogation room detective Lance used that one time when he questioned her about hacking Merlyn Global, "Now you will do exactly what I tell you to do."

"You are repeating yourself. It's annoying."

In a fit of rage Cooper grabbed Felicity's chin and forced her to focus on him, "Watch your mouth." he gritted through clenched teeth before pulling the gun out of the holster at his side and pointing it at her forehead, "Or I'll show you exactly what I am capable of."

When Felicity remained silent, choosing not to push her luck with an obviously unhinged guy, Cooper only grinned thinking he won. He had no idea his prisoner was already planing her next
move, because while he was out of the room and discussing something with one of his goons her smart watch beeped. It was a beacon of hope, a clue on how to get out of this situation.

Ray Palmer was brilliant, he made sure his invention had everything a good quality computer had too. And that included wi-fi. These computers in front of her might be protected, but nothing was truly safe from Felicity Megan Smoak.

"What the hell you want me to do?" she asked finally, not bothering to hide her anger.

"Central bank is sending freshly printed bills to fill the empty ATM. You will make sure the truck goes where I want it to go. Now..." he pushed her towards the desk, and since the concrete floor was smooth the force of the push caused her to hit her thigh into the hard metal leg of the desk. Instant pain went through her entire leg, and Felicity knew for certain that would leave quite a mark. Cooper ignored her hiss of pain, instead leaned forward and whispered into her ear, "Make me filthy rich."

He watched like a hawk while she typed, a smirk never leaving his face. She really was good, he had to admit that much, but he was obviously better. Because he knew how to exploit every advantage he had until he got exactly what he wanted.

His overconfidence was his ultimate downfall. Because he eventually left Felicity without supervision, leaving the room to inform his guys the trucks were on their way and will arrive at their destination in approximately two hours. That gave the genius blonde just enough time to access the Internet via her watch and send a short message.

Once the email sent she removed all trace of her activity and leaned back in the chair with a satisfied smile on her face. Oliver would understand what she meant, and she will come for her. She was certain of it.

When Cooper mocked the Starling City Police Department, and called them incompetent, he couldn't be more wrong. Because while they struggled with the shear amount of criminals that operated within the city limits once they had what they needed their response time was impressive.

Detective Lance was shouting out orders when the precinct doors opened and Oliver walked in, closely followed by Diggle. That fact he arrived didn't surprised anyone, they all learned the truth when the tabloid published the photos. Only now no one saw him anymore as the screw-up kid that caused trouble and then hid behind his family name and money. Now he was a man whose soulmate is in danger. Again.

"Queen." Lance greeted him shortly before turning towards Curtis who arrived from the IT department, "Holt, I'll presume they have a way of tracking the truck's route. Can you somehow make them see what we want them to see?"

The younger man shook his head, "I was about to mention it actually... I don't think I can. They infected the bank's system with something super big, and super complicated. I have never seen anything like that in my life. It's a truly thing of beauty, but unfortunately it is so complex it would take me hours, maybe even days, to gain control over it to an extent needed to fool them."

"Wait a minute?" Oliver interrupted before Curtis managed to say anything else, "You are still sending the truck, even though you know it's a trap and they are waiting for it?"

"We are the ones setting up a trap, Queen." the detective answered, before turning to focus back on the IT expert.

"I'm coming with you." Oliver said, his tone of voice making it clear he won't be changing his mind,
and Lance might as well accept is decision. Diggle turned towards his friend and frowned in his direction. Right away the billionaire felt the need to defend himself, "I won't be in the way and will obey orders."

Quentin Lance just coughed at that, but remained silent. Truth be told he wouldn't have a problem with Oliver coming along, his presence at the scene would most certainly calm Felicity down. Not that he expected the blonde to be hysterical or something like that. She was obviously a whole lot more tougher then your everyday girl, she hangs out with vigilantes.

But that girl has already been through enough, and he will never, for as long as he lives, forget the day she admitted to him she was actually killed before brought to life in some mysterious way.

But there way no way he would ever utter those words to Oliver Queen. He will rather leave the kid thinking he still dislikes him for a whole array of reasons.

Finally, after a prolonged silence, during which Diggle wondered if he should point out to his friend exactly how much he sucks at following someone elses orders, the older man nodded in acceptance. And instead of saying what he initially planed Dig nodded in the general direction of the exit, "I'll return to the hotel then and keep an eye on Mrs. Smoak. I know there is a policeman outside, but better safe than sorry. Let me know when Felicity is safe."

"Will do." Oliver answered shortly, before focusing on Lance's conversation with the guy that went on and on about some technical computer things that he didn't understand. And judging by the slightly glazed look in the detective's eyes it was easy to conclude he had no idea what the guy was talking about either.

The younger man was smart, Oliver had to admit that. He only heard one person throwing out words like firewall and algorithm in that speed. If this guy, he was certain the detective called him Holt, knew all these things than why was he working in the police and not in any of the big companies in the city. They would kill to have someone as knowledgeable as him.

Oliver made a mental note to ask Felicity to learn more about him. Maybe get him a job at QC that was more suited for him. But first he needed to get her back.

The plan was simple. If there was no way to get the truck to the precinct so that the policemen could get inside there, not without tipping the bad guys they were on to them, then the police would have to get to the truck. And the best place for that was in the middle of the city. Down side of it was they would have quite an audience, but there was no way around it.

And as expected the moment the money truck stopped on red light the back doors opened and the guard who drive back there jumped out. At the same time police officers exited several unmarked cars that were parked on either side of the street. Lance was closest to the armored vehicle, so he got in first, closely followed by Oliver. The billionaire sat on the side bench and remained quiet as others got in. Detective Hilton, who entered the last, shut the back door after himself. He nodded to Lance and his partner knocked on the metal plate that separated the driver from the cargo.

It was the usual signal, one that the former policeman who now worked as the driver for the bank knew well. They offered to put someone from SCPD to replace him, but he declined. He may no longer be in the police, but his sense of justice remained. The windshield was bullet proof, so unless the guys that were waiting for them had a rocket launcher, or something with a similar caliber, he was perfectly safe behind the wheel.

A quick glance to the side-view mirror told him the SWAT team truck joined the traffic a few cars away from him. That made him wonder exactly whom these bad guys managed to piss off.
Whomever it was they were going to pay a steep price.

"Are you shitting me?" detective Hilton asked after the truck back doors opened and the police man stormed out, their weapons pulled.

When the vehicle stopped he could feel the adrenaline pump through his body. They all were, despite knowing these guys weren't professionals. At least the two they had in custody weren't. Sure, they weren't talking, but hardcore criminals they weren't either. More like wannabe infamous guns for hire. But he was in the police long enough to know how these things worked. Leave the idiots to guard someone with less importance, and keep the capable guys at hand.

It turned out in these case there were no capable ones. Just a bunch of wusses who dropped down their weapons the moment the truck doors opened and they exited with their guns pulled.

The only one who caused trouble was the younger man who waved around a gun, but he too lowered it and raised his hands over his head when half a dozen barrels got pointed in his direction.

"Wish all my assignments were like this one." the commander of the SWAT team joked as he stepped next to Hilton.

"There might be more guys inside." Lance pointed out before looking back inside the cargo hold and pointing a finger at the sole man inside, "You stay in here until I tell you Queen."

The younger man only nodded, without protesting. Right away Lance eyes him suspiciously. That was way too easy, but he ain't complaining.

"Hey, Lance!" one of his men called his name and the detective turned around to see him holding the last guy who surrendered by his forearm, "Thought you might want to have the honor with the boss."

Quentin Lance couldn't put in words how much he enjoyed slapping handcuffs on the little bastard's wrists. He thought he was slick, that the police was never going to catch him. He was wrong.

The guy tried to break loose from Lance's grasp, although what he would accomplish by doing that the detective didn't know. It's not like he could just run away from the scene, there were quite a few people that would stop him. Starting with a billionaire that was slowly approaching them.

Lance had to hand it to Oliver. He actually listened to him this time and staying in the back of the money truck like he was told to. He never actually expected that to happen.

But then again he had a feeling Queen was smart enough not to risk betting caught in a crossfire in case the bad guys decide to make things more difficult for them. Not cause he would get hurt, but cause it would seriously piss off Felicity if he was injured for a dumbass stunt, instead of waiting for the armed SWAT team and the police to clear the area and make it safe.

"Hold still." Lance told the kid, cause frankly he didn't look over nineteen, and pulled him by his forearm when he tried to break free again.

Instantly the guy turned towards him and started to protest, "You have the wrong guy! The real mastermind is inside! She came up with the whole plan! I tried to stop her, had to restrain her when she threatened to-

The guy's hysterical protests were cut off when Oliver grabbed him by the front of his shirt. He knew there was no way the police would let him inside the warehouse right now, they were still checking
if there were any more armed guys waiting in ambush, but it seemed they were only a small group of five. And since he couldn't charge inside and get to Felicity, he would make this idiot stop telling lies.

"Whoa, hey!" Lance tried to make Oliver let go of the guy, but the enraged man refused to let go. Not until he made himself clear.

"Felicity has access to my bank account, my entire trust fund. That is more money that would be in hundred these trucks you were hoping to rob. But keep telling those lies, and see where that takes you... if you dare."

"Queen, let go!" Lance ordered, and this time Oliver listened to him.

The guy instantly grinned, "So you're her soulmate. I thought you were... more. But then again the frigid bitch doesn't deserve anything else but the guy like you."

"Keep talking, idiot..." Lance grumbled, "And I won't stop him when he punches you."

"That's police brutality." Cooper pointed out smuggle.

"I'm not the police." Oliver pointed out.

"And my guys would say you already had the black eye, and possible bruised ribs, and maybe a broken arm, when you got arrested. It would be your word against that of several police officers and a city's favorite reformed playboy who was so worried after his soulmate got kidnapped." Lance was getting bored with this guy.

Detective Hilton walked past them, looked at Cooper, and snorted, "If the news breaks out that this guy had Miss Smoak kidnapped the public will want his head. I swear people are more interested in Olicity relationship then their own."

"Olicity?" Lance asked his partner with a frown.

Hilton shrugged, "My wife reads a lot of trash tabloids. It stand for Oliver and-"

"Felicity!" her name escaped his lips the moment he saw her figure exiting the warehouse, an uniformed policeman behind her. She was walking on her own, and didn't look injured, but he needed to check. He needed to know for sure that she wasn't harmed.

Felicity yelped when Oliver's hands wrapped around her, and then she giggled. How could she not when he momentarily reminded her of the puppy that got excited it's owner returned home. Not that Oliver had anything in common with dogs, apart of his protectiveness and loyalty, and she didn't own him. But still... she was safe, and he showed it quite enthusiastically.

Someone laughed, but the pair ignored the policemen around them. Oliver because she was back in his arms where she belonged, and Felicity because she never felt more comfortable in her life than she in the safety of his hug.

"I'm sorry." she mumbled.

Instantly Oliver pulled back, and Felicity leaned in back to his warmth, but the look on his face stopped her. He wasn't angry, or upset. She knew all of his expressions, could read him like an open book, but right now she had no idea what she was seeing.

"Why are you apologizing?"
"Because I made you worry." she said in a matter-of-fact voice.

Oliver shook his head, not believing what he was hearing. What in the world made her think she needed to apologize, did she think she was a burden? Because she wasn't. She was everything to him, but never a burden. Knowing her, being allowed to call her his friend, having the honor of being her soulmate...

She made his life worth living, giving him a goal that seemed so unobtainable sometimes, but he would never keep trying.

And it starts now.

"I will always worry about you, Felicity. I felt the horror of life without you in it, and I never wish to feel that emptiness again. But you don't have to apologize to me for it, for anything. You are my soulmate... the woman that was meant for me, and that I... have feelings for. Do you understand?"

Felicity nodded silently, her words failing her like it rarely did before. Somewhere behind them they heard Lance call Oliver's name and remind him to ask her.

With a frown Felicity questioned, "Ask me what?"

Oliver looked sheepish, and scratched the back of his neck nervously, before approaching the subject, "I went to see your mom in the hospital. She was unharmed, and... she is quite opinionated. And also somewhat violent."

"Oh, God... what did she do?"

"She slapped me, but let's face it; I deserved it after all the pain I caused you with my-"

"She slapped you!" Felicity shouted, attracting even more attention for them. A SWAT member walked past them and snickered, a sound so odd for the man that was the same size as Diggle, and dressed in full gear, with a mean looking riffle in his hand.

Oliver glared at his back, before focusing on the blonde in front of him. He wanted... no, he needed to get her home where she would be safe. But her home wasn't safe at the moment, and he wasn't even sure if the police still had it closed off as a crime scene. And he had a feeling she would never agree to staying at the mansion. That left a hotel as the only option for the time being, and he wasn't all too happy with that. The security at Starling hotels were mediocre, even the best one wasn't good enough, not when it came to the safety of his soulmate.

But Oliver knew that was the only option Felicity would be comfortable with at the time being.

Felicity remained silent, waited for Oliver to find the words he needed to say, and instead observed the commotion around them. Several officers were carrying computer components from the warehouse, and loaded them in the back of the police van. That was really neat hardware, too bad it was supposed to serve for evil, and not good.

"Felicity, I... I was thinking, and then your mom suggested, or basically ordered... but I'm not doing it cause of her... I wanted to do this for a while, but I was a coward. I didn't think I had the right to ask, I still don't, but... I'm trying."

"Oliver." she said his name, did for him the exact same thing he did for her on a pretty much daily basis. Only for her talking in fragmented sentences was a must, she never seen Oliver do the same thing.
"Would you have dinner with me?" he finally asked, and then added for clarification, "Like a date. A date-date, not just two friends eating at the same time? I know I'm supposed to wait until you are ready, and all, but I... I just... I want to take you out to dinner, not just the Gala next week, but somewhere we can sit down and eat, and enjoy the company."

When Felicity's fingers wrapped around his own Oliver looked down in shock. That touch, the single small touch, meant the world to him. He didn't care how she saw it, to him it was a sign that there is hope, and that they are moving in the right direction.

"I would love to." Felicity finally said with a small grin, and Oliver sighed in relief, his shoulders slumping forward. All that nervousness, and in the end all he had to do was ask.

Chapter End Notes

I wanted to finish this chapter last week, but headache and hellish heat prevented me from writing.
The ending was supposed to be slightly different, but Olicity had such a nice moment together I didn't have the heart to ruin it for them.
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The bad guy, also known as Cooper Seldon, was in the back of the squad car, bitching about only wanting what should have been his, and Lance sighed. He arrested a lot of morons in his career, but this one is obviously trying to get on top of the list. Sure, he was computer savvy, but apparently not enough to do the dirty job himself which is why he had Felicity kidnapped. And that is what placed him on the idiot list.

Ever since the damn tabloid published the news Felicity Smoak became public's sweetheart, and everyone had an opinion on what she should do. Hell, he personally witnessed two little old ladies knitting and disusing her love life yesterday morning. He just wanted a cup of strong coffee, not to hear Betty White's classmate comment how Felicity needs to find someone better, and the idea this old grandma had is Felicity should move to Gotham and hook up with Bruce Wayne cause he has a better tush than Oliver Queen. Also the two men couldn't stand each other, so that was a bonus.

Then the second one went on and on how Felicity doesn't need to move all the way to Gotham to find a good looking guy who dislikes Oliver, there are plenty of those right here in Starling city.

By the time Quentin got in line for his coffee he was ready to jam the pen, that the barista had in her pocket, in his eye.

"Hey man, why aren't you arresting her for hacking into the system?" Cooper shouted and hit the car window with his hands, luckily not with handcuffs or he might have actually broke the glass, cause it would just give Lance extra paperwork.

He was about to tell Cooper to shut up, and that there is no way for Felicity to answer for a crime committed under the threat of death, when his phone ringed. It was actually a relief to have the reason to tell one of the officers to watch the guy and step away.

"Harvey? Did I mixed up the days again, cause I was certain we agreed to meet tomorrow for lunch?" Lance asked his old academy buddy who now worked as a guard in Iron Heights, and then listened to his answer. It wasn't what he expected to hear, and he wasn't even sure he heard him correctly, "Can you repeat that? Because it sounded like you said..." his eyes moved to the couple that now stood next to the ambulance while the medic checked Felicity. Damn, it seems those two wont be getting a break anytime soon. The detective sighed and responded, "Thanks for the heads up, although I wish it came earlier... no, no. I know you just got informed today, but my kid is in the DA's office, and had access to this information the moment the decision was made. Still, thanks for taking the time and call."

Lance moved automatically, and didn't even realized he was only a few feet away from them before Oliver's voice caught his attention, "Is everything alright detective?"

"What?" he asked, momentarily stunned, before nodding, "Yeah, I just... need to talk to you in private."

Oliver looked at Felicity who observed the exchange with a frown on her face. She saw the same thing he did; there was something going on that wasn't alright.

"I'm going to find out what's going on anyway, so you might as well save me the trouble detective
"Relax." Lance placed a hand on her shoulder, and instantly Felicity took a deep breath in an attempt to calm herself down, "Your mother is fine, she was rescued within an hour of your neighbor reporting a break in at your place. They didn't even try covering their tracks that led us straight to the warehouse where they were keeping her." the detective informed her, "Now, about this other matter..."

"Whatever you have to say to me you can say in front of Felicity." Oliver interrupted him, and Felicity smiled at his words.

"Right." Lance nodded, "Isabel Rochev is being released from prison tomorrow morning. The DA dropped all charges against her."

The silence the followed was completely understandable. And at the same time neither of them understood how that could possibly happen.

"But I thought..." Felicity looked from one man to another, "You said the stuff I found on QC servers was enough to implicate her in my kidnapping and... you know... murder." she whispered the last part, not wanting anyone to overhear.

"I don't know what the hell happened either." Lance admitted, "But I would very much like to know. But first I should take you two to the hotel."

"Detective." Oliver said to catch Lance's attention, and then paused. He wasn't sure how the next thing he planed to say would be received, but he hoped they would both understand he needed to do this himself, "I know you plan to talk to Laurel about this, rather than with DA Donner. I... I want to be the one to talk to her."

The older man looked at him closely, before his eyes shifted to the blonde standing on his right. If Felicity Smoak was displeased with that idea she didn't show it in any way. She did however comment on a completely different matter.

"What about your meetings from this morning? Oliver, the head of Applied Science wanted to talk to you about the possibility of hiring new people, and because of that I also scheduled a meeting with Accounting. You were supposed to be there-" she looked at the smart watch on her wrist, "Two hours ago!"

"It's fine. I rescheduled it." he tried to calm her down but she ignored him.

"It's not fine! Isabel is about to be free to mount her broom, and I seriously doubt she'll go down without a fight. Although if she ever comes anywhere near me she just might get just that... 3...2...1... Stellmore still has QC stocks and did you talked to your mother about it?"

"No." Oliver answered shortly, and hurried to add, "But I'll do it tonight." when Felicity opened her mouth to comment on it.

"Okay, kids. Let's go." Lance cut in before either of them managed to say anything else, "You have audience and I don't want to read about this in tomorrows paper."

Both blondes nodded and followed the detective towards a car. The second wave of police officers drove the vehicles that were left behind when the selected few got inside the money truck, and left
the keys inside. It was standard procedure. Although considering they were smack in the middle of
the Glades that might be considered testing the luck, cause the criminals here weren't all that bright,
so stealing a police car wouldn't be much of a surprise.

His Crown Victoria was still at the curb though, so Lance didn't have to deal with that paperwork
either. His day just might end better than it started.

Both Felicity and Oliver got in the back and the detective smiled at the irony. He had the vigilante
and his right-hand woman inside his car, and he wasn't driving them to the precinct to be interrogated
and processed. His life took a strange turn in the past several months.

They were almost at the hotel when Felicity suddenly turned towards her soulmate and asked
seriously, "When you said you rescheduled... did you meant that you made the call yourself, or-
"

"Dig did it." Oliver answered shortly, not looking at her.

Instantly Felicity snorted, "Diggle's secret identity is your black driver. He should get a raise for
dealing with your busy schedule too."

"Both of you should get a raise for dealing with him in general." the detective deadpanned.

Oliver actually laughed at the comment, "And here I though you started to like me."

Lance looked into the rear-view mirror, his gaze locking with Oliver's, "You thought wrong."

The seriousness of his voice and expression made Felicity laugh, because she knew for a fact the
detective was joking, and the lovely sound filling the car. And the look Oliver was giving her
because of it made Lance queasy. Oliver Queen was the CEO of a Fortune 500 company by day,
and the vigilante known as the Arrow by night, and here he was looking at Felicity Smoak with heart
eyes.

His life took a seriously strange turn in the past several months.

The sound of the key card unlocking the door signaled to John Diggle someone was about to enter
the hotel suite where the Smoak women were to stay until he personally ensured Felicity's home was
safe.

And he was ready to be there and stare over the locksmith's shoulder the entire time if necessarily to
be certain his work was good, and then he'll bring someone to install a new security system. That is
unless Oliver manages to persuade her to move into a more secure building, but he wasn't counting
on that.

The door opened and the blonde in question walking in slowly, and then paused when she noticed
him standing in front of a sofa.

"Oh." escaped her lips, before she smiled at him.

Dig expected Oliver to walk in behind her, but when Felicity closed the door, he frowned.
Something was going on if Oliver just let her out of his sight after this morning. Cause he might have
seemed calm in the precinct, and fooled everyone into believing he wasn't freaking out, Diggle know
better. He knew his friend was on the edge.

"Your morose shadow is suspiciously absent." he commented, "But I'm glad you are here... so I can
put a sub-dermal tracker on you. I swear between you and Oliver... you're slowly killing me here. I'm
"I'm sorry Dig." she mumbled, and then rushed towards her friend and hugged him. He instantly wrapped his hands around her too and squeezed lightly.

"Nothing to apologize for, it's not your fault. It's never your fault."

Felicity nodded, "That's what Oliver said."

"Where is he anyway?" Diggle asked curiously.

"He's a...um... He said my mom was here." Felicity changed the subject, albeit unsuccessfully because it earned her a look from Diggle that said their conversation is far from over. But he decided to indulge her for a moment, and answer her inquiry.

"Yeah. He's in the bedroom taking a nap. Made me promise to wake her up the moment you arrived."

Felicity nodded, took a deep breath, and went back to previous matter, "That's good, cause there is something you should know. The reason Oliver isn't here is because he went to the DA's office to talk to Laurel."

"Why that-" Diggle let go of Felicity and tried to move around her. He didn't wait for her to explain everything, but instead jumped to a conclusion. And because of that she reached out and grabbed his hand, not that that would stop him if he decided to leave, track down Oliver, and shake some sense into him.

"Save your anger for the DA, Dig." she hissed, because yelling wasn't an option with her mother sleeping in the other room. When Diggle turned to look at her, Felicity explained, "DA Donner decided to drop the charges against Isabel. She's being released from custody."

"What the hell?" the older man asked seriously. He was first hand the kind of damage the woman had done to them, and to learn she won't be held responsible for it... that just wasn't right.

"Oliver is hoping to get some answers from Laurel. That is the reason he went to see her." Felicity said, before adding, "The only reason."

"It better be." Dig muttered under his breath, but she heard him nevertheless.

It caused her to laugh, and hug him. She knew she could always count on Diggle to have her back. It didn't matter that he was Oliver's friend first, that he risked his life every night by working with the vigilante which created a bond between the two men she would never understand completely. They were brothers in arms. She was tactical backup.

But he had her back. And she trusted him.

That was why she knew she could confide to him about anything, although there are some things she would never share, and she was absolutely certain he wouldn't want to know. And the best part is he would give his honest opinion on the matter.

She just hoped his over-protectiveness wouldn't kick in this time.

"So... since we have an opportunity to talk in private for a bit longer I need your opinion on something. Well, actually I don't cause I already made my decision, but I would really like to hear what you think about it. So... Oliver asked me out on a date and I accepted."
Silence stretched between them for a moment before Diggle pulled away, and moved to sit on the couch that he previously occupied. Felicity sat on the second one, on the other side of the coffee table, took off her shoes, and wiggled her toes. And he was observing her the whole time.

"Why?" was the first thing he asked after several minutes. It was a loaded question, and Felicity opened her mouth to explain when Diggle continued, "You previously said you wouldn't go on a date with him anytime soon, I was right there in the Foundry during that particular conversation over the comm. And while I'm pleased to hear he is making an effort, and understand that you can change your mind at any moment, it all seems a bit..."

"Too soon." Felicity finished for him, and Dig nodded. She sighed and leaned back, a grimace appearing on her face, "It's because of today... and because of what happened before too."

"Felicity, what happened? What did the bastard that kidnapped you do?"

"He... his name is Cooper Seldon. I knew him years ago... although I'm not so sure anymore if I ever actually knew him. Today he... I didn't want to help him, and kept talking back, so he placed a barrel of his gun to my forehead and threatened to pull the trigger. I was certain he wouldn't, cause he needed my help, but there was a little voice in the back of my head... the same voice from before..."

"Felicity?" Diggle called her name after her voice trailed off and Felicity's eyes snapped at him, "Before?"

"When Slade had me." she whispered and Diggle felt his heart clench. He knew it was a mistake of letting her ignore what happened, and just act like she wasn't kidnapped by a maniac and killed. But now was not the moment, but it will come and soon.

"What did Slade do?"

"He killed me." she answered in a matter-of-face voice, and Dig flinched, "And the whole time while he had me... while we were in that warehouse and Oliver walked in... all I could think about was 'what if'."

"Felicity-" Dig start to speak, but she cut him off.

"I know! I'm know I'm not supposed to base big decisions on silly fears, but I can't help myself. It's easy to say I would just give up on Oliver, much easier then taking the leap of faith and trust him not to hurt me again. But I never did something just cause it was easy... I'm too stubborn for that." that comment made Dig smile. He agreed with it.

"I will respect your decision, even though I don't completely agree with it."

Felicity nodded in understanding. She was tired, and felt like she could sleep for days. But like mentioned previously she was also stubborn and didn't want to go to sleep until Oliver was back. She wanted to know what in the world happened that the DA made such a stupid decision.

Few minutes later a cup of coffee was placed in front of her and she smiled at Diggle. The gratefulness for his calm presence only grew as the warmth spread through her with every sip of the hot beverage she took.

"And that is why you are my best friend." Felicity finally said and Diggle smiled at her again.

A snore startled them and they both turned towards the occupied bedroom. Felicity was already used to the strange sounds her mom sometimes made in sleep but Dig was visibly shocked that such a small woman could produce such a loud sound while asleep. She sounded like some of the guys
from his old unit. When Felicity started to giggle he schooled his expression to be neutral, but it was too late. She already read him like an open book.

"Damn, that was impressive." he said and she nodded in agreement, before they both started to chuckle.

Eventually Felicity went back to drinking her coffee, and Diggle to silently observing her. Until she broke the silence with a simple question.

"Do you think he loves me?"

Only there was nothing simple about the answer, and Diggle honestly didn't know what to say to that. He doubted Oliver himself knew how he felt about his soulmate, and he could only read his expression to an extent. He known Oliver for over a year, but in reality he only knew what his friend allowed him to learn.

So finally he settled on the only answer he could think of, "I think he didn't expect to feel anything for anyone when he returned from the island, and you took him by surprise. I don't know if it can be classified as love, what I do know is he would die for you. And he would kill for you. And that is the most one person can feel for another."

Felicity nodded, before her eyes widened and she suddenly sat up straighter. The movement caused Diggle to sit more alert too, thinking she might have heard something he didn't. But Felicity cursed under her breath, one of her usual not actually a swear word, before lowering the mug on the coffee table and leaning forward.

"Dig, you can not tell Oliver what I told you about Cooper. It is important that he doesn't learn about the gun pointed at my head." she spoke slowly, her insides twisting as she did. Partially because she felt like a hypocrite for wanting to keep secret from Oliver when less then an hour ago she made a big deal of Lance wanting to talk to him in private, and partially because she didn't want for Oliver to get in trouble. Because she knew him. She knew he would do exactly what she thinks he would do if he ever learns about that particular detail.

"Felicity-" Dig tried to say something, maybe inform her that it wasn't a good idea to do that because secrets have a way of coming out and she should know that, but he cut him off yet again.

"Look, I'm going to be a major hypocrite right now and say it's for his own good. Like an uber-hypocrite. Cooper is in custody, and will be transferred to Iron Heights soon. Knowing Oliver he would break into the prison just so he could punch Cooper and he could get busted for that. After everything that happened, and all the close calls, he could seriously go down because he just had to give a guy that threatened me a black eye... at least."

"He couldn't get caught because I would be there to keep watch." Diggle said seriously, and Felicity didn't doubt he meant it even for a second, "Who is this Cooper guy anyway? An ex-boyfriend of yours?"

Felicity shook her head, and placed a now empty cup on the coffee table, before answering, "More like wanna-be-boyfriend."

"Who's the w-b-b?" Donna asked suddenly, and Felicity turned to see her mother standing on the bedroom doorway, and watching the two of them sitting on the couches. Suddenly the older woman's eyes widened as her still sleepy brain finally registered what she was seeing, "You're here! And you are alright!"
With a sign, which was because she was tired and not because her mother's hyper-activeness was draining sometimes, Felicity stood up only to be nearly tackled back onto the cushions. Diggle earned himself a glare for laughing, but that didn't stop him.

"Mom, are you alright?" Felicity asked after wiggling out of the hug.

"Oh, I'm perfectly fine sweetheart. A nice detective led the charge in the place where they kept me, and then drove me to the hospital, and stayed with me the entire time. He was very nice... reminded me a bit of your dad, you know the silent and serious type, but actually a giant teddy bear." Donna gushed, and Felicity couldn't help but smile at her mother. It's been years since she had seen the older woman act this way, and it was nice.

But for some reason Diggle was now biting the inside of his cheek, like he was trying to stop himself from talking.

That was a bit worrying.

"Okay. So I-"

"Well? Who's the w-b-b? Is it Oliver? Oh sweety, I'm sorry if I overstepped when I told him to ask you out on a date. I know you are independent and can make your own choices, as is he, but sometimes things require a little push in the right direction. I just don't want to see you miss on something incredible because you are afraid. Look, I don't know Oliver as much as you do, but I believe he is more than his past mistakes. But if you refuse him, that's okay too. I am in no rush to become a grandmother."

Felicity shook her head, "I had a bet with myself you would find a way to mention grandchildren. Looks like I won."

Suddenly Donna did what she didn't do in years. She pinched Felicity's cheek, causing the younger woman to make a face afterward to ease the discomfort.

Diggle sat there the entire time, and watched them with a grin on his face. Not even the stink eye Felicity sent him managed to ruin his good mood. Instead he picked up a receiver of the hotel phone, "Why don't you take a shower while I call room service. I doubt those bastards fed you."

Felicity nodded in thanks, before changing her mind, "Can we get Big Belly instead? I'm not really in a mood for fancy hotel food right now, I need some greasy comfort food." she turned to look at Donna, "Mom, is that okay with you? I don't know if you ate something already, you probably should have since we didn't get to even taste our dinner last night, and if you want room service than that is alright as well, but I would really-"

"Sweetheart, I'm fine with one of those burgers you keep talking about every time you call. Honestly, I'm the only mother who hears more about fast food than boys, and I'm curious if they are as good as you made them sound. But I can't have too many, I still have to fit into my work clothes." Donna smoothed the hem of the short blue dress she was wearing, one that was shorter than anything Felicity had in her closet.

Since it wasn't the same thing Donna wore when they were taken, but looked like something her mother would have and pack for a visit, despite it being chilly in Starling at this time of the year, Felicity was pretty certain someone went to her place and packed at least some of their clothes.

For that she was grateful cause she really needed that shower Dig suggested, and she didn't want to spend the rest of the day in a hotel dressing gown. No matter how comfortable it may be, and she
had a pretty good idea they were very comfortable cause Oliver made sure they were staying in the best hotel Starling had to offer.

Which means he is the one who will pay the bill, knowingly or not.

"The usual?" Diggle asked Felicity, and she nodded, before he turned to Donna, "Mrs. Smoak?"

"Call me Donna, dear. Now, what exactly is my daughter's usual? You know what Felicity..." she suddenly turned back towards the blonde that was a few steps away from the bedroom door, and this unexpected change of subject got her to stop and sigh, "Maybe hotel room service is the better choice. For one your friend here doesn't have to drive to the burger joint to get the food, and also you need to get used to fancy food places like these serve. As Oliver's soulmate you will be obligated to attend all sorts of galas and fundraisers and those are known to serve strictly gourmet food."

Felicity turned and frowned at her mother. Donna just had to remind her that the article Starling Scandal posted was just the tip of the iceberg. Soon more will follow, and her every move, every decision, will be analyzed. And she will more then likely be found lacking by some who think Oliver deserves someone more for his soulmate.

She flinched slightly, a movement that escaped her mother but Dig noticed it, and she could see the question in his eyes. He wanted to know if she was alright. Felicity just nodded slightly, not wanting to talk about it right now in front of her mother.

Actually sh didn't ant to talk about it ever, she didn't even want to remember it anymore. But his words, his taunting was forever embedded in her memory.

Slade made sure to inform her of some things that happened on Lian Yu, a very detailed story of the events that led to Shado's death. He told her about the photo Oliver carried with him, taunted her with Oliver's relationship with Sara, and the thirst with Shado. At that point he became erratic and almost punched a hole through a concrete wall.

And then he said the same thing she was certain would follow her for the rest of her life. That he expected Oliver Queen's soulmate to be more then just a babbling, IT nerd made secretary. Someone with better style, with manners and connections. Just... more.

But nature chose her for him.

"Felicity?" Diggle called her name, and the blonde got startled when she noticed he was standing right in front of her.

"When did you move?"

"While you were distracted. Is everything alright?" he asked, concerned for her state of mind, despite being certain she wouldn't say anything with her mother in the room.

"Yeah, I'm..." she took a deep breath, "I'm processing some stuff. Now, about that food..."

Diggle knew she was trying to change the subject, and went with it, "Take out or room service?"

Felicity groaned, "I don't want to get used to some fancy gourmet food just cause I'm... you know... supposed to be the next Queen. It sounds so weird when I say it out loud... Next Queen. Freaky."

"Felicity?" Dig called her name to get her attention. He knew very well if he didn't stop her she would babble for a while before remembering he was still waiting for the answer.
"Mom, if you want room service, we can get room service." Felicity said focusing on Donna who took a seat on a sofa, "But I thought we could get something more concrete, and nothing is better than Big Belly Buster. You know how much I always loved burgers as a kid."

Donna nodded, a small smile on her fact that mad Felicity extremely suspicious. And she was right to be cause instead of giving her a straight answer her mother focused on Diggle and with a flair asked, "Did Felicity ever told you about the time she tried to make her first burger? She was determined to make dinner for us both."

A groan and completely understanding, "Oh no." from Felicity made her friend smile.

"No, she never shared that particular story with us. Why don't you tell it to me before I got and get our food. I'll get one extra for Oliver, he's coming straight here after... he's done."

Before Donna managed to open her mouth Felicity protested, "He has a company to run! He can't just not show up for work!"

"He's the CEO sweetheart, he can do whatever he wants." Donna said calmly, and then ignored her daughter's mumbling that things don't work that way in companies, before she focused on Diggle, "As I was planing to say before... Felicity decided to make hamburgers from scratch. Now my little girl is a skilled as me in the kitchen, which isn't a compliment, but I thought she could make and bake a few simple patties. I was wrong."

"Over-seasoned the meat." Diggle guessed.

"I thought they weren't baked enough cause the juices were still oozing out of the patties when I put them on a plate." Felicity grumbled.

Diggle snorted, "It's supposed to be like that. It means the meat is still juicy."

"Well I didn't know that, I thought that was blood... so I fried them for a bit more."

"And they ended up with a thick crust that tasted like coal." Donna added on the end, and then shrugged, "We ate them anyway."

Diggle laughed before placing a hand around Felicity's shoulder and kissing the top of her head affectionately, "I'll make sure Carly knows how you prefer your burgers from now on."

Instantly Felicity pulled away and pointed a finger at him, "Don't you dare!"

They could hear his laughter even after he exited the room and closed the door.

She raised her head just as the well known man walked through the front door. Few other people who already returned from their lunch break were either too busy to stare at him, or didn't even noticed his presence. But she did.

Her blue eyes followed his path into the office in the back, one that was still occupied since the woman he came to see didn't leave for her scheduled meeting yet. He caught her just in time. Or maybe there was something else going on here.

Her fists clenched when he closed the door after entering the office to ensure no one overhears anything. He was walking on a thin line, and if he for some reason closes the blinds she will march in there and she will make sure he knows exactly what she thinks about men like him and Jesse.
"I don't have time right now. Or do you think you are the only one with a schedule?" Laurel said briskly after checking her watch. She had a meeting with a client and needed to leave five minutes ago. Usually she was punctual, but the DA was wanted to talk to her before she leaves the office. She didn't appreciate him tilling her how to do her job, but remained silent while he went on and on about the case.

As a result she was angry, late, and then as a bonus Oliver Queen walked into her office.

Oliver whom she called several times and every single time he ignored her call.

He huffed in annoyance. Detective Lance dropped a bomb on them and now Laurel is being difficult. Like his day wasn't bad enough already, and it was just past noon.

That annoyance was obvious when he responded, "I was a bit busy in the past several hours."

"Yes, I know. You are a grown up now with an actual job." there was no malice in Laurel's voice, no sign she resented that he changed into a more responsible man far too late. But she was still annoyed by him and his presence in her office.

"I'm surprised you don't now yet, being the ADA and all." before Laurel could ask what he was talking about Oliver explained, "A guy hired a few thugs and planed to rob a money delivery truck. And since they needed help in getting into the system and changing the truck's route they kidnapped Felicity. And her mother. So you will soon have someone new to prosecute... since you aren't doing that with Isabel Rochev."

"So that is why you are here." Laurel said coldly.

"Why else would I be here and not with my soulmate?" Oliver didn't know what made him use that particular word when talking about Felicity. It was true, and he did what she asked of him and stopped denying her, but it still seemed like he was rubbing it in Laurel's face.

Her expression was the proof of that.

But Laurel Lance was a professional. She chose to push down the anger she felt at his words, at the taunt that may or may not have been intentional, and stood up straighter, "DA Donner chose to drop the charges against Miss Rochev. There just wasn't enough conclusive evidence, and he isn't willing to waste tax-payers money on a case that was doomed from the beginning."

"The evidence was solid." Oliver said seriously. He had seen what Felicity dug out and stored on her tablet, and detective Lance saw it too, and the older man believed it was enough for an arrest. So to hear now that all that wasn't enough... it just didn't make any sense.

Laurel snorted, "A couple of e-mails that don't contain anything incriminating-"

"They do if placed in context!" Oliver pointed out, insinuating that Isabel was the one who would gain the most with Felicity's death because it would absolutely destroy him.

But Laurel ignored his outburst and continued, "E-mails that were illegally obtained, by the way."
The DA might want to talk to Miss Smoak about that."

"E-mails are from QC's servers, and Isabel Rochev used her official company address. That means I get access to them, and as my EA Felicity can do it for me. She is better with the computer stuff anyway." Oliver pointed out, but once more his explanation was pushed aside.

"Then there are the photos Miss Smoak obtained." Laurel continued, once more ignoring Oliver's words when he pointed out the photos in question were also on the company servers, "I personally contacted the CEO of Stellmore International. He isn't filing charges against Miss Rochev. Claims he knew about the photos and that she never used them for blackmail. It's probably a lie, hence why Miss Rochev got fired from her position as the head of acquisition, he just doesn't want a trial that would follow cause they would be used as evidence and therefore become public knowledge, and that would damage the company's image. Something that should be practiced in QC as well, for obvious reasons. The photos with Robert Queen are of no use either. They only serve to point out like father-like son."

Oliver started to shook his head. He just couldn't believe everything Laurel was saying. He just refused to believe Isabel Rochev will get away after everything she did, "Isabel worked hard to get her hands on the company. Hell, she even tried to get into his calendar to alter it so he would be late for meetings and look bad in front of the board. She worked with Slade Wilson to have Felicity killed. She can't just walk free!"

"As I recall Felicity Smoak is alive." Laurel pointed out, before rolling her eyes at one of the arguments Oliver used, "Changing your calendar? Really? She wouldn't have to do that to ensure you would be late. You never arrive on time for anything. I should know, I had to wait for you every single time we went out on a date."

"Is that what this is about?" Oliver asked, breaking an uncomfortable silence that filled the office as a result of Laurel's words, "Us dating in the past and now you being portrayed as the bad guy cause I found my soulmate?"

Laurel flinched instantly, but played it cool, "Like I said before, the DA made the final decision." Oliver just nodded silently in response, and turned to leave, when her next words made him pause, "Sara deserved more than she got."

Oliver wondered if it was really her sister Laurel was talking about, or Sara was just a convenient excuse for that statement. Be as it is he was tired of explaining himself, of having his past decision used against him over and over again.

Felicity did it, but she had the right to do so. Her was her soulmate. His choices caused her burning pain far too many times.

Laurel wasn't in any way bound to him. She could have stopped the cursed circle of breaking up and getting back together at any moment. But she didn't. She chose to restart their farce of a relationship every single time, and all it took was Oliver to offer an apology and a promise he would never cheat again. Both were just worthless words that he didn't mean. Not with her.

And sometimes he wondered if she knew that fact, but chose to ignore it.

That is why he didn't turned around and responded. He just exited the office and dialed Diggle's number.
I apologize it took me a month to update. Between very little free time, and my inspiration deciding to go on a long vacation, I wrote this chapter a few paragraphs at a time.
I hope it was worth the wait.
Chapter 16

Diggle was on his way to Big Belly Burger when he received the call. Instantly he did a U-turn and drove in the direction of the DA office, and on the first red light texted Carly the order. That way their food would be ready by the time he arrived to the fast food joint to pick it up.

He usually avoided doing that. He preferred taking a seat at the counter, and spend some time talking to his sister-in-law, catch up about things that were going on in their lives and how AJ was doing. But he had a feeling Oliver would prefer going back to the hotel sooner rather than later. It would take a while before he was ready to leave his soulmate out of his sight.

Honestly, Diggle wouldn't be surprised if Oliver announced he was sleeping on the couch in the hotel suite that night.

He noticed his friend standing on the corner, and not in front of the office building like he expected. He didn't bothered to think about it and instead did another U-turn, this time breaking a traffic law, and stopped at the curve. His hand just reached for the door handle when the passenger side door opened and Oliver got in the car, slamming the door shut with way more force than necessary.

That made Dig wince. It was a luxurious town car, a wonder piece of technology, not an old rust-bucket that way days away from breaking to the point it could no longer be repaired.

"That well?" the question escaped Diggle's lips before he managed to stop himself, and the sarcastic tone of his voice didn't help either.

Oliver just glared at his friend for a moment, silently wondering why they weren't moving. Then he sighed, rolled his eyes, and buckled his seat belt. Honestly, Diggle took the position of his bodyguard way too seriously sometimes.

Be remained silent during the entire drive, and Dig didn't questioned him, just let him be. He didn't even mentioned anything when the car stopped in front of Big Belly, but he also didn't exited the vehicle, just remained seating in the passenger seat.

Carly noticed it too, and when her brother-in-law entered the restaurant she greeted him with a wide smile and a question, "Is Oliver alright? He looks like he's having an existential crisis."

Diggle had to snort at that comment, she wasn't that far off the truth. But instead of explaining everything, which would take way too long and more then likely piss off Oliver cause he was itching to get back to hotel, he just said shortly, "He's in a rush. Is my order done?"

Carly nodded and placed the paper bag on the counter, "Four burgers, four fries, two milkshakes, two juices." Diggle reached to take it after placing the money on the counter, but she was still holding it, "So... what's going on with those two?"

"Who?"

Carly just shook her head, "You know very well whom I'm talking about John Diggle. Come on, give me something."

Dig glanced towards the car to see what Oliver was doing, and when he noticed his friend was focused on the cafe across the street for some reason, he leaned towards Carly and whispered, "He met Felicity's mom. She slapped him."
Carly forced the laughter that threatened to escape down before scowling at him, or at least trying to, "Give me something here. I've been watching them dance around each other for months before learning they are soulmates."

A sudden honking sound startled the pair, as well as everyone in the fast food restaurant, and Diggle sighed, "Duty calls."

"But my insider scoop." Carly complained playfully.

He just smiled, shrugged, and walked out of the door.

Carly wasn't only his, she was someone he trusted. He knew she would never betray something he tells her and sell the information to the press. But truth be told there wasn't all that much going on in Oliver and Felicity's relationship. They didn't actually have one per say. They were friends, and they worked together, but their personal lives were still very much separated. They weren't a couple like Carly hoped he would reveal.

Dig dropped the bag into Oliver's lap and started the car. It was a bit weird not to hear his friend comment about the grease potentially seeping through the layers and ruining his pants. That's what happened the first time he made that particular move.

"You want to talk about it now?" he finally asked, but received only the silence as the response. He considered staying out of it, not push his friend but instead wait until Oliver was ready to talk, but chose to take initiative this time. Usually that was Felicity's job, but she deserved a break from broody Oliver Queen that refused to talk about feelings, "I called a buddy of mine, he'll go to Felicity's place and fix any damage done to her door. I'm sure she would like to go back home as soon as possible."

"She should stay at the hotel." Oliver finally said, "It's safer."

"Safer would be if she moved to a new place with better security." Diggle pointed out, glad he got a response from his friend.

Oliver nodded in agreement, and then looked out the window. Dig threw him another glance before focusing on the road. He could see there was something else he wanted to say, but possibly didn't know how to approach the subject.

It was only after the car stopped on the hotel's private lot, and two two men exited the vehicle, that Oliver mentioned what was bugging him, "The safest thing would be if she lived with me." the statement surprised Diggle and he turned to gap at his friend, "Not at the mansion, I was thinking more in the line of finding a place for us in the city. But it's too soon, it's way too soon, and she would never agree to that."

Diggle chose not to comment on the fact Oliver Queen, the biggest relationship-phobe he ever met, considered moving in with a woman without the matter being forced upon him. Of course it was mostly cause he wanted to keep his soulmate out of harms way and didn't trust anyone else to do the job right, but it was a progress in the right direction.

But like Oliver he also knew Felicity would never agree to that at the current time. Their relationship is still miles away from that point.

Felicity jumped in fright when the toilet doors were closed with a bang. A moment later John Diggle pushed the glass door that separated the area designated for the CEO from the rest of the floor and stopped directly in front of her desk. Her first idea is something happened with her mother or Oliver,
but neither of those options really made any sense. But whatever it was it wasn't good, cause she had never seen Dig like this.

The former soldier was always calm and collected while in QC, she didn't see him lose his cool before.

"You need to get Oliver out of the meeting." he said shortly, and Felicity raised her eyebrow at the request.

"He's in there with an important investor who is interested in giving a lot of money to Applied science. So unless the building is on fire, or the apocalypse is upon us, he's staying where he is. So which one is it?" Felicity replied. Yes, Dig was acting strange and that was a clear sign something was going on, but the company needs to come first right now. Oliver needs to show the board he is capable running it, and there is no better time than now that Isabel Rochev is out of the picture.

"I got some shitty news while in the restroom, which was rather fitting. Isabel Rochev is downstairs. She demands to be let to her office. The security guard downstairs is lost as to what to do." Dig elaborated, his serious expressions cracking when Felicity cursed under her breath.

She hated that woman. She wasn't even going to deny it. She hated her. It was Isabel who started the damn rumor about the nature of her and Oliver's relationship, making her seem like a cheap fling, and a secretary that is sleeping with the boss.

She will never forget the experience of walking through the IT department, her old boss needed help with the security feature that was glitching all the time, and hearing two of her closest friends from the office talk about her earning her promotion on her knees.

Fast-forward a few months and those same two women gushed how happy they were for Felicity that she found her soulmate. One even went as far as to say she always knew Oliver and her had that something special between them.

Felicity straight out asked her if that was why she described Felicity as as a cheap secretary fetish fuck while gossiping in the breakroom. And she did it in a middle of an elevator with other people present, one of them being Mildred, a mild-mannered woman from HR. Milly sent her so-called friends a glare the Hood might envy her on.

Felicity closed her eyes, took a beep breath, and then focused on Diggle, "Give me five minutes head start. If I don't call you in that time and tell you everything is dealt with storm the meeting and get Oliver downstairs."

He eyes her for a moment, obviously considering her words, before asking, "Should I also prepare bail money?"

"I won't attack her. I have the bloodlust under control." Felicity said casually, already moving towards the elevator. She ignored Diggle's snort, because she knew exactly what he was expressing with it.

She didn't have the bloodlust under control. She just hasn't been angry enough lately for it to take over. Not even Cooper managed to piss her off enough.

But Isabel Rochev just might succeed.

"Five minutes!" Diggle called just as the elevator doors started to close and Felicity waived at him. She knew he wouldn't wait that long though.
Edgar has been the security guard in Queen Consolidated for two decades now. He was present during the numerous times the son tagged along with his father for a day in the office, and the day Oliver, now grown up man, entered through the glass doors for the first time since his return. It was one of the best days on the job, despite the extra work of trying to prevent those damn reporters from entering.

And just like he had seen Oliver in two different ways, he had also seen Isabel Rochev as she was before and as she is now. And he could honestly say she hasn't changed much. The woman probably doesn't even remember him, despite walking past him every single morning for almost two years while she was the intern for Queen Consolidated. She was just as cold and detached as she is now. He heard the rumors of course, everyone did, about the real reason why her internship was canceled a few months before her contract expired.

He didn't usually stuck his nose in other people's business, especially if said other people is his boss, but Robert Queen made a terrible mistake getting tangled with that one.

Now Felicity Smoak, her he liked. He liked her from the moment she entered the building, reported as the new hire that needed an ID, and then proceeded to tell him how he shared a name with a turtle her childhood friend had, and one day he pooped on her hand. The turtle, not the friend.

Felicity was a happy person, and he never saw her upset or sad in the years she as employed in the company.

That changed the moment the elevator doors opened and she stepped out. Edgar actually took a step back as she moved towards Isabel Rochev with certainly in her step. She was a woman on a mission, and she wasn't backing down.

"Well, well, well." the brunette eyed her approaching form, a cruel smile on her face, "Is Oliver so busy doing nothing that he couldn't even come here himself and instead sent his whore?"

Felicity bit the inside of her cheek to prevent herself from saying the first thing that was on her mind. It wouldn't look good if she lost her cool right there in the middle of the lobby. She had no idea what she was thinking... there was absolutely no way she would be able to maintain control over the bloodlust in Isabel's company. The shrew knew exactly what to say to push her buttons, and Felicity had no doubt she's hoping something would happen that would make her look bad.

She should have listened to Diggle. Oh well, too late for that now.

Isabel was still smirking, thinking Felicity would remain quiet like she usually did. The blonde knew that, and she had a perfect response ready, but paused, mentally said 'to hell with it', and laid it all out in front of audience that tried to look inconspicuous but it was obvious they were hanging around to eavesdrop.

"I'm failing to see why I should be the whore when out of two of us you were the one who fucked him, just like you fucked Robert Queen while working in QC as an intern. And from what I saw you continued to sleep your way in the company while in Stellmore as well." few people exchanged looks, already making plans in spreading the story, "Now, would you mind explaining what you are doing in Queen Consolidated."

The brunette looked like she ate a lemon for a second, before a mask of indifference returned, followed by smugness, "The DA decided the charges against me were bogus. I plan to sue the police for that, by the way. But right now I'm planing to get back to work, so..."

"You never actually worked for Queen Consolidated, Miss Rochev. Or did you perhaps deluded
yourself that the board actually hired you as the VP? You were employed by Stellmore International, and they fired you." Felicity replied as politely as she could muster. It was a bit difficult considering the smile on Isabel's face just kept growing.

"I bought half of the QC shares."

"Let me repeat myself once more, since you obviously failed to comprehend my words the first time... Stellmore bought the shares. Stellmore fired you. They aren't yours."

"That is where you are wrong, Miss Smoak. Those shares... every single one of them is in my name. I am their sole owner. You see, you don't have the right to keep me from going back to my office and return to my position as the Vice President. For now anyway... I have my eye on another position. One more suitable for my skills."

Felicity had to bit her bottom lip to prevent the words from escaping, and this time she succeed. Barely. She cleared her throat and turned towards the security guard that by now looked extremely uncomfortable, "Edgar, please call Mr. Diggle. Tell him to get Mr. Queen out of the office and down here."

"What?" Isabel looked from Felicity, to the guard, and back, "Are you saying you didn't even informed him of my presence, Miss Smoak? Very unprofessional. Your employment will have to be discussed with the board."

Felicity merely shrugged, "I simply didn't consider your presence worthy of his time."

Edgar coughed and reached for the phone to do as Felicity asked of him. Because of that he failed to see Isabel move closer to the blonde and whisper, "You look good for a dead person. But that's what you get for relying on others, I would have done a better job myself... maybe I will."

"Mr. Diggle says he and Mr. Queen are already on their way." the security guard said, completely missing the veiled threat.

Just as he said the words the executive elevator dinged and the metal doors opened, showing a seriously pissed off who marched his way through the lobby, not caring in the least for the curious looks he was getting.

"And the cavalry is here." Isabel mocked, before turning towards Felicity, "Why don't you be a good secretary and schedule a board meeting. I feel the board members should learn about the way the Queen family tried to kick me out of the company by forging bogus evidence against me."

"All the evidence collected is still stored on company servers. Including proof that you had contact with the man that kidnapped and planed to kill me." Felicity answered tensely.

Isabel merely shrugged, "Well it's obvious those things you call evidence mean absolutely nothing to the AD. He saw it for what they were, just innocent correspondence between two acquaintances. And last time I checked his opinion matters more than yours. Now..." she turned to Oliver and her expression changed from condescending to completely calm, with only her eyes revealing the fury she was actually feeling, "Since this day is already wasted on trying to explain something very simple to you, an often occurrence unfortunately, I will be taking my leave. But when I return tomorrow morning I expect to have my ID badge, clearance, and office waiting for me. And let's not forget that board meeting. Maybe you should write that down, sweetheart." she turned towards Felicity once more, "You know, in case it becomes too distracting working so close to your soulmate and all. Correct me if I'm wrong but there is a rule against soulmates working in the same department."
"You are wrong." Olive said coldly, "Do you want me to quote the point from the standard contract that all employees have to sign?"

Isabel didn't responded. She just turned around and walked away, her head held high, ignoring the curious looks sent her way, people were already whispering, but she didn't give a damn. Let them talk about her now, they will talk even more once the company is hers like it should have been for years.

Felicity closed her eyes and sighed. A hand on her shoulder caused her to turn her head and look at Oliver who stood by her side, and observed her closely. There was worry in his eyes and she smiled at him, trying to seem okay. But he knew better.

He knew her.

Edgar chose to ignore the pair and focus on the computer monitors. He was curious about the young soulmates, the whole city is, but he knew better than to poke his nose into his boss's business.

Few moments later Felicity pulled away from Oliver's touch and moved towards the elevator that would take her back to the executive elevator. He followed her instantly. There were several important meetings scheduled throughout the day, meetings that couldn't be postponed. And now this mess with Isabel on top of it all.

It wasn't what he needed right now. Any of it.

He was supposed to woo Felicity, show her he was done with being the bastard that hurt her too many times. Take her out on dates; punch a paparazzo that gets to cocky and tries to shove a camera in her face; steal a goodnight kiss at her door. Celebrate one month anniversary at the exact date instead of forgetting it; buy her something just cause he can and cause he'll know she'll like it, although she might not appreciate it and possibly think of it as an attempt to buy her affection.

He wants it all. And he hoped they would start soon, go on the date she agreed on. He already made a list of possibly locations, a list his sister found and showed their mother. Both women agreed he could do better than a picnic or a small intimate dinner for just the two of them on top of Queen Consolidated.

When Felicity slumped against the elevator wall, and closed her eyes, Oliver reached out and took her hand. A small smile appeared on her face before her eyes opened again and focused on him. She sighed before speaking, "I planed a lunch with my mom today, but right now I'm not so sure that is a good idea. I need to schedule the meeting with the board members and pull out paperwork for it. Isabel always whined about you not doing your job, and how she was the only one who worked hard to ensure the company doesn't sink. Well, I'm going to find every single document from past weeks that proved her wrong. You worked hard and it shows. QC's stocks are -"

A gentle touch made her freeze, blue eyes widening in shock at the fact Oliver was bold enough to place a finger on her brightly painted lips to silence her. He looked just as startled by the movement and puled his hand back only a heartbeat later, his face flushing momentarily.

"Sorry." he mumbled while staring at his shoes.

"You... um... you needed something?"

Oliver nodded, his gaze meeting hers just before the elevator doors opened on the executive floor. The ding startled him, something that never before happened. But then again he wasn't so caught up in her before, not like this.
"You should go and meet your mom for lunch. In fact I... if you are okay with that, that is... I have this idea."

"Oliver?" his hesitance was a mixture of adorable and worrying.

They moved out of the elevator, but didn't reached the offices when he stopped, took a deep breath, and explained, "I would like to join you at lunch. And maybe my mom and Thea could too."

Felicity stared at him for a while, waiting for him to laugh and admit it was a joke, but he remained serious. Only then did she respond, "You want our moms to meet? Today?"

"I know they are different." Oliver said, and then ignored as Felicity muttered how that was an understatement of the year under her breath, "Look, I'm going to be straight with you. I have no idea how relationships work, good solid relationships. I never been in one. And I know we aren't in one either, I messed that one up before it had the chance to develop into something resembling a healthy relationship between soulmates. I keep saying I'm trying to be better, but truth be told I honestly don't know what to do to actually be better; a better man, a better friend... what? Felicity I-"

"I don't think this is the time or the place to have that discussion." she pointed out after the conversation went in a completely different direction than expected. And to be honest Felicity actually expected he would sooner or later mention this thing they were or weren't.

It was a conversation she was both looking forward to and dreading at the same time.

"I know. You are right." Oliver said after shaking his head. But he didn't add anything else, just turned around and walked towards his office. Felicity could see how tense he was, but his head was bowed and he looked, in a lack of better words, defeated.

"Your mom doesn't like me all that much." she pointed out loudly.

"Your mom slapped me" Oliver reminded her in return.

Felicity grinned a bit, but then became serious, "I just worry about this Oliver. I'm not exactly the right fit for-"

The sudden movement, and the soul piercing look in Oliver's eyes, as he stood in front of her and gently touched her cheek left Felicity speechless in the middle of the sentence. That was good because he needed her to understand.

"To me you are a right fit in any possible way. You are the other half that makes me complete. I can't delete my past mistakes, but I can stop repeating them. Because of you. Because you make me want to be better. Not just a hero you think I can be, but a man... that loves his soulmate above all others."

"Is this a bad timing?" Thea's voice startled both of them and they turned to see the heiress standing in front of her and gently touched her cheek left Felicity speechless in the middle of the sentence. That was good because he needed her to understand.

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"To me you are a right fit in any possible way. You are the other half that makes me complete. I can't delete my past mistakes, but I can stop repeating them. Because of you. Because you make me want to be better. Not just a hero you think I can be, but a man... that loves his soulmate above all others."

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"Is there something you needed Speedy?" Oliver asked, trying to hide his annoyance at the interruption.

"I called but no one answered the phone, so I dropped by to see if you are free for lunch today."

Thea's eyes moved from one blonde to the other and back, "But if the two of you planed a nice private thing today that is completely fine with me."
Felicity knew Oliver was intentionally keeping quiet about his suggestion for, what Thea would certainly call, a family lunch. He obviously knew if he mentioned the idea to his sister she would press until she got what she wanted, not caring if all parties were completely comfortable with that. And she appreciated his silence, it was his way of giving her a choice in the matter.

And while she was still way too uncomfortable with the idea of her mother and Moira Queen meeting, Felicity would be a liar if she said she wasn't even the slightest bit curious as to how that would turn out.

There really was only one way to find out, by taking a lap of faith and hoping for the best.

After all, how bad can it get?

Felicity expected Oliver to pick something fancy, like Table salt, but instead was pleasantly surprised when the car stopped in front of a small Italian bistro she remembers eating in when she first arrived in Starling. It wasn't high dining, it was delicious dining. Just the memory of the best pasta she had in her entire life made her mouth water. This was the type of food she preferred, no garnishes and drops of sauce on her plate as decoration.

A second car stopped behind them, the driver opening the back door just like Dig did for her and Oliver. It will never be strange seeing him act as nothing more but a driver while in public, when in fact he was so much more.

"I never dined here." Moira observed the name above the large window, "But it seems nice. Clean."

"Their ravioli are to die for." Thea mentioned, before Felicity commented on something they call 'elephant ear cutlet' but didn't get to say anything more about it because Donna noticed her and called her name.

"Hey mom, glad you could make it. I still would have preferred if we picked you up on our way."

Her mother just waived her off, "Sweetheart, if I can handle the rowdy crowd at Vegas I can handle anything Starling has to offer. Except maybe that guy that runs around in green leather and hits people with arrows." Donna waived her hands while she spoke, just like her daughter does, completely unaware the four people in front of her froze for a moment and desperately tried not to show any response to her mentioning the vigilante.

Moira observed the woman in front of her with interest. She was dressed in a way most of the high society women she knew would find scandalous, or possibly envy Mrs Smoak for the fact she could fit into such a dress at her age. Be as it is, Moira Queen learned not to rely on the first look when it comes to people, they are rarely what they appear to be.

"Shall we go in?" Oliver asked, but didn't wait for the answer. Instead he opened the door and held them open for all the women to walk in. Donna briefly gushed about his manners, and he had to chuckle when his own mother looked quite proud at the praise. Felicity's worry about the two women meeting seems completely redundant.

Thea moved towards the table in the back, away from the window, and everyone followed. It was a silent agreement not to give photographers a chance to spot them, not that anyone would expect the Queen family members to dine in a small place like this.

Felicity sat next to her mother, with Thea and Moira opposite of them, while Oliver took a seat between his soulmate and sister. It as a perfect position cause moments after he sat down he felt a small kick to his shin. He barely reacted, but Donna noticed it nevertheless since she loved watching
him and her little girl together.

"Is there something wrong dear?" she asked curiously.

He turned to look at Felicity who just gave him a pointed glare, and he sighed, "I'm afraid I'm going to ruin lunch even before we started."

"Is everything alright? Did something happened?" Moira's mind instantly went into overdrive. She constantly worried about her kids, now more than ever. Thea's job at Verdant got her in contact with some strange individuals, and Oliver did what he did a night.

"Isabel Rochev arrived to the company this morning. She wants her position as the VP back, claims it's her because she owns half of the QC stocks."

"That's not possible." Moira replied, already making a mental note to once more call the owner of Stellmore International, "During our last conversation he informed me he would discuss with the board about releasing QC stocks again." she glanced towards the waitress that was approaching their table, her decision made. She wouldn't wait a minute longer. "Thea, order pasta for me if I'm not back before you are all ready to order. I'll go for a drive and be right back."

"Mom?" the young heiress asked in confusion.

But the Queen matriarch already took the phone out of her purse and stood up. She placed a hand on her daughter's shoulder and moved towards the exit. The waitress was startled for a moment, but Moira just smiled at her and informed the young woman she would be back in a few minutes.

"What just happened? What am I missing?" Donna asked, her blue eyes moving between Oliver and Felicity.

"A small problem with the company stocks. My mother is trying to resolve it as fast as possible." Oliver answered before Felicity managed to, so she just nodded. This wasn't the time or the place to explain to her mother the mess that was going on right now. Hell, she needed some time to make sense of it herself.

Donna nodded silently, pleased with an explanation, and instead focused on the menu the waitress gave her. Honestly, everything sounded great and she had a hard time picking. Felicity obviously had the same problem because she kept muttering about how it was easier to order at Big Belly Burger.

Oliver obviously heard her whispered complains because he was smiling at her, his expression revealing how much he cared for her. Moments later Thea caught Donna's expression and nodded in her brother's expression before rolling her eyes. The older Smoak woman had to laugh at the young heiress antics.

"Mom?" Felicity asked, curious what happened that made her mother laugh, because she didn't noticed anything funny going on.

"It's nothing honey." she was waved off and frowned in confusion.

Several minutes later the waitress returned to see if they were ready. As instructed Thea got pasta for her mother, but chose ravioli for herself. Oliver went with mushroom risotto, while both Felicity and Donna chose fish.

Of course Oliver teased his soulmate about not ordering the huge cutlet she mentioned outside, at whish she responded such a dish is ordered only if she has at least an hour to spare to eat the whole
thing and pants that she can unbutton. A formfitting dress isn't suited.

Any further comments were cut off when the restaurant door opened and visibly irritated Moira Queen stepped inside. Oliver stood up to hold her chair and was surprised when his mother ungracefully flopped on it, suddenly looking tired completely drained.

"How bad are the news?" he asked after taking his own seat again.

Moira huffed, "I have to give Miss Rochev credit, she certainly knows how to blackmail someone successfully." Donna gaped at her in shock, "Of course they don't call it blackmail. No, Isabel Rochev getting to keep QC stocks, paid with the money of the company that fired her, is now considered restitution. Also known as: they are scared of her. Their investors and shareholders are extremely conservative, and their happily married CEO having an affair with an employee could endanger everything."

"Ah." Felicity said with a nod, "The photo I found on QC server." she mentioned in understanding.

"So what are we going to do about it?" Oliver asked. He was displeased about having that woman as the VP yet again. He disliked her from the start, and the thing that happened in Russia between them was one of his choices he was most ashamed of. And then Felicity was kidnapped and he learned Isabel worked with Slade, she was the one who told him whom to target to cause him pain.

The waitress returned with their orders, an array of mouthwatering dishes, so the problems were pushed aside for a moment so they could enjoy the food in peace.

The restaurant doors opened and closed, and Felicity out of habit turned to see who entered. The smartly dressed woman went straight to the bar and the waitress smiled at her, nodded, and walked into the kitchen. Moments later the young waitress returned with a styrofoam takeout box in a bag and handed it over.

Like she sensed her gaze the redhead turned towards Felicity and after a moment winked, before once more leaving the restaurant. The whole thing confused her so she didn't even heard when the conversation switched from Isabel to the gala scheduled that weekend.

Not until her mother's voice startled her out of her silent musing. By that time it was already too late. Apparently she and Thea already agreed a shopping trip is necessary.

"Wait a minute." she tried to protest, but the young heiress wouldn't hear it.

"Face the truth. Everyone will expect you to appear on Ollie's hand, and you have to be dressed accordingly. And no one knows better than me what those stuffy old-"

"Thea." Moira sighed her daughter's name.

"What? You know what they are like, mom. The dress has to be the right shade of black, and the shoes had to pinch your toes. And let's not forget the jewelry that has to cost more then your average car. And if someone stands out they gather in small groups and comment on it. Remember my first appearance?"

"How could I forget. Janice Bowen grabbed her own chest and looked like she would have a heart attack."

Thea shrugged, "Carter was standing next to her, he could have easily saved her life. After all he is Mr. Dr. Miracle I-have-retractor-up-my-ass Worker. That dress was Ellie Saab, but it's too youthful for those snobs."
"I already have a dress." Felicity said just as Donna opened her mouth to suggest they skip work today and go shopping. But when she noticed her mother's face fell she added, "But I lack shoes that go with it."

"Other forty pairs you own are the wrong shade of black." Olive muttered under his breath, but to his misfortune both Felicity and Thea heard him, and his got simultaneously hit in both shoulders by two of the women that meant the most to him. Luckily neither of them was strong enough to cause any actual damage.

The conversation moved to another subjects and before they were ready the lunch break was over for Oliver and Felicity and they had to return to QC. But it was already decided they would have to meet again before Donna returns to Las Vegas. Despite Felicity's fears her mother actually get along great with Moira Queen, even though the two women were like oil and water. And she had a feeling Oliver would gloat about the fact he was right, that that is exactly what would happen once the two mothers meet, at least once today.

Back in Queen Consolidated, situated behind her desk, Felicity leaned back in her chair and sighed. The nice part of the day was done, back to business. And then to the hotel because there was no possible way of explaining to her mother why she was absent the entire evening and good part of the night, not without telling her the truth, or making her believe she was somewhere with Oliver consummating their... whatever this thing is between them at this point.

Felicity was still struggling with the things in her mind, making mental pro and con lists, but it wasn't getting her anywhere at the moment. She loved Oliver, that much she was willing to admit to herself. Was she willing to actually tell him that and jump into a relationship? That was the big question.

A feeling of someone watching her made Felicity open her eyes and she saw the subject of her musings standing in front of her desk and observing her with worry in his blue eyes.

"Oliver, what-"

"Are you alright? I didn't asked before, in the restaurant, but are you alright? I know it can't be easy for you to know Isabel is coming back to QC."

"I am mostly concerned about being fired." she admitted, surprising him with the answer. He opened his eyes to respond, to inform her he would never allow her to lose her job, not while he was the CEO, but she cut him off, "What if she pisses me off and I punch her? You know she will taunt me, she already did this morning. My bloodlust hasn't been the problem since I returned, and you messed up causing me to lash out on you. But she just might make me lose control."

Oliver was silent for a moment, his expression that of a stone cold killer, which worried the blonde. This was not a good sign, "What did she tell you?" he used what she likes to call his Arrow voice, "How did she taunt you?"

"Oliver."

"Felicity, I need to know so I can keep you safe. I can't lose you again."

"You won't. You won't lose me. Ever." Felicity said, and she meant it.

This thing between them was unstable, there were issues that needed to be resolved and dealt with. Honestly, a best option would be to just sit down and lay it all out in a honest and open conversation, without yelling and throwing accusations.
He cared for her, that much she knew. It was a good start.

Felicity was lounging on the couch dressed in her comfortable tights and an old MIT hoodie. One would think she was relaxed and at ease about another night off from her night job, but the truth was she was actually tense and couldn't stop herself from worrying about Oliver and Diggle. It was dumb, after all they worked just fine when it was just the two of them, before she joined the team, but she was so used to being there in the Foundry and watching over her boys while they were out in the Glades.

She trusted Dig to keep an eye on Oliver, but truth be told she didn't trust Oliver not to make some dumbass decision just cause she wasn't there, in his ear, nagging him to think before leaping headfirst into a danger.

And she trusted the criminal melee that gathered in the Glades even less. There wasn't a criminal out there that didn't hope of elevating his status among the gangs by taking out the vigilante. Most of them were too scared of even being in his vicinity, but there were always the idiots who intentionally provoked him into showing up. It happened several times before and only her quick typing prevented Oliver from walking into a trap.

But she wasn't there right now, and while her tablet was great for receiving alerts it wasn't even remotely in the same category as the computers in their base when it came to accessing databases and cameras. It could be done, but it wasn't efficient as she would have preferred.

And she preferred only the best when it came to the safety of someone she cared for.

She noticed the water was turned off and grabbed the remote. It wouldn't do good if Donna walked in and saw her staring at the dark screen of the TV. At least if it was turned on it would seem like she was focused on whatever was on right now.

The 24 hour news channel was reporting about the pollution in the bay, and Felicity was about to check if there was at least a semi-interesting movie somewhere, when the Breaking news alert flashed on the screen and the newscaster started to read from the piece of paper that was just handed to her.

Felicity didn't even snort at the apparent lack of technological progress, like seriously a paper note. Instead she sat up straighter and listened carefully for any peace of news about her soulmate.

"The police isn't giving any comments at this point, so we don't yet know if the robbery attempt is linked to recent attacks on 24 hour pharmacies. Also, the police chief refuses to say anything regarding several witness statements that say the Arrow was present at the scene and in fact neutralized the threat before the first police car ever arrived at the scene. One of the witnesses that was inside the pharmacy at the time of the robbery said the vigilante was injured when one of the robbers fired his weapon, but still managed to save the life of a young mother and her infant child. Despite him acting outside of the law it would be a lie to say the Arrow isn't just as much a hero as any policeman, perhaps even more so since he doesn't have a badge to use as a proverbial shield against criminals. So let us hope our local vigilante has a speedy recovery so he can keep watch over Starling city."

Under different circumstances Felicity would have gloated that the newscaster called Oliver a hero, and maybe she will afterward, once she has her eyes on him and knows that he is alright. And to do that she needed to leave. Like, right now.

Donna walked out of her room, still wiping the moisture out of her hair, when she noticed Felicity
hastily putting on her coat.

"Sweetheart? Is everything alright? Where are you going?"

Felicity looked like a deer in headlights for a moment, before straightening and grabbing her wallet out of the purse left at the sidetable, "I forgot to give document to Oliver to sign. I have to go to QC and get it, and then to the Queen mansion."

"Can't it wait till tomorrow?" Donna asked curiously. She knew running such a huge business as Queen Consolidated was a lot of work. She worked in a casino and loss count of how many times the head of surveillance and security complained about his workload when ordering a drink at the end of his shift. And he only ran one department. Oliver was in charge of the entire company. But certainly one signature could wait until morning.

"No can do. I need to get it tonight and fax it to out subsidiary in Russia. I should have done it hours ago." they didn't use faxes anymore, but instead relied solemnly on e-mails these days. Donna didn't know that, and that is exactly what Felicity counted on.

"Well then give me five minutes to dry my hair a bit and put something else on and I'll accompany you." Donna said over her shoulder as she headed back to her room. But the click of the lock made her turn, and once she did she saw the room now lacked one very anxious looking blonde. Felicity didn't even wait for her to finish her sentence before rushing out.

So she just shook her head. A document to sign. Right.

Diggle smiled when he heard the distinctive sound of the security lock on the heavy metal doors disengaging before a lot louder sound of someone running down the stairs made Oliver turn towards the staircase. The heart-eyes his friend sent his babbling soulmate the moment she was in his line of sight were slightly sickening. He was certain he never acted that way around Lyla.

"I'm fine. You shouldn't have come here and left your mom alone in the hotel." Oliver spoke just as Felicity started to approach the med table he sat on while Diggle cleaned and taped the wound just below his shoulder, "It's just a flesh wound, the bullet grazed me. That's all."

"No! That is not all!" Felicity had none of it, "That was you being lucky this time. Next time the graze might not be a graze, it might be a bullet straight into your heart."

"Felicity-" he tried to calm her, reached for her, but she just stepped back.

"I know this is what you do. I know, and I would never ask you to give it up. Being the Arrow is the part of who you are now. But the very thought of you being injured and bleeding..."

"Felicity-" he tried again, but she shook her head. She needed to say it, but the words were stuck in her throat.

"I just... I can't lost you Oliver. You are acknowledging me as your soulmate, letting go of the 'because of the things I do' bullshit... we are finally on the right track. And I'm terrified that now, now when things are finally... better... I could lose you."

Diggle didn't say anything, just stepped back when Oliver hopped down from the table. He knew this way it. He was watching history happening. He would talk their grandchildren about this very moment, although maybe skip the part about their grandfather being injured and shirtless, and their grandmother desperately trying not to stare at his naked chest.

She tensed slightly when Oliver pulled her into a hug, mostly because she didn't want to accidentally hurt him. But she relaxed instantly when he whispered the same words she told him just hours ago.
"You won't lose me. Ever."
"Are you sure that is a good idea?" Diggle asked, and received a glare from the blonde who didn't appreciate her plan being questioned.

She knew he was asking because he was concerned for her, for her safety, but she pretty much raised herself, due to the fact her mother worked crazy hours in a casino. She could take care of herself, most of the time anyway. Let's be honest, being kidnapped out of her apartment by someone she once knew isn't something that is bound to happen again.

"Diggle is right." Oliver commented, and Felicity had to roll her eyes. Of course he would agree.

"I see no reason to stay in the hotel when I have a perfectly good apartment that I pay rent for. I had the lock changed, and the guy also checked all the windows to make sure those are closing properly too. Including the one in the hallway that leads to the fire escape, so no more sneaking in for you mister." she pointed a finger at Oliver.

"Is the guy reliable?" he asked instead, ignoring her little jab. No need to tell her the simple window lock wouldn't be able to stop him if he wanted to enter her place.

After grumbling under her breath about over-protectiveness and control freaks, she replied, "He lives in the building and has been in charge of all repairs for over a decade. So yeah, he is reliable."

"I would still prefer if you stayed in the hotel for a while longer."

"Oliver!" Felicity yelled his name, startling him. His insisting went from endearing to annoying, and she had enough.

"Isabel is free, and you know just as I do that she would stop at nothing to get what she wants. I don't want her getting to you." he tried to justify his point, but the blonde just shook her head.

"I am not letting that woman influence my day to day decisions. I am not giving her that much power." the coldness in Felicity's eyes as she spoke surprised Oliver, "Besides, I doubt she would dare to do anything. Now with all the publicity we now have thanks to that tabloid."

Instantly Oliver stood straighter. He was used to being in the spotlight, being hounded by photographers who followed his every move and took pictures of every bad decision he made. He grew up that way. But Felicity didn't, and he didn't liked the fact they were bothering her, "Did they found you already? Appeared at the hotel? There were a few in front of your building when Dig went there to pick up clothes." Diggle instantly nodded to confirm his words.

But Felicity shook her head, "They are surprisingly leaving me alone, at least when it comes to shadowing my every move. But I checked my e-mails, thanks for getting my tablet together with my things Dig, I really appreciate it, and there are quite a few messages from magazines asking for an exclusive interview, and you would not believe the amount of money they are offering for it to happen. Like, where the hell were they when I was in college? Oh, and then there is this one guy, some scientist, who is apparently interested in studying us."

The frown on Oliver's face spoke even before he did. He was not amused by any of it, particularly the last part. They were not Guinea pigs to be poked and probed, and how the hell would someone test the connection between them, the link between the mirror marks. He could only think of one way, and the hell would freeze over before he would do something like that. Not ever again.
Finally Oliver sighed, "I understand that I can't force you to stay at the hotel if you don't want to. I would have preferred if you did because it would make both you and your mother safer, while she's still in Starling, but if you want to return to your apartment that is okay."

Felicity stared at him suspiciously, "Are you planing to camp out on my fire escape? Oliver, you better not."

"I won't." he cut her off, but that didn't help with her feeling that he was up to something. She pointed at finger at his direction and was about to comment about it, but the phone in her coat pocket started to ring.

Instantly Felicity fished it out. She set up designated ringtones and knew right away her mother was the one calling, without even checking the screen. And since her mom knew where she went, more or less anyway, and knew she was returning to the hotel there really was no reason for her to call. Unless...

"Mom? Is everything alright? Did something happened?" she tried to hide the panic she felt from showing in her voice, but that didn't work all too well.

"Oh, everything is fine dear. I was just calling to let you know I'm getting room service."

Felicity pulled the phone away from her ear, stared at it in confusion, like she would have with Donna is her mother happened to be standing right in front of her, and then questioned, "Why are you calling me to tell me that?"

"I'm just checking if you would be coming back, I know you said you would but it's okay if your changed your mind baby. I would completely understand if you chose to stay with Oliver instead tonight. You're an adult sweetheart, it's completely normal to have a sleepover with your soulmate."

"What? Mom, no! Just... don't do that..." Donna's words got Felicity all flustered, and the two men in front of her got curious what in the world did Mrs. Smoak said that got her daughter to blush like that.

"Are you sure, dear? Cause that man is worthy of dumping your own mother."

Felicity grumbled something that sounded suspiciously like 'for God's sake' under hear breath, before informing her mother yet again that she would be returning to the hotel tonight. In fact she was on her way right now.

"Dig will drive you." Oliver said the moment she disconnected the call, "Don't think I didn't noticed you taking a cab every morning to work."

Felicity shrugged, "I'm still waiting to hear from my insurance agency. I'll get a new car then... but let's not talk about that right now. You..." she pointed at finger at Oliver, "Do not do anything dumb tonight... anything else dumb."

"I'm going straight to the mansion." he said with a small smile, that grew wider when she responded with a grumble of 'you better'.

Oliver started to wipe his palms on his pants, but stopped when the motion registered. He was nervous, but that was no reason to mess the suit. If his mother doesn't get his head for it Thea would. His sister has been a whirlwind for the past several days, planing a shopping trip and a visit to the spa and the hairdresser, and all to make sure Felicity looks her best possible.
Although before exiting his room today, and leaving him to get ready Thea, snickered and said the only time Felicity will looked more beautiful than today will be on her wedding day. Needless to say he was frozen for good ten minutes trying to process the image that appeared in his mind.

Tonight she's supposed to look the complete opposite of the vision in white, that is if she follows the unwritten rules the older generations forced upon the younger. She said she already got the dress, but didn't mentioned what it looked like no matter how many times he asked. He ever used the excuse of wanting to wear a tie of the matching shade. Felicity just snorted at that and returned to her desk.

The press seemed even more eager than him to find out even the smallest tidbit about Felicity's appearance for the Gala. They already reported about her new haircut, which was just a few inches shorter, but apparently people wanted to know.

Felicity thought it was hilarious.

It took only a few seconds after he knocked for the apartment doors to open, but instead of his gorgeous looking soulmate it was actually teary Donna who responded.

Oliver instantly froze, his blood running cold in his veins at the thought something happened, something that upset the woman, "What's wrong?"

"Oh dear, my girl... I never saw her like this. She is positively radiant."

A relieved sigh escaped Oliver's lips, and only a second later he was left completely breathless. In fact he was so taken aback by the sight in front of him that he dropped the flat black box he was holding. An action that made Felicity laugh, as did the look of utter shock on his face.

The dress was black and sleeveless, made out of silk and lace, and just to tease him a bit Felicity twirled once, revealing bare back. The flower design of the lace had sequence sewn into it that initially appeared to be black but as she moved the color switched to deep green.

"You are beautiful." he breathed, unaware she heard him until the small smile appeared on her face.

A shrill scream startled them, and Oliver acted in the only way he knew how. He stepped in front of Felicity, shielding her from the danger. Because she was everything, she needed to be protected at all costs, even if that cost was his life.

But there was no danger inside her home, no intruder who came with an intent of harming anyone. Only a blonde woman who held an opened jewelry box with a look of utter shock on her face.

"Mom." Felicity sighed, her grip on Oliver's hand easing. She didn't even realized she wrapped her fingers around his until then, and a blush colored her cheeks.

Donna raised her eyes towards the pair, focusing solemnly on her daughter's soulmate. She knew he was rich, and that buying such an extravagant gift didn't mean as much to him as it did to everyone else... or maybe he did based on the way he blushed and looked at the floor to escape her gaze.

Felicity noticed that too, and once again, this time fully knowing what she was doing, reached to take his hand. Oliver wasn't a shy person, far from it, but everyone had that one thing that made them feel self-conscious. And for him it seems to be the silent praise, praise he perhaps believed was undeserved.

"Maybe you should help Felicity put it on." Donna finally said, and Felicity's eyes moved from her mother to the man standing next to her. She was curious what it was, and why her mom reacted the way she did, but it should come from Oliver. She wanted him to hand it to her, or help put it on like
her mother suggested. She knew it was jewelry, the box revealed as much, and if she should guess
she would say it was a necklace of some sort. She shook her head and nudged Oliver slightly,
hinting at him to get a move on so they could leave already and get to the Gala on time for a change.

Donna was practically bouncing while handing over the flat black box, making Oliver smile at the
older woman's eagerness to see her daughter's reaction. He just hoped Felicity would react similar as
her mother, although he wouldn't mind if she skipped the whole screeching thing Donna seemed to
have perfected.

Felicity's eyes widened when she saw what was carefully placed on the black velvet. It wasn't what
she expected, considering the Queen family was known for expensive extravagance. Truth be told
she expected something more closely to the broach from the Ominous decade he once donated to
catch the Dodger, namely big, bold, and with the huge stone.

It wasn't.

The platinum piece was custom made for her, it was obvious on first sight. She didn't doubt jewelry
stores had pendants in that particular shape in stock, but this one was made to look exactly like the
soulmate mark on her back. It was decorated with several stones, their color surprising Felicity. Her
eyes moved from the box in her hands to Oliver, and his expression surprised her. She only seen it
once before, when he ended up falling asleep on the cot in the Foundry. The look of complete and
utter calmness. But his eyes revealed something else, something she was unable, or possibly
unwilling, to name.

"Rubies?" she asked, ignoring the way her mother's head moved from her to him and back, like she
was watching a tennis match.

A faint blush covered Oliver's cheeks and he reached to scratch the back of his neck, "You were
crunching on a pen when I first saw you."

"Yes." Felicity confirmed, confused why he was mentioning that.

"It was red." Oliver said with a small shrug and Felicity laughed. She didn't think he would
remember such a small detail, something so insignificant that happened over a year ago.

"Help me put it on." she handed him the box before turning around.

The gentle touch at the back of her neck as Oliver closed the clasp made her tremble. There wasn't
absolutely anything intimate about what he was doing right now, but her body still reacted to his
proximity. If he noticed it he didn't say anything, and for that she was grateful.

"Don't forget your purse, baby." Donna said, interrupting a moment and making them step away
from each other. She made a face when realizing what just happened.

"I won't." she said shortly before walking to the kitchen peninsula where she placed the clutch after
making sure everything she needed was inside. It was a lucky find, something she just out of the blue
thought to look up online, and lo and behold there were stores that sold her now favorite purse.

Oliver snorted when she turned around and he recognized what the oval clutch represented. It was
bright and sparkly, decorated with black and white rhinestones, in a shape of a panda's face, "Do the
shoes match?" he just had to ask.

Felicity sighed dramatically, "I found a pair that would, but they didn't have my number. And they
were so cute; white, four inch heel, and a panda face at the front. They were perfect, but alas it
wasn't meant to be. Yet anyway. But I'll get them."
Oliver laughed, "I'm sure you will."

It felt strange for Felicity to admit this to herself but right now she envied Oliver for growing up under the spotlight. It didn't mean she wished she did too, completely the opposite. Her childhood may have been difficult, but she wouldn't replace it for the kind of life he led. Now then his days included being followed by people who turned stalking into a legitimate business.

She envied him because it also meant he learned how to act in front of the crowd screaming his name, how to smile just right without revealing his true feelings. He may have perfected the act of deception during those five years, he had to because his life was depending on it most of the time, but he learned it from early childhood simply by imitating his parents. Because to Moira and Robert Queen public perception was everything.

She was so focused on her own thoughts that she didn't realize he called her name until he reached out and took hold of her hand, startling her in the process. Felicity jumped in fright and turned to glare at her soulmate, silently daring him to laugh at her, but the small smile at his face told her he wasn't planning to do so. He understood she was worrying about tonight, and he was trying to calm her down by gently running his thumb over her knuckles. In his opinion she had no reason to worry, she attended a big function with him before, and nothing really changed.

Except for the fact now everyone knew they were soulmates.

And they would be extremely judgmental about every single thing; from her dress and hair, to her decision to keep working, and as his Executive Assistant no less. Isabel had already made a comment about it during a meeting, and while she didn't get the response she expected Felicity didn't doubt at least one other person will have the same opinion about that being improper.

"Remember what Thea said." Oliver said gently and she had to smile.

The Queen heiress was opinionated, and she didn't even try to hide it. Instead she spoke boldly and left people to decide for themselves if they would act all insulted at her words, or accept that that is what she's like and move on. Felicity liked that about her, she appreciated the bold honesty. As well as the sarcasm she seemed to have in abundance.

What Oliver reminded her of was the family dinner at the Queen mansion two night ago when she mentioned the article that questioned her decision to keep working at QC. Thea instantly gasped dramatically, clenched her shirt over her heart, and gaped at her with wide eyes before muttering, "A woman working for a living. The horror."

Oliver snorted at his sister's words, and Felicity nudged him gently with her elbow, before focusing at the teen, "They claim I'm being selfish for taking a workplace for someone who actually needs it. Because being Oliver's soulmate apparently means I don't have to pay bills, or buy groceries."

"They are literally setting you up to fail." Thea wasn't amused anymore, "If you work then you are selfish. If you quit then you are a gold-digger who is taking advantage of your soulmate being a billionaire CEO. There is no pleasing them. So don't even bother to try."

"It's your life and it's your choice." Oliver added, and Felicity smiled at him. She used those same words, but in a completely different setting. Neither of them noticed Thea rolling her eyes, and the two mothers sharing a look.

Felicity was still focused on the events from two nights ago that she didn't notice when the car stopped in front of the Starling National Museum, not until the sound of the driver's doors closing
brought her back to the presence. Instantly she pulled her hand from Oliver's and reached for the necklace around her neck. It was strange how fast its presence became comforting for her, how touching it calmed her nerves.

But Oliver reached for her hand again, making her focus on him again. The smile on his face did nothing to calm her nerves, neither did his touch. She didn't want to go out there, face the crowd of reporters and Starling elite, didn't want to be judged just because the blot on her back connected her to one of city's favorite bachelors.

But she was Felicity Smoak. She survived the Undertaking, the Count, and Cooper freaking Seldon, went to the underground casino with the intent of getting caught for counting cards. She died, was brought back to life, and had a nice conversation with a man that referred himself as the Demon's Head. She lived through the burning heart.

She can and will face all these people out there with her head held high.

The calls became much louder when Diggle opened the back door to allow them to exit. She wasn't sure how the reporters could tell who arrived based on the car that stopped in front of the museum when all the cars were practically identical. They were all black town-cars with tinted windows, no actual way to tell them apart.

Oliver's hand let go of her own as he slowly exited, buttoning his suit jacket the moment he was out. It was a movement Felicity saw him perform hundreds of times before, and she wondered if he actually knew he was doing it, or if it was an automatic move by now.

Her mind was obviously on the roll tonight, because it took her far too long to realize Oliver offered his hand for her to take and exit. Only his amused chuckle, as he leaned down to look inside the car, which was probably a total breach of some made up etiquette the elite had, made Felicity realize it was time to get out and face the music.

She reached out and placed her hand in his, all the while hoping her palm wasn't completely sweaty, which wouldn't really surprise her. With one swift movement she placed first one heeled foot on the ground, then the other, and was then standing close to Oliver. Like, really close. Close enough to feel her breath on her face.

And the press loved it.

The flashes would have blinded her, Felicity was certain of it, if Oliver's eyes haven't mesmerized her. They were bright, and so full of life; his whole expression was open to those who knew how to read him.

Diggle cleared his throat, his expression schooled into a emotionless mask that was slowly cracking because he struggled not to laugh at them for acting like lovesick fools in front of every tv house and newspaper publisher in the city. It was even funnier when they realized what they were doing and tried to act casual about it, but weren't fooling anyone.

The Queen Consolidated PR will have a field day tomorrow.

"Shall we?" Oliver asked, offering her his hand.

Felicity laughed, placed her hand at the crook of his elbow, and followed him down the red carpet towards the museum entrance. They only stopped a few times, solemnly because Oliver swore to Moira he wouldn't practically run inside but play nice with the press. It was one of those 'give them what they want today, and they will leave you alone tomorrow' type of thing. But because he was
petty, or possibly annoyed by their persistence, and wanted to prove a point not once did Oliver pause for any reporter that called him Ollie.

And then one of them asked for a kiss, only for the others to join in. They didn't get one, but they got a clear view of the soulmate mark on Felicity's back. That seemed to be good enough, because clicking signaled several dozen photos taken of them entering the large building.

"I will never get used to this." Felicity muttered under her breath, meaning the attention a mere blot on a skin gets. In her opinion they are blowing things way out of proportions. It's not like soulmates are extremely rare, and happen in one in a million. Literally everyone has one. It wasn't that big of a deal.

"It's a life of a Queen." Olive responded, his hand covering hers for a moment before he led her deeper inside the museum, following the sound of music and conversation that led them towards the main hall where the gala was being held.

Felicity considered pointing out she wasn't a Queen, she wasn't born one, and she wasn't his wife either. But being his soulmate made her one in the eyes of everyone else, starting with his sister. And also his mother, a fact that freaked Felicity out every time she thought about it. Moira actually saw her as an equal, something she didn't believe was possible. Not after the whole mess with the family secrets that the Queen matriarch desperately wanted to keep buried and forgotten.

But things changed.

And yet Felicity didn't believed she would ever not be freaked out by it.

Things didn't change much once they walked into the large hall, filled with over a dozen round tables set for dinner and plenty of free space for socializing and dancing. People were still observing them, but at least they were a bit more covert about it than the press outside. But that also meant that instead of saying what they meant to their faces they would whisper behind their backs.

"Oliver." the first person who approached them was also the one Felicity could honestly say she liked meeting. Walter Steele, former CEO of Queen Consolidated and also former husband of Moira Queen. But even though his links to the family and the company were broken the older Brit still offered his full support and assistance to both Queen siblings.

"Walter, it's great to see you. I wasn't certain you would be attending, I heard about the trip from Thea. How was London?" Oliver went into his polite chit-chat mode, but actually meant every word he said. His former step-father was someone he held in high regards, and had utmost respect for.

"It's rather gloomy at this time of the year. I have to admit while I missed the city, I did not missed the constant rain." the older man's eyes moved from Oliver to his companion, and a wide smile spread on his face, "Miss Smoak, you look particularly lovely this evening. May I offer my congratulations to you both, I hope your bond will be solid and your life filled with happiness."

"Thank you Walter." Oliver said with a smile, and Felicity nodded in agreement with his words. She respected Walter Steel as the businessman and as a person, so for him to offer them his well-wishes meant a lot. And from Oliver's expression she knew he felt the same.

"I have to admit I was surprised when even the papers in England published the news, albeit it was a tabloid, but still. I take it the detail about Mirror marks wasn't just a publicity stunt on their side?"

"No, it wasn't." Felicity answered, and Walter nodded. She didn't miss the little look he sent Oliver's way, but she couldn't read him like she could her soulmate. He perfected the mask of complete
calmness during the years of being involved with Queen Consolidated, first as the CFO and then, after Robert Queen's death, as the CEO.

After Walter excused himself Oliver led Felicity towards the open bar at the side of the hall. He knew she could use a glass of wine, and to be honest he wouldn't mind something strong that would help him deal with all these people for the next several hours. The galas were never his melee, not when he was younger and rebelled against the unwritten rules of the Starling elite, and definitely not now when he knew which ones of the gathered people hid skeletons in their closets, and not just the one that would cause scandals and divorces, but were deserving of a life in Iron Heights. Without evidence though there wasn't much he could do, couldn't hand them over to detective Lance on a silver platter. He could kill, but he wouldn't.

The Arrow doesn't kill without boundaries, and the Hood is long gone.

While Oliver was musing about how badly he wished he wasn't here surrounded by all these two-faced people Felicity was observing the crowd. And the crowd observed them.

"Glass of wine and a scotch." Oliver said to the young woman manning the bar. She smiled at him before pouring gold liquid into a wide glass, and then picked a long-stemmed one from the fully stocked table behind her and filling it with expensive wine.

Felicity gratefully accepted the glass and smiled widely after taking a sip. While the champagne the waiters were carrying on trays through the hall was probably some big name that cost more then she made a month per bottle, for her red wine was always a better option.

"Back to mingling." she mumbled under her breath, but made sure she was loud enough for Oliver to hear.

He leaned towards her and whispered, "It can't be worse than board meetings." into her ear. To everyone that probably looked like he was being romantic, and that was completely fine with both of them. Let them think whatever they want, just as long as they keep their opinions to themselves.

"Only cause Isabel is present during those meetings." Felicity responded, but then a groan escaped her lips, causing an older woman that was walking past them to look at her in confusion. Oliver did too, until he noticed what, or rather whom, she was focused on.

"What the hell is she doing here?" he was angry, and that was obvious in the tine of his voice, as did in the way his eyes darkened at the sight of the brunette walking into the hall. He was ready to storm there, grab her by the forearm and drag her away to demand answers. But Felicity was on his side, she was his priority.

And that became obvious when Felicity tightened the hold on his arm in an attempt to calm herself down. The meeting today didn't went so well, and she really didn't want to blow a fuse tonight in front of all these people. Not when she knew Isabel would use it against Oliver. Be as it is it was getting progressively harder to keep her bloodlust in check when she was forced to interact with a woman that was involved in her being kidnapped and killed.

"Steer us away from her at all cost." she whispered to Oliver, while maintaining a smile because a older blonde woman was walking their way.

Oliver followed her gaze, and smiled as he recognized his mother's old friend, "Mrs. Danforth."

"Oliver, dear, it's always great to see you. Where is your mother? Is she not in attendance tonight?" Jessica Danforth asked while looking to see if Moira was somewhere close to her son.
"Mother chose to stay home with Thea tonight. I believe they are having a girls night together with Felicity's mother," Oliver answered, smiling slightly as Felicity's turned towards him so fast he wondered if she got a whiplash. Thea made him swear on his bow, of all things, that he wouldn't tell Felicity she planed to pick up Donna, once they left for the gala, and drive her to the mansion for a late dinner and some quality female bonding.

His sister must have suspected she still wasn't comfortable having their mothers in the same room without her as a buffer, despite the fact the two women got along just fine every time they all got together.

"It's a shame. I was looking forward to seeing her." Jessica's blue eyes then focused on Felicity, her gaze doing a quick check of her entire persona from head to toe, "And this must be your lovely soulmate. I'm Jessica Danforth, old friend of the Queen family." she offered her hand.

"It's a please to meet you Mrs Danforth." Felicity responded politely while shaking her hand.

The older woman shook her head, "Please dear, call me Jessica. You are going to be one of us soon after all."

Felicity glanced towards Oliver for a second, recognizing his discomfort right away. Like her he didn't like it when people insinuated about their wedding, which is a whole different matter that will not be discussed anytime soon. Or maybe it was the fact the city elite seemed to consider themselves some sort of exclusive club, secretly overflowing with corruption, and they perceived her as fresh blood that could be molded to fit right in with them. Turn her into a gossiper who only cared about public perception of her and tea parties.

Well they were wrong.

Oliver was a savior who pulled Jessica's attention onto himself by asking her about her teenage daughter who just finished High School and was soon going to college. The older woman was just telling them how Madison met her soulmate during summer classes at Stanford when the unwanted, but more than likely inevitable, happened.

Felicity honestly wished there was some sort of warning that came before Isabel Rochev decided to butt in on a conversation that wasn't any of her business. But there wasn't, so when she heard the woman's voice the younger blonde groaned while the older one turned towards the newcomer, not trying to hide her curiosity about this women. It's not every day that someone greats Oliver Queen with an veiled insult.

"Miss Rochev, eloquent as always." Oliver deadpanned, not at all amused by the fact Isabel just walked right up to them and made a rude comment about him and Felicity attending the gala together.

Isabel faked a smile, because in Felicity's opinion if she ever smiled for read her face would crack, and then continued with her comments, "I am merely worried about QC's public appearance. It is my opinion that Miss Smoak's continued employment is destroying the company's public image."

"Really?" Mrs Danforth asked, her blue eyes focusing solemnly on Isabel, "Then you might consider firing the entire PR department for being incompetent and not knowing how to play it to your advantage. A CEO finding his soulmate and becoming a family man does wonders for public image and support."

"A CEO in a relationship with his secretary will turn the entire company into a mockery. Especially one with reputation as Ollie Queen." Isabel fired back.
The feeling of Felicity gripping his arm more tightly told Oliver how close she was to losing her calm, and possibly the control over the bloodlust. A glance in her direction confirmed she was on the edge, so he decided to get her away from the temptation of snapping Isabel's neck.

"You are referring to the boy from before, but Oliver is obviously changed. A man in love wants to keep his soulmate close to him, reputation be damned. I don't see anything bad in that." Jessica responded to Isabel's comment, and that was the perfect intro to what Oliver was planing.

"Which is why you must excuse us. I promised by soulmate a dance."

"Oliver Queen on a dance floor. And voluntarily." as an old family friend Jessica Danforth knew how far he was ready to go to avoid dancing. The older woman laughed good-naturally, before throwing visibly annoyed Isabel a look that clearly said 'told you so'.

The Queen Consolidated VP glared at them while they were walking towards the dance floor, their glasses placed on the tray of the passing waiter. Moments later Jessica Danforth excused herself as well, she noticed Janice Bowen and wanted to relay the news to her. Isabel knew if she was anyone else the older woman would have waived at her friend to join them, but these women tended to avoid her. But she also knew she should have expected it, these old money types all stuck together and rarely allowed another inside their little circle. And while she didn't particularly cared about invites to some idiotic tea parties the old broads organized once a month Isabel didn't appreciate being continuously ignored by them. She knew that was Moira Queen's work.

But no matter. She'll deal with Moira eventually. Once the matriarch falls the rest of the family will follow, and she will finally have what belonged to her from start. What Robert promised her, but then betrayed her. And for what? For a little brat that wasn't even his own.

She will destroy them. And she knows just the right person to start with.

Looking around Isabel's eyes briefly fell on DA Adam Donner. He was on the phone, and seemed agitated as he apparently explained something to the person on the other side of the line. She understood that feeling, being surrounded by idiots every time she took a step into Queen Consolidated. But approaching him and starting a conversation wasn't high on her list of priorities.

He already served his purpose. She had no further need for him.

"Thank you for getting me away from Isabel." Felicity whispered once they were gently moving on the dance floor. She wouldn't call it dancing, they were mostly just rocking from left to right, unlike several couples who seemed to have take things seriously and act like it was a national competition.

Oliver nodded, without saying a word. He didn't want to think about anything right now beyond the feel of her in his arms. The cut on her back was deep enough that the tip of his fingertips touched the bare skin, and it was making his brain short circuit. It was crazy, absolutely and utterly insane, that such a small thing could affect him like that.

Felicity watched his face closely, gasping a bit when he closed his eyes and pulled her closer. She didn't expect this, she thought he would be just as cautious, and respective of the boundaries she had set up for them, like he usually was. No intimate touches, no unnecessary closeness... nothing she wasn't ready for with the man that just little over a month ago dated someone else despite knowing she was the one who carried his mark.

He was taking initiative tonight.

And Felicity would be lying is she claimed she wasn't just a tiny bit pleased by that.
"I'm sorry if I'm making you uncomfortable." Oliver eventually mumbled, pulling back slightly.

She couldn't help but smile at him, "You're not. I actually like this, despite the attention we are getting. I'm presuming not many women had the honor of dancing with Oliver Queen."

He shook his head, "Before the island I preferred club parties to galas, but only danced when Laurel practically dragged me to the dance floor in some sort of attempt to show her dominance over the girls who were trying to get my attention. After the island, once my mother made it clear it was expected of me to attend high society gatherings, I steered clear of the dance floor by making her extremely uncomfortable so she wouldn't push me to ask someone to dance."

Felicity snorted, and received a curious look from the couple next to them who were visibly taken aback when recognizing them. She blushed and leaned forward, resting her forehead on Oliver's shoulder. He laughed lightly, and because of that Felicity pinched his arm slightly before returning it on his shoulder.

"Do I even want to know what it takes to make Moira Queen uncomfortable?" Felicity teased after a few moments, once she pulled back so she could look at his face.

He just shrugged, a little smile playing at the corner of his lips. She knew that expression, she loved it when he did that.

She loved many things about him, but it would take a while before she was ready to admit that... to him anyway. She admitted it to herself a long time ago. Long before she knew he was her soulmate which brought her a lot of turmoil. She believed him to belong to someone else so loving him, being with him, wasn't an option to her.

"We're gonna have to mingle. And soon." Oliver said, his eyes moving around the large hall, assessing everyone present. He detested galas and the need to be uber-polite to people who saw him as a name and not as a person.

Felicity knew what was going on. He wanted to get the whole meaningless chit-chat thing over with so they could leave, probably to the Foundry. Or maybe Big Belly Burger. But he seemed to have forgotten one important detail about tonight, "We promised your mother, remember. At least two hours."

Oliver groaned and leaned forward, until his forehead was resting on her shoulder. The move got him some inquisitive looks and caused some tongue wagging among the older population. They didn't know what was going on, so they assumed. And the assumption was Oliver Queen was being inappropriate with his soulmate, and the lady in question allowed him.

"How much longer?" he mumbled into her shoulder, his hot breath touching her bare neck, making her tremble.

'Too long' was the first thing that crossed her mind, but instead she replied, "We arrived not twenty minutes ago."

"I'm sending Thea next time."

Half an hour later Oliver no longer felt the same way. While it was officially referred as a Gala tonight meet of the city elite was actually a Fundraiser for the Children's Oncology Ward of Starling General. He already made a sizable contribution in the name of Queen family, and the family company, and it was rather fun to watch Felicity persuade the others to do the same.

The charity behind tonight's fundraiser was founded by late Jasper King in memory of his beloved
wife. After he followed her their daughter continued down their philanthropist path and opened a free clinic in Glades. And after Rebecca Merlyn's death his mother made sure their wonderful continues.

And it was his mother who usually made sure everyone opened their wallets and checkbooks, but he had to admit not even the Queen matriarch was this successful. Moira would manipulate them skillfully, Felicity had a different approach. She would guilt trip them by quoting statistics and share heartbreaking stories she found online. She was a natural. And hearing her talk about families who needed their help, about sick children that deserve the best possible care because they are facing something as horrendous as cancer at such tender age, gave him an idea.

And a feeling of shame washed over him before he didn't think about it sooner.

The anniversary of the Undertaking was little over two months away, and he will make sure there was another fundraiser then, even if he had to plan the whole thing himself. These people around him were familiar to him in more then one way, several times already he heard a name that was mentioned in the book. And while he couldn't connect them to any crime, the fact their names were on the List was enough for him.

It took good ten minutes, and a phone call to her boss, until the damn guard let her inside. And because he was so stubborn, and unwilling to listen to her, she chose not to inform him about what was going on behind his back. While he was focusing solemnly on her she had a perfect view of the waiting staff, and saw one waiter entering a side room that apparently served as kitchen while the other one was exiting at the same time, and with a perfectly synchronized move an item was transferred from hand to hand.

She couldn't see it properly, but she could make an educated guess considering what was happening inside the hall at the moment.

The photographers managed to slip inside and were working on getting some good shots of the gathered elite while impersonating waiters. She was impressed with their persistence and willingness to do anything to get that one that would sell for a nice sum of money.

She sighed after the guard finally allowed her entrance, and didn't waste any time walking pass him and towards the hall. She didn't have any time to waste, not if she wanted to be back at the office on time to intercept her target. It was all planed till the smallest detail, and her extra set of clothes, as well as the weapon of choice, were stashed in the trunk of her car... but then Donner called and ruined it. And because she was just an intern she couldn't exactly say no to the man that was smart enough to get to the position of the DA, but stupid enough that he forgot to sign legal documents.

So here she was, attracting attention from old farts, as she walked among them towards her boss.

A pair caught her attention and she smiled, her steps freezing for a moment. They looked so wonderful together, like she and Jesse did all those months ago, before he cheated. Before he died.

The blonde woman, Felicity Smoak, said something and her soulmate laughed. Oliver Queen looked so different right now than he did during those years before he seemingly died together with his father. More open, honest, and without questionable haircut. He was more mature now, changed... but still made some choices that made her furious. She did her homework, found the articles, and knew he started a relationship with Sara Lance after her return to Starling, and according to the story they ended it just before it was revealed Miss Smoak was his soulmate.

That made her furious, at him just as much as at the women that didn't give a damn he belonged to
another. She was projecting her fury, and she knew it, still... Jesse died because of the little whore he was visiting in the Glades, both he and Gloria died in the earthquake, and left her living in knowledge the man she planed to marry met his end in another woman's bed.

That left her without a closure she needed, without a chance to face the woman that caused her pain by being selfish. That's why she came up with a plan, why she spent months picking the perfect the perfect subject. She already had the needed skill, a remainder from the teenage years and the dream to attend the Olympics. And then Starling Scandal published the story and gave her exactly what she needed.

Oliver was deep in a conversation with a city councilman when Felicity's hand slipped from his own. Instantly he turned towards her, wondering what was going on. She blushed and mouthed 'bathroom' before moving away, all the while feeling his eyes following her instead of focusing on the man he was talking to.

Another set of eyes observed Felicity finally stepping away from her soulmate, for the first time that night. From the moment they entered the hall they were inseparable, and it was annoying. Isabel cringed when she glanced at Oliver and saw his lovesick gaze. It was disgusting, and made him look like a lovesick fool in front of important people. So much about representing QC in the best light.

The brunette waited for a few more moments until he finally stopped staring at Felicity's back, or more than likely her ass, considering it was Oliver, before making her move. She knew she couldn't do anything on the Gala, too many prying eyes around, but she could play some mind games. She loved those.

Felicity Smoak might be smart, but she wasn't anywhere near her league. Isabel spent years honing her skills; she learned how to intimidate, manipulate, and twist the truth until it suited her needs. The little blonde girly didn't stand a chance.

"It's a dream come true for a girl like you, isn't it?" Isabel asked the moment Felicity exited the facilities. It might have been better if she cornered the blonde inside, but she refused to step into that place. So many people used it already tonight, heaven knows what kind of disease one could pick up while in there. That obviously didn't bothered Oliver's little soulmate.

"Pardon?" Felicity asked, confused by the question. She didn't want to be there talking to Isabel, she knew it would be better if she just walked away, but her feet felt like glued to the marble floor.

"A nobody from Vegas rubbing elbows with elite." Isabel's eyes moved down Felicity's body, making her feel uncomfortable under the judgmental gaze, "You think putting on an second-hand shop dress and costume jewelry makes you one of us. You don't belong here."

"Us?" Felicity asked, an obviously fake smile on her face. She was glad she chose a hard case clutch for tonight because it allowed her to grip it as tightly as she could to calm herself down, even though it caused the rhinestones to leave mark on the skin of her palms. Better than than to cause a scene, something Isabel would without a doubt enjoy.

"I am a vice-president of QC. I earned my place."

Felicity snorted, silently cheering for herself because it caused Isabel to look insulted, before as politely as possible pointing out, "Let's not kid ourselves. It is a well-known fact you didn't earn your position in the boardroom, but in a bedroom... of a cheap motel by the side of a road, because you honestly aren't worth the price of a room in Hilton."
If it were physically possible steam would come out of Isabel's ears at the insult, or the truth depending on whom you're asking, and she pointed a finger at Felicity, her perfectly manicured fingernail an inch from the blonde's nose, "I would watch my mouth if I were you. I am not someone you should trifle with because it just might happen my face is the last one you see."

Felicity's eyes widened at the obvious threat, not believing Isabel dared to say something like that when there was a possibility someone might overhear her. But then again she was rather unhinged from the beginning, and possibly believes herself to be untouchable since she was already cleared from the charges and released from custody once.

Isabel interpreted her shock as fear and smiled thinking she manage to rattle Felicity. She didn't. But that didn't mean someone else wasn't affected by her words and came to a conclusion Isabel Rochev was a threat.

And as such she needed to be dealt with.

The redhead checked her watch and frowned upon noticing how late it was. Her perfectly laid plans were ruined, her mark probably already out of her reach. Family dinner and all that. But from what she heard right now, the one she wanted to hunt down first wasn't the one who was most threatening to her charges. But this woman that talked to Felicity Smoak, threatened her, was. She wasn't just needed to be punished because of the past, but to ensure she doesn't destroy the future.

She recognized the older woman from the few times she made an official statement for QC, but she didn't consider her anything more than a business annoyance. Now she realized she was wrong and should have placed the brunette's photo on the wall together with the others.

She walked past the guard, ignoring him, and marched right to her car. On the way there she checked the museum's designated parking lot. It was filled to the brink with sleep black cars tonight. Her own car was the only one parked behind the nearby restaurant, and that suited her just fine. It saved her the time to change and get what she needs. The briefcase was thrown on the passenger seat carelessly and she pulled the handle by the driver's seat to open the trunk. It was time to get ready and find the right car.

Isabel was fuming. Tonight was a disaster. Everyone went out of their way to be extra polite to Oliver and Felicity, giving them way more attention than they deserved. It annoyed the hell out of her because her stronghold on QC depended not only on her own abilities, but also on Oliver's incompetence and inability to stay out of tabloids. The board was very displeased every time he ended up on a front page, and that served her well.

But then his soulmate was revealed and suddenly he went from a screw-up to a sweetheart. Disgusting.

"Where the hell are you driving me?!” she shouted after noticing they were driving through filthy streets of the Glades. Her penthouse was on the other side of the city, no where near this disguising place, "Turn the car around and drive me to my building, and I just might not inform your boss of your competence. Do you hear me? I will have you fired and make sure you can't find another job anywhere in this city? Do you know who I am?!!"

Isabel was thrown to the door when the car suddenly took a sharp turn, and then stopped with the sound of screeching tires.

The car's turned on headlights were the only light in the dark alley filled with smelly dumpsters and rats. She didn't planed to stop there, but the woman annoyed the hell out of her with her screeching.
She pushed the driver's door open and moved to open the back door. One that was conveniently secured with a childproof lock to ensure her passenger couldn't exit until she was prepared.

Until she was armed and ready.

A single gasp escaped Isabel's lips when she finally stepped out of the vehicle and found herself starring at the tip of an arrow. Her eyes moved to the person holding the bow and she frowned. She expected it was the damn vigilante, one she suspected to actually be Oliver, but Slade Wilson evaded answering her question if he knew who was beneath the hood.

This wasn't the man in green, but a woman with red hair, dressed in black leather pants and coat with a crop top underneath. Nothing special, but something that could be found in a nearest mall.

"Cat got your tongue?" the unknown woman asked with a small grin.

"I will make you pay for this." Isabel instantly threatened, but the woman only laughed in her face.

"You won't get the chance. Do you know why? Because my face will be the last one you see."

Isabel took a step back, and glanced towards the alley entrance. It was too far, and she was wearing high heels underneath her gown, so the chances of outrunning the redhead archer was highly unlikely. She could scream, but that wouldn't do her much good. This was the Glades, no one gave a damn about people yelling for help around here.

So she tried to barter, make promises and offer money, but it didn't seem to have an effect on the woman. So finally she asked. Because she just had to know.

"Who are you?"

A wide smile spread on redhead's face, "I'm Cupid, stupid."
Chapter 18

In hindsight it was a really bad decision to wake up her brother by slapping him on the bare back. Luckily for Thea, somewhere between flipping his assailant on the mattress and the shrill scream of "What the fuck, Ollie!" Oliver woke up completely and realized he wasn't still on the island. He was back home, in his room, lying on his bed. And there was no mysterious attacker.

Just his younger sister with a really bad idea.

"Damn it, Speedy." he mumbled under his breath and moved away from her, flinching when she turned her wrist and it popped as a result of his actions, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to."

The teenager right away looked up at her brother, surprised by the self-loathing in his voice. He was sitting at the edge of the bed, turned away from her, his shoulders bowed as he stared at the floor. It was a look of utter defeat, posture of a man disgusted by his own actions. By the fact he hurt his sister, just like he once hurt his mother. Simply because she tried to wake him up.

"I'm fine Ollie. No harm no foul, right?" Thea said gently. She moved on the bed until she was sitting next to him, and then she leaned her head on his shoulder. It felt good, to have that support from her older brother. Not just literally like right now, but generally in life. He was there for her to lean on.

"You can't do that again, Thea. I mean it. Waking me up like that... it's not safe."

She nodded, her mind thousands of miles away on a deserted island in North China Sea. She was still curious about the events that happened there, but at the same time she wasn't sure if knowing the details would do her any good. Knowing exactly what her brother was forced to do to survive that cursed place. She had a pretty good idea already.

To ease the tension the teen decided to tease her brother a bit, bring up a subject she knew would bring a smile to his face, "Bet Felicity would wake you up with a kiss." she teased.

Oliver instantly snorted, making Thea grin, "That or shake me awake and demand coffee. The second option is more likely." he responded, remembering one time she arrived to the Foundry early in the morning, before she had to get to work. She was holding a travel mug in her hand, but apparently didn't have the chance to drink from it because the lid got stuck somehow and refused to open. To this day Oliver is ready to swear Dig almost leaped over the med table when she started to jell at him for breathing too loud.

"Speaking of your soulmate..." Thea's voice trailed off as she leaned back to check the state of her favorite project, "Your mark is now fully visible, but it will take a few more days, maybe a week, until the tattoo is completely gone."

"Thank you, Speedy." Oliver said before kissing the top of her head. It made her grin even wider.

But now she had to ruin the good mood, "Also speaking of your soulmate I got up extra early today, like I-used-to-go-to-bed-at-this-time-after-partying early, and drove to the nearest open store. Also I shocked Raisa who thought never seen me awake at this time since I was an infant... but that's not important. What's important is the damn tabloid. Several magazines covered the Gala last night, but only Scandal had this on the front page..." Thea turned around, looking where the tabloid landed after flying from her hand. Finally she noticed it on the foot of the bed and leaned forward to reach it.

The front page featured the photo of Oliver and Felicity standing next to each other in front of the
museum, nothing special since they were standing in front of an army of photographers who all yelled for them to look their way. What was interesting is the cut photoshopped between them, separating them completely from one another, with a question mark in the middle.

Those who were confused by the whole thing, like Oliver was, the bold yellow letters explained it.

"What the hell?" he asked, ripping the magazine from is sister's hand, like having it closer to his eyes would somehow force it to make sense. But the title remained the same.

"Oliver Queen replacing soulmate Felicity Smoak with company's VP Isabel Rochev?"

"What the hell are they insinuating, Ollie?" Thea asked, and the hardness in his voice surprised him. As did the glare pointed at him.

"I don't know." he replied, and he mean it. The thing with Isabel was a one-time mistake, one he wasn't crazy enough to repeat ever again. So unless they had a source informed them about what happened in Russia, and he wouldn't put it past Isabel to do just that if she believed it would serve some kind of purpose, they couldn't have known about it.

He turned the pages in haste, trying to find the article and answers.

It didn't take long until he found it, with a photo of him and Felicity dancing taking up an entire page. The fact that picture existed told him the tabloid had someone on the inside who secretly took photos, because it was a well known fact no one from the media was allowed to attend the Gala. They got their scoops of who came with whom, and what designers were most popular that evening, from the red carpeted outside of the museum. And that was enough for most of them. But some, like Starling Scandal, wanted more and were willing to go very far to get a money shot.

And it seems they got one last night, or at least what they considered to be proof of something... more.

The sight of the photo pissed Oliver off.

The photo in the middle of the page wasn't anything special, just two women talking. At least on first glance. But it was obvious something more was going on between them, and Oliver could practically feel his blood pressure raising. Felicity looked as gracious as always, standing straight and appearing completely calm and detached. And apparently that calmness pissed off Isabel, more than the older woman was probably willing to admit, because in the picture it was clearly visible her expression was anything but friendly. Combined with the fact she was pointing a finger at the blonde it was easy to conclude there was no love lost between them.

Quite the opposite.

Thea snorted as her eyes skimmed over the text. She was just as upset as her brother, okay probably a bit less than him, cause she still managed to find amusement in the whole article. Hell, the whole thing, from start to finish, was a one big joke that no one should take seriously.

"Starling National Museum was a place to be last night for the city elite. Among them the tabloid's favorite Oliver Queen who arrived, surprisingly on time, with his recently revealed soulmate, and Executive Assistant, Felicity Smoak. The lady in question looked dull next to some more experienced members of the high society, but still she shined like a star (or maybe that was the tacky rhinestone covered clutch she was wearing). Despite arriving together, and presenting themselves as an united front in front of the media, we have information that things aren't so perfect between them.

Inside information from the Gala reveal Miss Smoak was unwilling to allow Oliver to leave her
sight, monopolizing his attention the entire time, making it impossible for him to socialize with his equals. Was jealousy a reason for that? We have a reason to believe it is.

Several sources confirmed Miss Smoak did everything in her power to remove Mr. Queen from Isabel Rochev's company. Many of you aren't probably aware, but Miss Rochev is the Vice President of Queen Consolidated, a skillful woman in a man's world. It seems because of that Miss Smoak perceives her as a threat.

Later in the evening an altercation began between two woman who seem to fight over Oliver Queen's affection. And while Felicity Smoak has the title of a soulmate, and therefore is in advantage, Isabel Rochev has something else. Namely experience with Queen men. After all she managed to keep Robert Queen interested for quite some time, despite the fact he was 'happily' married.

Will Oliver Queen fall off the wagon (or did he already) and hook up with his VP? Or will he for once in his lifetime actually be faithful? Considering the nature of Mirror marks we are hoping it's the later, after already cheating on his soulmate with Laurel and Sara Lance, Helena Bertinelli, one of SCPD finest McKenna Hall, and many more, Mr Queen should think twice before repeating the same mistake.

Still, we have no doubt Miss Rochev will continue her attempts of showing Oliver why his father kept her around for so long. Only question is how long will Miss Smoak tolerate that?"

"Mom will not be happy with the fundraiser being linked to a potential scandal." Thea pointed out calmly, eying her brother to gauge his mood.

He merely sighed, "There is no scandal going on Speedy. I told you, all those weeks ago when you overheard me talking to Felicity over the phone, that I'm going to take the fact she's my soulmate seriously. No more fooling around, no more one-night stands or weekend girlfriends. No more..." his mind wondered off to the worst choices he made since he realized Felicity was his soulmate. The night with Laurel that never should have happened, but he fell into old habits like a fool that he was. Same thing with Sara. That is the one choice he would never forgive himself for, even if Felicity, by some miracle, does.

"You also told me you plan to marry her." his sister pointed out and he nodded silently. He did, he still hoped someday to have that honor. But it was still distant future.

"I have to get ready for work. I have no doubt Isabel will be particularly nasty today, and I don't want to have Felicity in the office without me there to run interference." Oliver standing before he stood up, signaling to his sister that the conversation was over and she is to leave his room so he could shower and get ready. But Thea either didn't get the hint, or simply ignored it, and kept sitting on the bed and staring at him. When he finally exited his walk-i closet and noticed she was still there he frowned and asked, "What?"

She lifted the magazine, showing him the page with the photo of him and Felicity dancing. It was a beautiful shot, despite being taken secretly. Thea turned the tabloid back towards herself, and stared at it for a moment, before speaking, "I have an urge to track down whoever took this photo and ask for a copy. You look so beautiful together."

Oliver smiled at her, "If you do that get me a copy as well."

His sister's head snapped around so fast he was worried she got a whip-lash, her blue eyes focusing on the bookshelf in the corner of his room. He instantly knew what she was looking for, but it wasn't there anymore. He removed it months ago. He never actually wanted it to be in his room, but Laurel
insisted.

They were dating for a year, not as exclusively as she believed, when she wished him a happy anniversary and placed a perfectly wrapped present in his lap. Inside was a glass picture frame with Laurel's photograph. She looked lovely on it, smiling shyly at the camera. He of course didn't know what day it was, but managed to talk his way out of trouble by saying her gift was being custom made and wasn't yet finished. It was a lie of course; he waited two days so it would appear like he really waited for her gift to be finished, before he walked into the first jewelry store and bought a necklace with a gold shaped pendant decorated with tiny diamonds. Laurel loved it.

And then she insisted for her gift to be displayed in his room where it remained until the day he walked into his room and the sight of it made him feel sick. It was crazy, after all he spent half a decade yearning to come back to her, and then hoping to fix things with her even though she was happy with Tommy. But then he made a choice, he abandoned his post to go after Edward Rasmus because he endangered Laurel, and as a result three ARGUS agents died and Diggle got beat up by Deadshot, with the killer walking away yet again.

His partner left the team that day, and he didn't blame him for it. He understood that Dig was disappointed in him, and so was Felicity, because he made his friend a promise and then put Laurel first. He removed her photo after returning home that night, promising to himself he wouldn't do such a thing again. He did.

Thea nodded, obviously pleased with his decision. She wasn't sure if she'll actually do it, and track down the photographer, which would be an impossible task anyway since she was certain the tabloid editor would do everything to protect his source. They always do. But she had to do something, even if that something is arranging a photo shoot for her brother and his soulmate, because they looked so amazing together and that needed to be captured on film, so to speak.

"I'm gonna leave you now to get ready. But just so you know I'm dropping by in QC and we are having lunch together, so make sure your schedule is cleared." the teen paused, frowning for a moment, "In a second thought maybe I should text Felicity and inform her directly. Just in case you forget once you arrive at the office."

Oliver rolled his eyes, "I'm not going to forget Speedy."

"You sure?" she asked, a wide grin spreading on her face, one that made her brother nervous, "Are you honestly telling me the sight of your soulmate doesn't cause you to lost all thread of thought? Really? Are you absolutely sure of that Ollie?"

His silence made her laugh. It was so easy to tease him, and it felt so great to see him actually smile. As with many other things, Thea was ready to credit that to Felicity's presence in his life.

Felicity's head snapped up when the elevator dinged, and she sighed when Oliver's familiar form walked through the glass doors that led to the executive offices. From the moment she came to work she's been dreading the inevitable moment Isabel would storm in and get all bitchy about being featured in a tabloid. Without anyone else on the floor to serve as a buffer, and considering how much Felicity disliked Isabel, not to mention the feeling was mutual, things could have easily gone badly.

But it's been half an hour now since she arrived at he company and her brunette nemesis was still absent.

"Morning." she said politely when Oliver stopped in front of her desk, watching her closely,
"What?"

"You look lovely this morning."

"Thank you." Felicity responded, before suspiciously asked, "What do you need?"

Oliver had to laugh at that, amused by her suspicion. But there wasn't any hidden meaning behind the compliment, he wasn't buttering her up before asking for a favor. He just wanted to let her know he found her beautiful. Her hair was down again, flowing around her shoulders, and he had to clench the urge to reach out and test to see if it was as soft as it looked. And her dress... good lord did she know what she was doing to him? The cutout wasn't really revealing, didn't show anything inappropriate, just a small amount of skin on her chest. But that was more then enough. And above it...

"You are wearing the necklace." Oliver breathed out, shocked at the sight.

"Of course." was Felicity's answer. And she said it with so much certainty, like it was completely understandable that she would wear the piece of jewelry he gave her. And that answer, that response, made him smile widely.

He just opened his mouth to inform her she needed to ensure his lunch was free because Thea was coming when the elevator dinged again, informing them of a visitor. Felicity sighed, mentally preparing herself for the accusations and insults that would without a doubt follow.

"Miss Smoak." Quentin Lance's serious voice told them it wasn't the VP who arrived, but a SCPD detective. And he didn't arrive alone. His partner, detective Hilton, was walking beside him, with two uniformed officers behind them.

Felicity's first thought was they came for Oliver. Somehow they learned he was the vigilante, she suspected Lance knew but the older man never confirmed it, and they arrived to arrest him. They arrived to QC because they wanted to do it as public as possible. They... her mind was moving a million miles per second. And then it stopped.

Her name. Lance said her name, not Oliver's.

"Detective, what is going on?" Oliver asked, now standing in front of Felicity's desk with his hands crossed over his chest. It was a very image of seriousness, of intimidation. But it didn't work because Lance just threw him an unimpressed look, before focusing on the blonde behind him.

"Miss Smoak, you need to come with us."

"What is this about?" Oliver asked again, this time more insistent. He no longer requested an answer, he demanded it.

Detective Hilton was the one who answered, who dropped the proverbial bomb in the middle of the executive floor, "This morning a jogger discovered a dead body in an alley in the Glades. The victim was quickly identified as Isabel Rochev." those words made both Oliver and Felicity to stare at him in shock, "Initial report suggests she was killed last night after the Gala."

"That still doesn't explain-" Oliver started to speak but Lance cut him off.

"Miss Smoak, stand up please." he was dead serious, not revealing in any way how much he actually liked and respected the young blonde woman. That told Oliver things were more grave than he believed them to be. It told him they were suspecting the last person they should.
And he was very vocal about it, "You are making a mistake! Felicity killing Isabel? You can not be serious!"

"It is clear Miss Smoak and Miss Rochev had a falling out. Perhaps more than that." detective Hilton said seriously, and Oliver gaped at him on shock, "She needs to be questioned."

"You can do that here, can't you?" Oliver asked right away, glancing towards Lance who looked suspiciously uncomfortable. Usually the fact he was a Queen did the job, but right now it seemed the two detectives weren't willing to look through his fingers today.

"It needs to be official, in front of the camera. Miss Smoak, please..." Lance was the one who clarified, and Felicity nodded her head. She understood, but wasn't happy with it.

She jumped suddenly, startled when Oliver slammed a fist into her desk, and luckily not breaking the tempered glass. Cause that would be an even bigger mess, literal one, and her computer might have gotten damaged in the process. Also that would have spilled her still hot coffee, more then likely in her lap, and that would be far worse than needing to get a new desk... cause priorities.

"Felicity isn't going anywhere! I demand to know why my soulmate is being treated by a common criminal! She is a Queen!" Oliver exclaimed, his body tense like he was ready to strike the first policemen that moved towards him, probably to try and calm him down. Like that would work. But a gentle touch on his arm calmed him instantly, and he turned towards the woman behind him.

His words startled all four policemen present, as well as the blonde who now sported a dark blush on her face. He spoke in a feat of anger, and probably didn't even realized what he said, but she did.

"Chief Mason is impregnating new rules for the police department. No one is above reproach, regardless of their last name." detective Hilton said calmly.

Felicity watched the older man quietly before asking, "Is me being brought in for an interview part of the new policy, or personal?" her eyes moved from the detective to Oliver, and saw he bowed his head and clenched his fists. Lance was just shaking his head.

He used to dislike Oliver Queen, now could he not considering the kid's past with not just one, but both his daughters. But he had since made peace with the fact while he was leading both Laurel and Sara on, they both followed. And frankly, it was a well known fact Ollie Queen was a chronic cheater, and wasn't that great of a catch for any girl. No money in the world could make up for the fact his girlfriend at the time, which was his oldest daughter most of the time, got to see photos of him leaving some club with a never before seen girl on his hand. Both his girls could have told him to piss off, and he would have preferred if they did.

But while he got over the fact, and only rubbed it in Oliver's nose from time to time to annoy the younger man, the new chief was now on a power trip. The rumor that spread through the precinct was he hated Queen for hooking up with some random girl his own son threw an eye on, or maybe she was the kid's soulmate, no one knew for sure.

"I'm sorry." they heard Oliver whisper, and Felicity instantly took hold of her hand and squeezed lightly.

She took a deep breath and turned towards the waiting policemen, "I'm coming with you, and I will not have a lawyer present." she sent Oliver a look when he opened his mouth, which she anticipated, that told him this was her final decision, "But I should give you a heads up. I have an alibi and might act obnoxious, simply because I do not appreciate being a pawn in someone's petty revenge."
She calmly reached for her coat, removing it from the back of her chair, her eyes never leaving Oliver. Once she was dressed, she moved around the desk, but didn't walk past him. Instead she stood on his left, her hand gripping his forearm tightly, "I know you want to come along, but you have more important things to do right now. Inform the board about Isabel, they should learn about it first. Then get the head of PR up and let her know they need to write a press release. QC investors need to be ensured the company isn't in any way in danger because of this."

Oliver nodded silently, thankful for her ability to think five steps ahead. Detective Lance observed them with curiosity, but his partner chose to comment on her instructions, "Usually the CEO runs a company, but it seems here the secretary is in charge."

"Executive assistant." Oliver corrected him right away, before Felicity even managed to open her mouth. He knew how much she hated the title of a secretary, how angry she was at the fact she was responsible for his schedule instead of working on upgrading the company system, or programming something brand new.

He knew he called it a promotion, but it didn't do her any favors. Quite the opposite. And now, that her being his soulmate is public knowledge, any attempt to move her to Applied science, or give her a position in IT worthy of her knowledge, would be seen as nepotism. Of her moving up in the company just because of the mark on her back, and not because she was just that good with computers.

"My apologies." detective said with a wry smile, "I am merely commenting on the fact your... Executive assistant... seems to be making sure the company continues to function without her present."

"She is the reason this company functions in general. I just sign the paperwork." Oliver said, sounding almost amused.

Oliver remained standing in the middle of the reception area, watching silently as the policemen escorted Felicity to the elevator. He considered it was a bit overkill for Lance and Hilton to bring two uniforms with them, like the petite blonde is some sort of hardcore criminal that could not be restrained by only two people. He watched as the panels of the elevator doors closed, and right before they hid his soulmate from sight she winked at him, making him smile.

But a moment later a sombre expression returned on his face. Isabel was dead, killed in the Glades. He doubted the woman ever took a step in that particular part of the city, so her presence there was extremely suspicious. But he couldn't do anything about that particular thing until tonight, until they are in the Foundry and Felicity can check the street cameras.

Right now he needs to focus on the company, and informing all the important people of the newest development. Basically what Felicity told him to do. And to ensure she isn't caught by surprise with the information he also sent a quick text to his mother. He would have preferred to call, as would she without a doubt, but he spent almost half an hour on the phone scheduling a board meeting. It was decided the head of PR would be present as well, and they would mutually decide what to do and how to present the news to the public.

Oliver wasn't sure how the board would react to the fact the police wanted to question his EA about the killing, but he wasn't worried about it either. She was innocent.

The few photographers that always hanged out around QC in hope of getting some juicy photo of the city's newest power couple, that wasn't actually a couple but they didn't care about that, now got a few good shots of Felicity Smoak being escorted out by the police. No doubt the Scandal will have
a story out on their site within an hour.

That might look bad for a while, but it was nothing the company's PR department won't be able to fix. She got to know everyone who worked there quite well, during the several hours she spent removing the junk that remained on the previous department head's computer. They all came into the office, one at one time, to see who the female that kept using rather unusual curse words.

The previous department head left a week before that for another company, and his replacement, Julie Walsh, was ready to rip her hair out because the computer kept glitching. It turned out the asshole installed a spyware before leaving, so he could keep an eye on happening in QC, and know what's going on before everyone else, since all important announcement went through PR department.

She's been work friends with Julie ever since, and knew the older woman would have her work cut out for her today, what with QC's Vice president being murdered, and her being brought in for questioning. But Felicity had complete trust in her abilities.

Felicity calmly took a seat once she was in an interrogation room. She was smarter this time, knew what to expect. She would think before blurting out the wrong thing. But also she really didn't do anything wrong, not like the previous time when she actually did hack into Merlyn Global's mainframe. She didn't kill Isabel. Hell, she still couldn't believe it's true.

The red light on the surveillance camera in the corner blinked the entire time, and after around ten minutes of sitting alone Felicity sent a glare in its direction. They were wasting her time, making her sit there and wait. It was police psychological thing, if all the crime shows were correct. Making her sweat nervously, only that wasn't happening. But her bloodlust seemed to be rearing its head again. Lovely.

Ten more minutes, or at least it felt that way but could have been longer, and Felicity sighed and leaned back in the hard metal chair. A part of her hoped Oliver would storm into the interrogation room and tell her she was leaving, and if the detectives wanted to talk to her they could speak to her lawyer, or something of that sort. But he wasn't coming because she told him she got it covered. And she did. But Lance was taking his time and her ass was starting to get numb.

She wondered what was going on in QC, how the board reacted to the news of Isabel's death. It will probably complicate things in some way, but she was positive they would get through it. They were a good team.

That thought made her smile, and just then the doors opened and the two detectives walked in, both noticing her expression.

It was detective Hilton who mentioned it though, "Feeling happy about something Miss Smoak? Considering your predicament I would expect you to feel more nervous."

"Why would I be nervous? It's not my first wedding night." Felicity shot back and then flinched. So much for not babbling the wrong thing.

Lance merely raised an eyebrow at her response. He witnessed her saying the first thing that crossed her mind countless of times, and it never failed to amuse him. The girl was unable to keep secrets, not with a mouth that worked faster than her brain. Except a certain green secret. That one she kept hidden like a snake its legs.

"Death isn't a joking matter, Miss Smoak." Hilton said, throwing a file on the table. It was agreed during the car ride that Lance would sit in the background, instead of leading the questioning.
Like conspirators the three of them agreed they didn't want the chief think they were taking it easy when talking to her, and give him a reason for suspend the detective. After all Lance was already under scrutiny for the fact he was willing to look away when the vigilante was present when the police burst in to arrest some random criminal. Heck, it seemed his practice spread cause more and more policemen looked up to the Arrow as a good Samaritan, rather then a menace.

Felicity was okay with the idea and reminded the two detectives she would might act condescending from time to time. She muttered something about bloodlust, but neither man was willing to ask for a clarification.

"I am aware of that detective. Which is why I think you the police should do something about the number of violent crimes in the city, to... you know... lowed the number of deaths. So why don't you ask me your questions, I will inform you of my alibi, and then you can work on solving the case by using actual facts."

"So you have an alibi? That's helpful. I suppose you mean Oliver Queen."

"No. Not entirely, anyway. I meant security cameras on Starling International." Felicity said calmly, "We arrived on the Gala at nine, and left at eleven. The driver drove me home where my mother was waiting with her suitcase already packed. We then drove her straight to the airport to ensure she caught her redeye flight to Vegas. It was on terminal 7. I was still dressed in the same gown I wore on the Gala, you know, the one from the tabloid photos. Oliver was there too, with my mother once more gushing about how handsome he looked in a tux."

"Why didn't you said all this in the office?" Lance asked.

Felicity shrugged, "You came to my work place with two uniformed policemen, like I'm some sort of hardcore criminal and basically accused me of murder because of a picture. You didn't have any physical evidence, no fingerprints or DNA. Just a photo of Isabel Rochev informing me not to trifle with her."

"So there was some tension between the two of you?" detective Hilton asked. This wasn't going according to plan, the girl was saying more things than she should, but he had to continue questioning her about it so it doesn't look suspicious. After all chief Mason was siting behind the screen in the surveillance, watching everything like a hawk.

Felicity snorted, "She was involved in me being ran off the road and kidnapped, but the DA decided there weren't enough evidence to support that theory. Afterward she returned to the company, acted like nothing happened, but still rubbed in my nose that she was in fact involved, and that she got away with it, at every opportunity. Last night wasn't an exception."

"Did Mr Queen know about that?" the detective asked, not switching his focus on another possible suspect. One that he wasn't allowed to pursue without solid evidence due to his connections to some people in high positions, "He must have, after all he is your soulmate."

Felicity huffed. The detective was fishing, "He was aware of the fact Isabel Rochev despised me. She wanted Queen Consolidated, in some sort of petty revenge against a dead man. I made sure Oliver didn't look like a complete ignoramus in front of the board, or arrive late on meetings, which would basically be the ammunition she would use against him in an attempt to sway the board on her side and persuade them to make her CEO and boot Oliver out. The whole now arriving late part didn't always work."

"So you had a motive." detective Hilton pointed out.
Felicity sighed. She spoke to soon yet again. She really needed to work on that brain to mouth filter, but at least she didn't proposition the detective unintentionally, or something that inappropriate, "Honestly... no. I never wanted anyone's death, no matter who it is or what that person has done... except maybe Malcolm Merlyn, I'll admit I think that he did deserve it... but anyway... I would rather see Isabel fail and leave QC with her tail between her legs. Much more satisfying."

"This is all for now. But we might have more questions for you later on Miss Smoak, so do not leave town." Lance finally said.

Felicity nodded, but remained seating, something that surprised them. That wasn't a part of the plan, "I suggest informing the SCPD spokesperson that they might need to do some damage control. Several photographers witnessed you escorting me out of the building, the news will hit the media within an hour. It might make me look bad, being a suspect in a murder investigation, for about ten minutes until my alibi is confirmed. Then the police force will be the one who will face public scrutiny because the only reason you even considered me in one secretly taken photo published in a trash tabloid. The media will ask questions, and it only takes one chatty officer for them to learn exactly what they want to know." she smiled widely, "And if they learn it is somehow linked to Oliver's colorful past they will have a field day crucifying someone for using his soulmate, who suffered enough as it is, to get back at him for something that happened over half a decade ago."

Lance bit his lip to prevent himself from laughing out loud, and detective Hilton looked constipated as he tried to push down his amusement with the young woman. Quentin told him she was a good person, revealed she worked closely with the vigilante and led him through the old subway tunnels to first earthquake machine, and instructed him step by step how to disarm it.

Oliver was waiting outside of the interrogation room when detective Hilton opened the door. He didn't say anything, just scowled at him, because he knew Oliver's presence might complicate things. Lance was the one who commented, and after shaking his head, said, "No worries. You are getting her back."

"She isn't an object to return her to me." Oliver pointed out.

And a moment later Felicity spoke as well. Only she wasn't amused, "She is wondering why you are here and not at QC informing the board what happened and working with the PR department. Honestly, Oliver. I can't leave you alone for ten minutes."

"It's been an hour." he pointed out, before informing her calmly, "Board is aware; they are concerned but have faith things would get resolved soon, and the police would do their best to find the perpetrator. Head of PR is personalty working on the statement draft and wants you to call her and let her know if you want to add something regarding your questioning. She's ready to incorporate your personal statement into the public announcement just to clear things out."

All four of them were aware of people around them eavesdropping, but neither of them planed to scowl them or move somewhere more private.

"I'll go down to talk to Julie, see what she suggests. I take it the tabloids already got something online."

Oliver just nodded silently in response, before turning towards the detectives, "Is there anything else or can Felicity go back to work now?"

"We have no questions for her right now. We might have some additional ones once her alibi is checked." Hilton replied.
"Check with airport security. We went straight there after picking up Donna from the apartment."

Like she somehow sensed her name was being mentioned Felicity's phone started to ring. A quick check of the screen told her it was her mother. Since the older woman supposed to be at work at this time she was worried something might have happened.

She worried for nothing.

Donna's shrill voice demanded to know why the nice detective arrested her, and then wanted to talk to him so he would explain himself to her personally. It took a lot of explaining to calm down the bold woman, who even suggested she returns to Starling city and personally informs the police about her daughter's whereabouts. It was only after they were already in the car, choosing not to keep amusing the officers present in the precinct, that Felicity thought to ask her mother how she learned about it so fast.

"Oh, Mike from surveillance and security to set it up on my phone so I know when your name is mentioned in an article. It's such a handy thing. I didn't even know you could do that."

Felicity was silently nodding along to her mother's words, already planing to call Mike Cannon and scowl him from doing that. She didn't want her mother to worry about her constantly. But it's too late now, the deed was done.

"I have to hang up now. We're back at the company, and I have to get to work. Sort things out."

"Everything okay? You okay?" Oliver asked, concerned for her. And so was Diggle, according to his gaze she caught in the rear-view mirror.

"It will be once this mess is done. I'll start a search tonight, see if the street cams caught anything. And check the SCPD network for the file. And-"

"Later." Oliver gently touched her hand, and she nodded silently with a sigh. It was time to mentally prepare herself for later on when they would have to face the press. She knew Olive, he would want her there, to make a silent statement, and show she was right there and not in police custody.

The reporters were already shouting questions, they started even before Oliver took a step behind the lectern with the QC logo in front. They didn't wait for him to start speaking to read the official statement. The questioned varied; some asked about Felicity and the arrest, some wanted to know if it was somehow linked to the Arrow, since they somehow learned Lance brought her in just before the Undertaking because he was certain she worked with the Hood.

Those questions bothered Oliver the most, he was willing to go far to keep her safe, the three arrows in the Count's chest were a proof of that. And now these reporters were trying to connect her to the vigilante, asking about it in front of dozen cameras. It only takes one criminal that is after him to try and see if these speculations were true, and goes after Felicity.

And in that moment Oliver preferred the rumors about him hiring her solemnly because of her looks, or because he was sleeping with her, than the actually true story about her being connected to the Starling city vigilante.

He glance quickly behind himself, a move that caused everyone to notice her presence, a move that caused a new wave of questions to be shouted. But he refused to listen to them, and instead focused on the statement the head of PR department wrote, with an input from the legal department.

"Queen Consolidated has suffered a loss. Our Vice President, Miss Isabel Rochev, was killed late
last night by an unknown perpetrator. The police is working diligently on finding the person responsible for this heinous act, and I have no doubt their search will soon bring positive results. I personally, and the entire company, are offering our full assistance to the law enforcement." Oliver read the first paragraph, and surprisingly believed every single word he said. He didn't like Isabel, he hated her even, but he didn't want her dead. He would have preferred her to be rotting in jail for what she did, it would have been a much worse fate for someone as proud and arrogant as her.

He continued to read the statement, mentioning Isabel's past in the company, but skipping the whole affair with his father. Julie Walsh did an amazing job portraying Isabel as a successful businesswoman, and a valuable member of the Queen Consolidated management. Do not speak ill of the dead and all that.

"We do not know at this point if Miss Rochev has a last will, so the board will work with legal department on that question. Our goal will be to secure those shares, and keep the company save from another attempt at a hostile takeover." he continued reading from the paper, all the while making plans to talk to Walter as well, to see what could be done about those shares. He knew the older man would be the one to help him.

And then he came to the last part, one that he wasn't certain would be added to the official press release, "Earlier today my EA Felicity Smoak was taken in for questioning by the police. It hasn't been yet confirmed by the leading detective if Miss Smoak is considered a person of interest, or if it was merely an informative conversation. But I can confirm Miss Smoak has a solid alibi and is therefore the least likely suspect. Thank you."

Within a heartbeat questions filled the air. Earlier he discussed with the PR department and Felicity if he should answer any questions. The popular decision was not to cause any more speculations, and be as precise as possible. Answering questions might open some other issues, and that should be avoided at all cost.

Oliver agreed with that suggestion. He knew how skilled the reporters were in twisting something, or taking words out of context, to create something that didn't have anything to do with reality. Neither he nor the company needed such a mess right now.

So he politely informed them he will not be answering any questions at the time, but they are welcome to send their inquiries to the PR department, and they will do their best to answer. He knew those answers would mostly be 'no comment', and he appreciated the department head's professionalism.

His hand instinctively went to the small of Felicity's waist, as he escorted her back inside the warmth of the building. Both of them ignored the sound of cameras clicking, as the photographers present at the press conference took the advantage of the opportunity to take pictures of the two soulmates together, side by side.

Employees that found themselves inside the lobby were also staring at them, obviously trying to gain some info they could rely later on to their friends, and possibly the press, but the couple moved silently towards the elevator. It was time to get back to work, act like nothing was wrong, and pray Isabel's death doesn't damage the company, scare away the investors.

It was ironic that even dead the damn woman was screwing with them.

He was surrounded by the shadows, a part of them. It was how he lived since returning from the island, and for months he was perfectly content with that kind of life. Until she arrived, and brought light into the shadows. And suddenly the life under the green hood wasn't enough anymore.
But his past choices, and the current mess they were in, were complicating any attempt to woo his own soulmate. They agreed on a date, a nice night in a restaurant, followed by a stroll in the park... or something equally romantic but with less chances of freezing cause the winter was just around the corner. But when he mentioned it to Felicity today she just said they will talk about it later tonight, and then dropped a pile of reports on his desk.

And when he tried to mention it once they were in the Foundry she had just disconnected the call with detective Lance, and informed him to suit up cause the older man was waiting for him on their usual meeting place. Diggle just shrugged when he looked at his friend, and went back to cleaning his guns.

Since he was always aware of his surroundings Oliver knew Quentin Lance was already waiting for him on the rooftop. The older man looked ragged, tired. He was doing a tough job, Oliver understood that, but he didn't remember ever seeing the detective like that. He had a suspicion what was going on, and felt guilty for causing the older man troubles.

"Detective." he muttered his usual greeting with a nod of his head.

"Queen." Lance responded, a tired smile on his face, "Nice press release, your PR did a good job."

"Yet it caused you trouble with the chief." Oliver pointed out.

The detective didn't even try to deny it, "Chief's personal opinion of you is what caused trouble. So I suggest you lay low for a while."

A snort escaped Oliver, and it startled the detective, due to the fact his voice modifier was turned on. He shook his head slightly, to push away the mixture of annoyance and anger. Because what he needed right now was yet another reason to put his life on hold, now that he was finally ready to live and not just exist.

"You wanted to meet." he said instead of mentioning his private life. Honestly it wasn't something he wanted to discuss with the man whose daughters he once dated.

"You have a motive, and knowledge, to kill Isabel Rochev, but your name and the fact I am only one in the know about your alter-ego is keeping you safe. The fact remains the driver testified he was knocked out by a woman, before she took the limo, but then again the couple that kills together stays together."

"Both Felicity and I have an alibi, detective." Oliver said, losing his patience. He could be doing a dozen different things, more important things, then standing on the freezing night air and listening to the detective repeat himself.

"Yes, and then there is the fact I learned a while ago that you psycho archers tend to color-code. Makes things easier for me." the detective was unaware of the frown on Oliver's face, since it was hidden by the green hood.

A frown that deepened when the older man reached, and picked something up from the top of the large industrial AC unit he was standing next to. It was a large evidence bag, with a long shaft sitting in it diagonally. Oliver instantly recognized what it was, how could he not when he spent several hours every week making his own. The tip was shaped oddly, and the fletching was deep red color. Obviously not one of his own, or one of the ones the ark arches used last year.

That meant a new archer was in town.
And he wasn't the only one who froze momentarily after seeing the weapon that killed Isabel. Diggle swore loudly upon seeing what he was holding, while Felicity gaped at it with her mouth open wide.

He was surprised Lance managed to give him the only evidence the police had against the new mystery archer, especially since the new chief was breathing down everyone's necks. But he appreciated the risk the older man was taking, the length he was willing to go to catch this new killer. Not many people would ask one criminal to stop another.

"Can you check this arrow like you did with Malcolm's I brought to you?" he asked Felicity after noticing the blonde didn't make a move to take it from him, something that he expected she would do the moment she sees the weapon.

Felicity flinched for some reason, but shook her head, and masked her fact to appear calm and collected. It didn't fool Oliver, nor Diggle, but neither man wanted to press the issue. Something happened, something seemed to bother her, but they both chose to give her space for the time being.

A moment later Felicity acted all confused, and with a curious voice asked, "Malcolm? I thought that arrow belonged to your friend Steve who was into archery."

The look Dig gave him, the 'are you for real' expression, made Oliver let out a breathy chuckle. His partner witnessed a few of his less than stellar excuses, but he missed that one. And now watched Oliver like he couldn't believe those words actually left his mouth when he tried to get Felicity to help him track down the Dark archer, without actually telling her what was going on.

"Can you do it or not?" Oliver asked as he walked closer to Felicity, but to his surprise she moved away from him. That startled him, and he froze in his path, "Felicity? Are you alright?"

She pointed a finger at the evidence bag in his hand, the lilac fingernails catching his attention as she moved her hand, "That thing... it still has Isabel's blood on it."

"I know blood bothers you, but you dealt with it before and-"

"No!" she snapped, silencing Oliver, "This is different. This is Isabel Rochev. I should be organizing a huge party right now, heck an entire festival, but seeing the arrow all I can think of is... she's dead and... it's weird. Why is it weird?"

"Cause you are a good person." Diggle offered an explanation, and Felicity smiled at him.

She focused back on Oliver who still stood a few steps away from her, and not moving closer which she appreciated, "Can you... check out the shaft for any markings? Please. I don't want to touch it. I just..." she shuddered, and he nodded before opening the evidence bag and, with his leather gloves still on, taking the long arrow out of the plastic that was preserving it.

It didn't take long for Felicity to search around the Internet before she found what they needed, and a strange sound that escaped her made both men move closer to her space in the Foundry. She was scrolling up and down a page, photos of different arrows moving in front of their eyes.

"Is this for real?" Diggle asked.

Felicity nodded, "I don't get it either, but it seems archery is more popular than I thought. Not just as an Olympic sport but in general. You can order arrows with specific fletching color, length, composition, and the cheapest ones are priced 5 bucks a piece. That's nothing next to ones Malcolm used. Anyway... I checked out their system and found an order of red arrows. Only problem... the address is a PO box in Glades. I'll check the cameras in the area, but I don't think there are any in the area."
"Post offices have cameras." Diggle pointed out.

But Felicity shook her head, "Not in Glades. Those cameras must be connected to video recorders or something like that, cause I can't find them in the CCTV system. I got nothing about the archer." she turned and looked at Oliver, "I'm sorry."

He placed a hand on her shoulder, a move that always calmed her down, before moving to the area at the side where he was putting his own arrows together. He placed the tip of the red one under the strong magnifier he kept there, and turned it to see the other side.

It was shaped oddly, a special feature Felicity wanted to find the origin of, but unlike the shaft it didn't have a serial number. So she returned to clicking on different pages, seeing if any online shop sold arrowheads shaped like a spade. Her first thought was maybe it was being made in Vegas, a gambling center of US, but while her hometown had a lot of weird things they didn't have an arrowhead manufacturer.

A sudden ringing startled them, and Oliver sighed before accepting the call from his sister. He put it on hands free so he continue looking the arrow from side to side, maybe noticing something that escaped everyone else. It was a useless thing to do, but he didn't know what else to do. How else to help.

"Hey there, brother dear! Just calling to check up on you. I would drop by down in the Arrow cave but I'm getting ready for a date with Roy. And then it hit me that you still haven't said anything about my offer to help you organize something tooth-rotting romantic for your date with Felicity. So... did you have something in mind?"

Once his sister finally got him the chance to respond Oliver opened his mouth to do just that, to inform her he didn't need help. He could be romantic all on his own. But Felicity cut him off.

"Considering what is going on right now it might look bad if we are photographed out on a romantic date in Table salt, or somewhere like that. Our personal life shouldn't matter to anyone, but I bet Scandal is just looking forward to a chance to twist something into a... well, a scandal."

Oliver was looking at Felicity while she spoke, and she had to look away after noticing his gaze. It made her insides turn, and not in the good way. There was hurt clearly visible in his eyes, and she felt bad for making him feel that way. She was looking forward to the date just like he was, more and more with each day that passed. It was a possible beginning of something more, of them as a couple, and after everything that happened it felt good to be at that place in their lives.

But she heard whispers today, they followed her throughout the day. Assumptions and guesses that hurt, despite her knowing none of the things said were true.

"Felicity?" Thea sounded just as confused and hurt as her brother.

"I'm just saying we should postpone the date until this whole mess is behind us and--"

A loud bang startled her, and caused the younger Queen to yelp in shock, while Diggle only glared at Oliver.

Oliver who finally reacted to his soulmate's words, and not in the most productive way possible. He didn't even registered his hand closing around the handle of the hammer that rested on the metal table. He didn't even knew he was moving the tool until it bashed on the red tip of the arrow.

"Ollie, what the hell?" the young brunette didn't need to be present to know her brother was responsible for the sudden noise.
But he didn't respond to her, instead looking towards Felicity, who instantly jumped out of her office chair and moved to his station. It took only one look for her to see what it was that confused him. The little piece of technology didn't have any purpose inside the arrowhead, but for some reason it was lodged inside the hollow tip.

"It's not damaged much. I might be able to fix it and use it to trace... oh frack..."

"What's going on? Hello? Anyone? I'm still here!"

"Not now Speedy." Oliver muttered and disconnected the call, ignoring his sister's cry of protest.

"How bad is it?" Diggle asked when Felicity didn't say anything, but stared at the small bug, or whatever that was.

"If that's a tracker I can back-trace it to see where it has been. But if it's a tracker that also means the red archer might now know our location." she said seriously, her eyes moving from one man to another. And as her words registered they understood their operation, their very lives, could be in danger.
Chapter 19

Ho-ho-holy shit it took me so long to finish this chapter!
And now it's time to start the next one.

_Eerie._ That is how Diggle would describe what they found in the apartment Felicity's computer search led them to. Or maybe _creepy as fuck_ would be more fitting, considering the unique decoration the place had.

Oliver was somewhere behind him, checking out the rest of the place, but there didn't seem much of a point. The whole apartment complex was abandoned after the Undertaking, several surrounding buildings were already demolished and he was certain, without Felicity having to check, that the one they were in was also scheduled to be turned into a rubble and finish what the earthquake started.

As they initially entered the building both expected to see signs of squatters, it was a common thing in the Glades, but it seemed the crumbling building without electricity, heat, or running water was something even those who didn't have any roof of their head refused to enter.

It was obvious that particular thought bothered Oliver who was even more closed off the moment they entered through what once was front doors. In his mind this was yet another reminder he failed to stop the Undertaking, failed to prevent the deaths of so many people and destruction of too many homes.

This were the Glades, those who lived here didn't have expensive cabins to go to, penthouse apartments on top of buildings, or beach vacation homes. This is all they had. And now it's all gone.

The comm unit in his ear came to life and he could hear Felicity's voice from the safety of the Verdant basement, "I'm still trying to find out who lived there before, but the building was one of those owned by our old buddy Nickel. And he wasn't known for keeping records of those who bought or subleased from him. Unless they owed him money."

"There has to be some record of tenants. Maybe SCPD has something in their database." Diggle pointed out, and got a grumble as a response. Something that sounded like 'not my first rodeo'.

But truth be told neither held much of a hope of finding the previous resident that way. The police database had some serious holes when it comes to residents of this particular city part, unless they had a rap sheet. And even then the address on record was rarely the right one.

He took another photo of the collage tacked to the wall of what was once a living room, before checking the phone screen to see if it was visible enough to serve it's purpose. He didn't want to return to this place ever again. Yes, it was empty and silent, and nothing and no one dangerous waited for them around a corner, but that in itself was what bothered him. It seemed like a trap, and Oliver and him were the idiots who walked right into it.

"Check the record for the night of the Undertaking, and the weeks right following it." Oliver spoke silently as he moved to stand next to his partner. It was obvious to the man next to him, as well as the woman who listened in, that he was tense, that something happened during those minutes he was
checking out the apartment for any hidden places one could store a bow and a quiver in, or for signs of living.

He didn't find either, but he did find signs of death.

"You okay man?" Diggle asked, before Felicity managed to speak.

"Ceiling in the bedroom collapse." he elaborated tensely, "One of the beams fell as well, hitting the bed. There is some blood splatter on the wall, like..."

Felicity who silently listened as her soulmate struggled with words finished when he couldn't, "Blunt force trauma. I'll check the city morgue records as well. They were swamped in the aftermath, but if we are lucky they went through the backlog and added everyone who died that night to their system." a tense silence followed and she bit her lip as hard as she could upon realizing how insensitive she sounded just now, "I'm sorry. I was so focused on this case I didn't think about... I'm so sorry."

Oliver nodded silently, his eyes moving across the room, and intentionally not landing on his partner who watched him like a hawk. When it became obvious he wouldn't say anything, wouldn't respond to the blonde, Diggle went to calm her down.

"It's alright. I'll just make a few more photos to cover the whole thing and then we'll be on our way back."

"What exactly did you find? You never said." Felicity pointed out, a bit of annoyance at not getting the clarification already seeping in her voice.

"Too many files to send. You can have them once we're back." was the response she got from Diggle, and after that she remained suspiciously silent. He had a feeling it meant she was silently making plans for wearable cams for the two of them, so that she could see what was going on all the time. Truth be told he was surprised she hasn't made them already.

After responding Diggle moved towards the wall and plucking one of the newspaper cutouts that were tacked to the damaged plaster. He showed his find to Oliver, who was standing frozen on the spot.

"It's from the gala. Published this morning." the archer commented on the photo, his blue eyes moving across the wall. He wasn't sure what he was feeling right now. Was it shock, confusion? Horror? Were there really that many of them? Bile raised in his throat at the images in front of him, proof of the kind of a person he was.

"I do not like the sight of this man." Diggle finally muttered, before returning the cutout on the spot where he found it. Oliver was about to ask him what he was doing, why he was putting it back, when his partner pointed out, "Here is another one from the Gala." his finger was pointing at the ripped out page of Starling Scandal in the corner of the twisted collection.

"No one is living here. This is just a base of operation." Oliver pointed out after another silent minute, "Completely rotten food in the fridge, damaged furniture, no running water and no electricity."

"With the police patrols rarely in this area this is a perfect hideout. Adjacent buildings demolished or close to it means no witnesses of any suspicious activity. It safer then having a base under a popular night club." Diggle added, his final argument earning him a look from Oliver. It was an intentional move on his part to ease up his friends agony over the Undertaking and its aftermath.
"So what you're saying is it could be completely random and I'm not accomplishing anything by hacking into several databases." Felicity grumbled over the comm, "It wouldn't be the first time I did a completely unnecessary search, but I'm still going to do it. Because if it was me and I had a choice, after all the entire building is deserted, I would pick an apartment that didn't had marks of someone dying all over the wall. And I'm being insensitive again. I'm sorry."

"It's fine Felicity. Keep searching, we're on our way back." Oliver said, and he meant it.

He didn't like the hold the Undertaking still had on him, the feeling of guilt that sometimes threatened to suffocate him. A part of him knew it wasn't his fault, that he did what he could, after all he went above and beyond to prevent the destruction of the city part and save the people from certain death.

He went so far he even remained silent about the mark that was hidden underneath the dragon tattoo after he had seen its match on Felicity's shoulder. Oliver was ready to die to protect Starling city and its residences, just like his father died to give him a better chance to survive. In his mind he was protecting her from the pain that would come with the knowledge that her soulmate is dead if he did in fact lose against Malcolm.

He had no idea back then that the pain would come anyway, that her mark would burn the moment his heart stops.

But there was still a part of him that felt he needed to carry the weight of those deaths on his shoulders for the rest of his life. He failed after all, and the second device fulfilled it's horrifying purpose. Malcolm did what he planed to do, he punished innocent ones for the actions of one man.

On their way back to the Foundry Diggle stopped the van on the red light and plucked out the cellphone out of his jacket pocket. He started scrolling, while glancing on the light every once in a while. Oliver, who was sitting on the bench in the back to ensure some unsuspecting passerby doesn't notice him casually driving on the passenger seat and call the police, noticed the device in his partner's hand and scowled.

"I'm not going to drive and talk on the phone." Diggle's voice startled him, and he raided his eyes to catch his friend's gaze in the rear view mirror, "Although, let's be honest here... that is pretty much the least illegal thing I wold be doing. And least dangerous too."

"Don't let Felicity hear you." Oliver deadpanned, earning himself a confused look. When Dig didn't ask, but it was obvious he was curious about what he meant, the vigilante clarified, "She'll inform you that you need to drive safely when driving a precious cargo."

Diggle instantly snorted, "My pregnant wife is a precious cargo. Felicity is a precious cargo. You... not so much." the light changed to green and he placed the phone on the dash before switching gears and going through a nearly deserted crossroad. Only other vehicle on the road was some peace of shit yellow camaro with a twitchy teen behind the wheel, "And speaking of driving-"

"Felicity's car." Oliver interrupted him.

Diggle nodded, "You noticed it too?"

"That she's taking a cab every morning? Yeah. The Mini was totaled in the crash, and there was no use trying to get it repaired. It's scrap metal."

"She needs the new one. Cabs in this city are not the safest transportation option." Dig pointed out and is friend nodded in agreement, "Are you going to talk to her about it, or do you want me to do it?"
"I'll do it." Oliver responded just as the van was taking a turn towards the always empty parking lot behind Verdant.

None of the club goers who arrived with their own vehicle dared to leave their car back there, in fear it would get stolen. Instead they use a fenced parking lot, that employed two guards, whose business has been blooming since Oliver Queen opened a club in the area.

Four months after Verdant opened Oliver learned the truth when a nice lady dropped by a large fruit basket to his office, the one that his sister used since she took over as the manager. It turns out there used to be a house on the plot that now served for parking, and the family that owned it lived crammed in a tiny studio cause that was all they could afford after their home burned to the ground. The guards were actually two oldest sons who earned enough from tips for the whole family to move to a better apartment, and their sister worked in the club as a waitress while going to community college to earn a business degree.

Just thinking about it made Oliver happy. Because that is why he wanted to open Verdant. It wasn't to hide his base of operation, not only because of it anyway. He wanted to give back to the Glades in some way, and knowing his decision directly helped at least one family was the conformation he needed that he was doing the right thing.

He succeed to do good as Oliver Queen, something he didn't always believed accomplishing as the Arrow.

Felicity turned towards them the moment they entered the basement, giving them both an once-over to check they were unharmed, despite listening in the entire time and knowing they didn't engage anyone tonight.

"So, what did you find that freaked you both out? Two grown, tough as nails, men. How bad was it?" she asked, and they noticed that despite the calm exterior she was nervous.

"Honesty, I'm not exactly sure." Diggle replied honestly, offering her his phone. He was watching it earlier in the van, so the moment she unlocked the screen Felicity was greeted with one of the photos he took.

"What the hell?!" she yelped, her head snapping up to look at him, "Is this for real?"

He just nodded silently, ignoring the way Oliver lowered his bow on the metal desk a bit too forcefully. Felicity's eyes landed on her soulmate for a moment, before she turned towards the computer to transfer the photos from the phone. It would take a minute or so, which gave her an opportunity to check up on the tense man that stared at the far wall of the Foundry.

Diggle muttered something about changing, but she zoned him out while she moved towards the still hooded man. For some reason he was still hiding underneath his mask, and she was having none of it.

"Felicity-" he started to speak the moment she stepped next to him, but he was cut off.

"Not your fault." Felicity said, not bothering to hear what he planed to say. She had a pretty good idea what it was. It was usually the same damn thing, over and over again. It was his superpower after all, feeling responsible for pretty much every bad thing that happens in the city.

"Wait till you see the rest of those photos. Then you may not feel the same way." he muttered under his breath before pushing past her towards the training dummy. He quickly discarded his jacket, revealing the black short-sleeved shirt underneath, letting it drop carelessly on the mats, but not
bothering to completely change into his usual workout gear. If one could call sweatpants and nothing else gear.

Her computer signaled the transfer was complete and, with one final look towards her soulmate who was yet again expressing his frustration on an undeserving Wing Chun dummy, Felicity returned to her station to see what they got in that apartment.

The photos scattered around her screen and she gaped at them for a moment, before repeating her previous statement, "What the hell?!"  

Picture after picture, article after article, it all unfolded in front of Felicity's eyes. Brunettes, a few blondes, an occasional redhead, one or two women with black hair. And in a middle of it all a photo taken shortly after Oliver became the CEO of Queen Consolidated. It was her first appearance as her EA, and she felt stiff the entire time, like she didn't belong. Only time she was even slightly relaxed was when Oliver sneaked up on her with a glass of wine in his hand, telling her the whole bottle is waiting for her in the Foundry. A promise long overdue.

She smiled at him, and apparently the official photographer captured that moment. That photo must have ended on QC web page, for some reason PR team posted a lot of those from every company celebration. And somehow the red archer found it among thousands of others.

"I know." Diggle said, making Felicity yelp and almost fall out of her chair. She was so focused on the screen it completely went by her that he came out of the bathroom in the back and came to stand next to her seat. He fortunately chose not to point out she sucks are being aware of her surroundings, something she already knew thank you very much, but instead he commented on the find, "Last time I've seen something like it I was in Afghanistan and my unit just raided this ran down house in a middle of nowhere. We found maps and photos nailed to every single wall."

"A hit list." Felicity said somberly, her blue eyes moving from photo to photo.

"Did you saw the one with Isabel Rochev?" Diggle asked, after placing a hand on her shoulder. It was something Oliver started doing, and even though it wasn't him this time she appreciated the touch. It was comfort and strength, and she needed that right now.

"I did." a few mouse chicks and the photo opened to take the entire screen, "She was in the apartment today. This proves it."

"Are there any cameras in the vicinity of the apartment building?" Oliver's made a pause in beating the training dummy to ask the question, but didn't wait for an answer before resuming his training.

Felicity knew why he was asking, she thought about the same thing, which is why she already checked, "None that would be of any use. The biggest issue is we don't have an ID, so I don't even know whom to look for. We know it's a woman, but that doesn't exactly narrow it down."

"We also know she has some serious issues." Diggle deadpanned, "I mean look at this..." he waived in the direction of the screen, "It seems like she found every possible article about you online and then printed out the photos published in them." he turned to look at Oliver, who didn't comment on it but continued to abuse the poor dummy.

"There was no printer in the apartment, right? I mean the whole building doesn't have electricity..." Felicity leaned back in her chair and leveled Dig with a look, "I might be able to trace her that way. Every printer has an unique signature, but you need to know what to look for, and the manufacturers keep records of where each one was shipped to. Find where it was bought, and maybe find the woman who bought it." she sighed, "But I would need the original paper from the wall."
"The police will collect them the moment we inform detective Lance where to find the red archer's lair." Diggle pointed out, "We could go back and get you one but it might be better if they have the... what? What is it?"

Oliver stopped punching the training dummy and instead focused on Felicity, the moment their friend insinuated something might be wrong. The blonde looked uncomfortable for some reason, she intentionally focused on the screens in front of her, just clicking on different photos.

"Felicity, what's wrong?" Oliver finally asked, after the silence became too long and Diggle sent him a look.

"I was waiting for the unavoidable moment when you'll tell me I need to identify and find every single one of these women so we could check if either of them was attacked by the red archer." Felicity's voice was weak, hollow, completely unlike her.

Oliver looked down in shame, "I thought it might be better to leave that to the police. And then we could work with Lance on identifying the possible next target so we could set up a trap and catch the red archer."

"That is if he wasn't her caught." Felicity muttered under her breath, shocking Diggle by the coldness in her voice. Oliver who was too far away to hear her didn't know what was going on, but he could see the look Dig was giving her. And it told him something more was going on than he suspected, than just her being faced with the evidence of his selfish past.

He moved closer, abandoning his violent training, and stopped next to her chair. When she refused to look up Oliver knelled down on the concrete floor to catch her gaze. It took a few moments but finally her eyes moved to focus on him, and her expression surprised him. A mixture of worry and fear, apprehension that he rarely saw on her face.

"Tell me what's wrong." he said gently, like he was afraid to spook her.

"The general assumption based on these photos is that this new archer is chasing your former girlfriends, or bed-warmers, or whatever they were... a fact that will probably threw suspicion on me yet again... but Oliver a photo is missing."

"What do you mean?" he asked, his eyes now moving over the computer screens, "What photo?"

"The most important one." Felicity pointed out and got a confused look from her soulmate.

"You are right there." he pointed a finger at the central photo of the hit list collection.

It wasn't a response Felicity expected, and it took her a moment to process the fact he just called her the most important one. But then her sombre words made him realize he truly did oversee something, or rather someone.

"But where is Laurel's photo?"

The silence that followed her words was awkward, to say the least. Oliver watched her in shock, before standing up, his eyes moved to the screens yet again. He needed to see for himself, needed to verify that she was telling the truth. Diggle too was paying closer attention to the collection of women on the photographs, before he swore under his breath.

"No." was Oliver's short response, and truth be told his two friends weren't surprised by it in the least.
"She's not among them." Diggle pointed out seriously, but his words were answered with a frown. Oliver refused to believe it, and he was fast to point it out, "There is no way Laurel is involved in this. Absolutely no way she is responsible."

"Why not?" Dig asked after a few moments, "She certainly showed a whole lot of interest in the Arrow."

"Her solemnly interest in the Arrow is to arrest him, not becoming like him!" Oliver's gaze then moved to the woman who watched him silently, her face a mask of calmness but her eyes revealed she was everything but. So he yet again went down on his knees in front of her, before taking her hand in his, "Please believe me Felicity. I am not defending Laurel. If I believed it was her I would be facing her right now as Arrow and demanding answers. But I can't imagine her killing Isabel. There is no motive."

"Motive or not, the fact remains all your previous girlfriends, or whatever, are right there..." she waived her free hand towards the screens, "... all except Laurel, who was your girlfriend the longest. The main one, while the others were just side-flings. So why not her?" Felicity sighed and closed her eyes, "You say you would face her if you believed it was her. But let's face it, I could show you conclusive evidence and you would still have doubts... because you were always siding with Laurel, always choosing her, everyone else be damned."

Oliver simply repeated the same old explanation he used when faced with his decision to rush to Laurel's defense, "I treated her badly in the past, and now I'm trying."

But this time he didn't get to complete the sentence Felicity heard before, she refused to hear it yet again, "You treated me far worse Oliver!"

"I know that!" he snapped, but then regretted raising his voice when she flinched, "Believe me, I know... I know, and every day I'm working on being a man worthy of someone as wonderful as you."

"You haven't actually done anything." Felicity pointed out, before biting her lips. She never wanted to say those words, never wanted him to think he was obligated to do some grand gestures to get back in her good graces.

But Oliver wasn't angry at her for pointing it out, instead he stood up and removed his black shirt he wore underneath the leather jacket since it became colder outside. Felicity's eyes briefly admired his well defined muscles, a bright blush appearing on her face when he smiled at her. But then Oliver revealed the reason for the stripping to his pants. He turned around and let her see what he had done.

Felicity got up from the chair and made a single step forward, until she was just inches away from him. She must have noticed him trembling slightly when her fingers touched the mark on his shoulder, but she didn't comment on it. Her sole focus was on the now visible crown-shaped mark, the dragon that was previously hiding it now a mere shadow.

"I want to do something, something that would matter, something that would show you I am completely devoted to you, but I don't know what. This is me doing what you asked of me, I am stopping denying you and the mark that links us together." Oliver's voice was rough with emotions, and Felicity placed her palm directly over the mark, "It's so easy to destroy, but so damn hard to fix things. Especially with you."

"What is that supposed to mean? Especially with me?"
Oliver wanted to turn, to look her in the eyes while he was explaining himself, but he didn't want to move and lose the contact, "I was used to buying forgiveness, learned that from my father. But you don't care about material stuff, so now I have to learn how to do things differently. But for you I am willing to find another way."

Diggle stood aside the entire time, watching the couple silently. He didn't know Oliver was working on removing the tattoo either, and was genuinely pleased with that decision. He honestly couldn't imagine not being able to see the mark that tied him to Lyla. She was the best thing that happened to him, she and the little one they are eagerly waiting for.

Being a member of the team from pretty much the beginning of Oliver's crusade he had witnessed the younger man occasionally making a fool out of himself in front of the blonde, the hangover cure in a syringe will forever be remembered as the worst excuse in history of lousy excuses, but he had never seen him so open and honest.

He had seen Oliver pretend to be honest, but this was the real deal. This was everything.

And after seeing this development Diggle hated the fact he was about to interrupt, and ruin the mood. But things were chaotic, and dangerous, and they needed to focus on finding and capturing the crazy woman that apparently targets Oliver's former lovers. And considering the little detail Felicity noticed the next necessary thing they needed to do will be really uncomfortable.

"It's time to call detective Lance. Let him know what we discovered and the location of the apartment," he said seriously.

Felicity instantly pulled her hand back, a blush covering her cheeks. She blinked several times, before looking around like she was in shock and didn't know where she was and how she got there. By that time Oliver turned around and was now facing her, watching her with an expression Diggle couldn't properly identify and name.

"Felicity." he whispered her name and her eyes focused on the man standing patiently in front of her.

The blonde nodded, before muttering, "Right... call Lance. On it."

But a gentle touch on her wrist stopped her from moving away, from sitting back on her chair and throw herself back to work, and she sighed. Her blue eyes found Oliver's and his hand moved upwards; from her wrist, up her arm, until it finally reached her face and he gently cupped her cheek.

That was the most intimate thing that ever happened between them, a strange notion considering they were soulmates, and they were both aware now wasn't exactly the right time or place. It was a move in the right direction though.

Quentin Lance let out a huff, his warm breath creating a mist in the rapidly cooling night air. He is willing to swear it wasn't this freezing out on the rooftop just two minutes ago when he first exited the building. They were less then a month away from Christmas, and it was only a matter of time before the first snow.

One would think their demographic position would mean warm winter, but Starling was a freaking weird city and nothing here was normal. Not the weather; not the citizen; and certainly not him, considering he was meeting a wanted criminal on a rooftop a day after handing the man crucial evidence in a murder investigation.

He used to hunt the Hood, fear the maniac that killed without prejudice. Later on he started to appreciate the change in the vigilante when the less bodies started to fall, and more criminals ended
up in plastic cuffs with USB drives containing proof against them conveniently hanging from their necks. He actually had one of the tech guys try and locate where the memory sticks were purchased, but even a brilliant guy like Curtis Holt couldn't find a trail that would lead them anywhere.

Now he respected the man wearing the green hood, and understood the sacrifice Oliver Queen made every day wasn't any less than the one he himself made every time he put on a badge. As a vigilante he was in an even worse position, because there was no gold badge to hide behind, no few dozen cars driving to backup. Just a woman behind a computer screen and a friend behind a sniper scope. That was it.

"Detective." digitally altered voice startled the older man who was too focused on his inner musings to notice he got company, "I am sorry to keep you waiting, but there was a robbery in a small corner store that required my attention."

"I take it the police has been notified?" Lance asked, despite already knowing the answer. Chances were the Arrow knew about the robbery because the police knew, but there was never any evidence to prove his IT girl was inside police network and keeping an eye on their channels.

"A squad car was driving up to the address when I was leaving through the back exit." the vigilante answered, and Lance could swear he heard amusement in his voice despite the voice distortion.

"But you, or rather Miss Smoak, didn't call me here tonight to chit chat... what do you got? And where is the red arrow?"

A frown was visible below the hem of the hood, and the larger-than-life vigilante looked suspiciously small as he produced a bagged arrow from his quiver. It was still in the original evidence bag, and it didn't look like the seal had been opened, but it has obviously been tampered with.

And by tampered he meant destroyed.

Lance just opened his mouth to scowl Oliver like he was a small child, to growl at him for ruining evidence he handed to him in good faith, but he was cut off by the younger man, "There was a bug in the tip."

The detective took a moment to process those words, but all he could think of was a mosquito trapped in amber. Since he was certain that wasn't what the Arrow meant he just said seriously, "Explain that sentence."

"A computer chip. Felicity deactivated it so it was no longer sending out any data, and backtracked it to a location where it was initially activated. I won't even pretend to understand how she did that, but we found the red archer's lair deep in the Glades."

"You checked out the place?" Lance asked, and when Oliver nodded muttered under his breath, "Of course you did."

"Felicity is currently trying to learn who the former resident was, but it's a slow progress. Maybe you will have more luck." Oliver paused, shutting his mouth with a snap before he mentioned the most important thing. He knew he should inform the detective about what they found inside the apartment, but a certain thing Felicity pointed out wasn't something that would sit well with the older man. Of that he was certain.

So he pulled out a small glass vile with a piece of tech clinking inside. Felicity did everything she could with this thing, as well as deleted some of the data that would reveal the red fletched arrow for
some reason left the police evidence storage and traveled half-way across town all the way to Verdant, and it was decided they would hand it over to the detective.

"The bug?" Lance asked as he took the small container from Oliver's gloved hand, "The technology is progressing by the minute. I got an idea how to solve the problem of destroyed evidence, but if you do something like this ever again you can stop counting on my help. Are we clear?"

"Crystal." Oliver answered somberly, making the detective turn and start walking away as the older man believed the conversation was over. But there was one other thing that needed to be mentioned, "Detective... about the address."

"I'll get a few of my guys and check it out first thing in the morning." Lance said, "I need to deal with this bug thing and get a judge sign a warrant. It should be-"

"One of the walls is covered in photos." Oliver cut him off mid-sentence. He needed to say it or he'll lose his nerve. It was funny really, he didn't have a problem facing a criminal who was far stronger than him and armed to the teeth, but this right here was something the feared vigilante wished he could avoid. He took a deep breath and continued, "Most of them are of me and my previous... sexual partners. We believe it's some sort of twisted hit list because Isabel Rochev's face was crossed. This red archer seems to be focused on Felicity and me, at our relationship, because the photo of us together is decorated with hearts and butterflies."

"I've seen weirder things." Lance muttered under his breath.

"But there is a discrepant. Now I'm not saying it's in any way linked to the red archer's identity but Laurel's photo isn't among them."

The detective instantly bristled, "It seems to me that is exactly what you are saying!"

"I am just stating a fact. I don't believe it any more than you do, but it's suspicious that all my previous lovers are featured on the wall of shame except the woman I was dating the longest."

"Wall of shame? Is that what my daughters are for you? Something to be ashamed of? Because my girls deserve better than that!"

It was obviously a wrong way to describe the collection of those damned photos, and there was no turning back time and preventing the words from leaving his mouth. But Oliver also couldn't and wouldn't lie to him, not now.

"I am ashamed of the way I treated them, yes. But I am even more ashamed of the way I treated my soulmate, of the way they enabled me to treat my soulmate. I am not trying to place the guilt on anyone else, because I know it's mostly my fault, but every single woman I've been with, and that includes Laurel and Sara, knew what and where my soulmate mark was, and knew it wasn't identical to their own. And none of them cared."

"Because you're Ollie Queen." Lance pointed out, using the words Oliver hid behind in the years before the island. His name was both a shield and a door opener, and he knew it. He took advantage of it.

His name and bank account was what brought those girls in his bed, reason they didn't care about the mark on his back. They were in it for a ride, not forever, and each and every single one knew that. Laurel knew that. Although she believed they would eventually go against nature, get married and have a family.

Looking back at those days as her boyfriend Oliver wondered if that was why he cheated on her,
why he went out of his way to do anything that would hurt her and make her leave him for good, why he eventually took her sister along on Queen's Gambit.

Deep down he wanted his soulmate, and refused to settle down with anyone else.

Finally he nodded, accepting detective Lance's words, but adding, "I was a conquest to them the same way they were to me. I understand that, I always did. It's just that before I didn't care. Now I do." he took a deep breath, "I gave you all the info we found. If, or rather when, Felicity find something else that might lead us to the red archer I will let you know. She also believes she might be able to use the paper the photos were printed on to find the printer that was used. Something about distinction marks made by the manufacturer, and from that locate where it was purchased and possibly who bought it. But for that she'll need the original paper, but we haven't taken any from the wall collection. So... we're going to need your assistance on that one."

The detective watched silently as the vigilante walked away into the shadows, without waiting for his response, before using one of his trick arrows to get to one of the neighboring buildings. By that time Lance realized he overreacted, but it was too late now.

He should focus on more important things now, like persuading Holt to help out with this tech thing. The IT guy was smart and had a good sense of justice, from what he had seen during their interactions. No doubt he would question Lance why the arrow tip was destroyed in the first place, when the police was very careful when it comes to preserving evidence. One of the choices was to lie to the kid, but since he was a genius chances are he would see right through whichever excuse Lance gives him. He could also tell the truth and hope Holt doesn't freak out and report him to the chief, a move that would cost him his badge and possibly land him in Iron Heights.

He checked his watch and noted the time. Night shift was already out on the streets, but the tech guys rarely worked this late. Lucky bastards. That meant he would have to wait until tomorrow morning to deal with this mess, while ensuring he had a good explanation to give to the chief about the address.

Great. Between what occurred between him and Oliver tonight, and worry about how Holt would react, Lance was pretty certain there would be no rest for him tonight.

The Foundry was silent when Oliver returned and he initially thought both his partners went to their respective homes for the night, but as he was walking down the stairs his eyes as always moved to the computer station. It was a natural thing to do for him, check up on Felicity the moment he returned after a mission or a simple patrol. He needed to see her with his own eyes the moment he entered the basement. The sight of her safe and sound always calmed his nerves and eased the tension in his muscles.

It wasn't always like that, but with time she became his safe harbor.

Their eyes locked and he smiled slightly, seeing her waiting for him. Diggle wasn't anywhere in sight, but that wasn't all that surprising.

"I sent Dig home. Lyla's due is in five days, but chances are the baby will come when she's ready, not when the doctor says so. Did you know babies are born on their due dates in only 4% of cases? It's basically an estimation, not and exact science. And he mentioned she's been getting back pains more and more often so the little Digglet might be with us sooner than expected."

Felicity stopped to take a deep breath and Oliver smiled widely at her. Her babble usually had that effect on him, especially if she dropped an innuendo and then tried to backtrack but made things
even worse.

"Then why are you still here? It's late, you should have gone home to get some rest. We have a long
day tomorrow."

Oliver placed his bow in it's case and started to unbuckle his quiver when her words made him
freeze, "We need to talk." after a second a groan followed, "Don't you just hate that sentence?
Nothing good ever started with those words."

"Will this be that case too?" he finally asked after removing his portable arrow cache and placed it on
it's designated spot.

Felicity shrugged, "It depends."

"On what?"

"Why you didn't tell me when you recognized my mark as identical to yours." she blurted out in a
single breath and then bit her bottom lip, expecting a response from Oliver. But only received a sign
and her soulmate looking down at the floor in shame, "Look, I understand you were afraid you
wouldn't survive your mission, we already went through that, but Oliver I had a right to know. I
know it's extremely awkward to just drop that particular information into someone's lap, but nothing
needed to happen. We didn't even had to mention it ever again. But-"

"Telling you would have made it more real, and I didn't want that. I was nothing more than a killer
back then, and you don't deserve anything less then a gentle man."

She raised an eyebrow, not in the least impressed with his self-contempt, and not agreeing with his
words. A gentle man? Please. Like one of those would know how to handle her.

"But then the Hood became the Arrow. And you informed me you couldn't be with anyone you
could care about." she started to speak, ignoring him mumbling her name as his eyes begged her not
to mention it. Not to ask about it. But she did, she had to know, to understand, "Then explain Sara."

If that was an option right now Oliver would have escaped to the bathroom in the back with an
excuse he needed to change into his civilian clothes, or asked Felicity if she wanted to go and pick
something from Big Belly for both of them... anything really. But avoidance was not an option. Not
this time. Not when their future together depended on it.

"It was so damn easy to fall back into old habits, make the same mistakes as before. Looking back I
can see, and admit, I was simply being a coward and running away from something I feared. I know
Sara wouldn't say 'no' to me, just like she didn't refused me the last time I used her as a means to
escape. She used me too, I knew it, and I didn't care." the roughness of his voice was proof he
struggle to speak about the matter, Oliver Queen wasn't a man of many words, and he sure as hell
didn't speak about feelings. But for her he was willing to do just that, "I knew if I told you the truth
things would change between us. You said we wouldn't need to even mention it, but there would
have been no stopping things from escalating between us. I wouldn't be able to keep you at arms
length anymore, I would have pulled you in and never let go. And just thinking about that freaked
me out Felicity."

"Oliver..." she whispered his name, but he shook his head. He needed to finish what he began, or he
would once again lose the nerve.

"I am truly sorry for doing that. I treated you just as bad... worse... as I did Laurel when she wanted
us to get an apartment together. I took an easy way out. But she was just a girlfriend, you are my
soulmate. You are more important then she ever was."

"I want to believe something like that won't happen again. That if I, for instance, suggest we get a place together you won't run to Nanda Parbat and sleep with Sara."

Oliver looked honestly horrified at her words, like he couldn't believe she would ever suggest that, "Felicity, if you suggested we move in together in our own place I would buy us a house, any house you want. And maybe we could get a dog too; an actual one, not one of those yapping things you could carry in your purse. An actual guard dog that would keep you safe... maybe find a retired army dog trainer who could teach it how to-"

"Whoa, Oliver! Are you saying you want to live with me?" Felicity was now gaping at him.

He smiled at her, that particular smile that always made her weak in the knees, and the blonde was grateful she was sitting down in her office chair. Especially when he reminded her of something he mentioned before, "Felicity, I already told you I want to marry you."

"Shouldn't you, I don't know, love me first?"

"I already do."
Chapter 20

Felicity would be the biggest liar on the planet if she claimed those words didn't make her feel like she had butterflies in her stomach. And not those cute colorful, flying in a swarm with fairy dust everywhere, type. Nope. Felicity Smoak had Queen Victoria's birdwing butterflies portraying how Oliver's words made her feel.

He loved her.

Those were the words she hoped to hear, and at the same time dreaded, because she knew that little voice in the back of her mind would claim that maybe he was yet again lying to her. That he was only telling them to get her forgiveness, or because it was expected of him due to the fact she was his soulmate and the world now knew it.

Doubt reared its ugly head, and it must have shown on his face, because a sudden touch made her gasp and focus back on the man in front of her, a man that was observing her with tears filled eyes.

"And I'm too late." he whispered, pain gripping his heart in a vice, and his hand dropped from where he gently cupped her face, "I'm sorry. I'm... gonna go now."

She wasn't even aware she moved, but next thing Felicity knows is her hand is gripping his own, making his pause instead of walking away from her like he intended. A small movement and their fingers interlaced, and although there was nothing really intimate in hand-holding it certainly felt that way.

"I want to believe you... so badly." Felicity moved closer and placed her forehead on Oliver's shoulder, her hand gripping his own tighter.

"But my actions from before are making you doubt me." he said calmly, "I understand."

Oliver thought about moving, about walking away, but there was no force that could make him step away from his soulmate right now. Not when she reached out to him first. He had pulled away too many times already, kept her at arms length, and that is what caused this rift between them. Felicity doubted his honestly, his love for her, so the only thing he could do is prove to her he was dedicated to making them work.

"You love me?" a question was asked so silently Oliver barely heard it.

But it caused him to smile as he answered, "I love you."

A sob escaped Felicity's lips. He said the words. He wasn't just correcting her wrong assumption, and telling her how he felt about her without actually using those three words.

"I can't right now... but I'll say then when I'm ready." Felicity replied, before pulling back in shock at the sudden feel of his lips kissing the top of her head. He was still sad, his eyes revealed as much, but a wide smile that decorated his face told her he understood and wasn't upset about her apprehension. He expected and deserved it, but they were on the right track.

And someday things will be okay.

The peaceful silence was interrupted by a familiar ringtone, causing Felicity to frown for a moment before her eyes widened and she all but ran to get hold of her phone. In her rush she managed to slam her hip into the sharp corner of the desk, and she bit her bottom lip to prevent a groan of pain.
But Oliver noticed it, and he was by her side in a heartbeat.

"Felicity..." he was planing to ignore the constant ringing, and instead focus on her, maybe get her to sit down or gently massage the bruised area, but she had other ideas.

"It's Diggle." she trusted the phone in his hand, "I can't right now."

"What?!" it was probably a really bad way of answering the call, and Oliver suspected he would get a lecture from his soulmate, if the glare she was currently sending him was any indication, but they were interrupted. Diggle was his best friend, but the man had a really bad timing.

Oliver's eyes widened as what he was being told registered, but then so did the smile on his face. Felicity was watching him with interest for a moment, before poking him in the arm to get his attention, "What's going on?" she hissed at him.

"We're on our way." Oliver informed his friend, and after a moment sighed, "You seriously think Felicity will be totally okay with going home right now? Lyla is in labor and you think she'll just wait until tomorrow to go and-"

Felicity didn't wait for Oliver to finish what he was saying before she ripped the phone out of his hand. There was simply no time for politeness, and it was her phone anyway, "We're on our way Diggle! Tell Lyla not to have the baby until we arrive... no, wait... don't do that..." Felicity moved the phone away from her lips and glared at Oliver, "Why are you still standing here? We need a ride!"

Her soulmate only snorted before moving to the metal table by the wall where he kept his helmet, and one extra. Felicity never rode on a motorcycle with him, few times he offered to take her home after a long night in the Foundry were always answered with a lecture about traffic regulations, but tonight it was either this or the van. And the big boy wasn't exactly fast and right now the speed was of utmost importance. Not even Felicity would argue with that logic.

Although she did roll her eyes at his enthusiasm.

"We should ask the nurse-" Oliver pointed towards the station but Felicity just walked past him, and towards the elevator. He followed, of course he did, and couldn't help but feel amused at the nervous energy she was positively radiating right now, "Felicity?"

"I memorized the hospital layout and could probably find the maternity ward without my glasses." she said casually, but then noticed the small smile on Oliver's face. As always he was equally confused and in awe of his soulmate. But she just shrugged, "I wanted to be prepared and not waste time talking to nurses who would be more interested in flirting with you than giving us directions."

"Would that make you jealous?" Oliver jokingly asked, but tensed at the glare he received in response, "I was just... I'm not planing to do something just to intentionally make you-"

"I know that Oliver." Felicity breathed out, "I know you wouldn't. But... others... other women..."

"They can flirt all they want, it won't matter. None of them matter to me. You do. Do you believe me?"

"That you won't cheat?" Felicity asked, and after a moment nodded, "I do after tonight."

John Diggle just ran both hands over his face when the elevator at the end of the hallway dinged and opened, revealing his two friends inside. Sure, he said they didn't have to come, but he was grateful they were both stubborn enough not to listen to him because he needed the company.
someone to tell him that it's going to be okay cause the doctors aren't exactly comforting with their long words and probably made up statistics.

"Dig! Any news yet?" Felicity rushed to his side, Oliver close on her heels, "So much about an accurate due date." she punched her soulmate lightly, "See, didn't I tell you tonight?"

Oliver just smiled at her, and Diggle's eyes narrowed in suspicion. Something happened between these two. They were comfortable around each other before Felicity learned the truth, then things became awkward, and now they stood side by side like an unmovable force that could withstand anything. Fucking finally!

A shrill scream echoed through the mostly deserted hallway and all three of them turned to look at the door. That was Lyla, but neither of them, not even Diggle who was married to her, ever heard her like this... this loud.

"What are you waiting for man?" Oliver asked, not understanding why his friend was still standing outside. Why he was outside in the first place, and not next to the mother of his baby.

"Yes, get in!" Felicity pushed him, but it was like trying to push a mountain. It earned her an amused grin from her friend before he did as instructed and braved entering the room.

"Get in here Johnny!" Oliver and Felicity could hear Lyla issuing a direct order, and shared a smile.

"How many fingers?" Felicity asked casually, and Oliver frowned at her.

"What?"

"Diggle. Fingers. Snap. How many?" Felicity tried to demonstrate using her own, but one of her knuckles cracked causing her to shudder.

Oliver had to laugh, "Have you seen Diggle's fingers? Not so easily broken."

Felicity raised an eyebrow at his confident answer, "Have you met Lyla? ARGUS agent extraordinaire."

Oliver laughed again and led her towards the waiting room next to the elevator. There were no chairs in the hallway and chances are it will be a long night for them all, so it might be better to be somewhere more comfortable. But then he pushed the door of the waiting room open, found simple plastic chairs, and made peace with the fact they will both be extremely uncomfortable for the next few hours.

"When did you meet her?" Oliver didn't know what made him ask the question, and break the silence that spread between them after they sat down and prepared themselves for the long wait, "Lyla, I mean."

"Oh, it was after you went back to Lian Yu." Felicity said casually, but then made a face. She wasn't sure how he'll react to her mention those six months, since they were a self-imposed punishment Oliver felt he deserved for not succeeding in completely preventing the Undertaking... and for Tommy's death, "Um... she came to check on Dig after learning he's in Starling. I actually walked in on them talking, sort of... they were in Big Belly and I had a serious need for chocolate milkshake with extra cream. Dig introduced us... and I instantly liked Lyla."

"So she wasn't in Starling the entire time?" Oliver asked, feeling curious about the woman that was his friend's soulmate. He knew she worked close with Waller, and for that he admired Lyla because he truly detested the woman and held in high regards anyone who could spend more than five
minutes in a room with the cold-hearted director of the agency and not want to strangle her.

Felicity shrugged, "I suppose. I never asked. I have a feeling it's one of those 'if I tell you I have to kill you' things." she mused for a moment, "All I know a few weeks later Dig told me she was not permanently in Starling and they decided to try again. And looking a them I understand that..." her voice trailed off and Oliver looked down at her face.

She was staring at her hands, resting in her lap, and he slowly reached out and took her right hand in his left, their fingers interlacing like it was the most natural thing ever.

"Understand what?" he asked gently after it became obvious that she wasn't going to finish that thought.

"Diggle and Lyla are proof that finding your soulmate doesn't mean you get instant happiness. Things just don't work that way. It's just a regular relationship, one you have to work hard to maintain, but with someone who is perfect for you in every way."

"I sucked at making relationships work."

"I never really tried. It was so much easier to do whatever I want, and later apologize with an expensive date or a piece of jewelry if I really messed up. It's kind of sad, when I think about it now, that forgiveness could be bought with a bracelet."

Felicity pointed a finger at him, with her free hand cause letting go of his hold wasn't an option, "Just so we're clear; if you pull shit like that I won't forgive you even if you hand me United Kingdom's crown jewels."

Oliver nodded seriously, but then chose to lighten the mood and mention something she blurted out over a year ago, "We both know you prefer my family jewels anyway."

He had to laugh when Felicity stared at him with narrowed eyes, but then she too started to giggle.

John was drained, but not even that feeling of utter tiredness could wipe off the wide smile from his lips. He practically pranced down the hallway to the waiting room where his two friends eagerly awaited the good news. Well, one of them was... the other one was completely unaware of the outside world.

Dig smiled as Oliver looked towards him over Felicity's head. The blonde was fast asleep, her head pillowed on her soulmate's shoulder. She looked small and fragile, but he knew she had a spine of steel and the personality that matched. Felicity Smoak was a force of nature.

Her knew women like her. One of them was his own soulmate, and soon his wife yet again.

Oliver shook his head, and instead gently woke up the blonde that was snoring softly. He could see in his friend's eyes what he wanted to do, and he knew it would be a really bad idea. A really, really bad idea. You do not wake up a morning grump like Felicity with a shout unless you want to have hear use her loud voice.

"What?" she looked around for a moment, confused at the surroundings, until her eyes landed on the still smiling man at the doorway, "Diggle! Lyla!"

"It's a girl!" he exclaimed, and his words were met with a shrill scream. It seemed there were moments in which Felicity channeled her mother.
Seconds later he was practically pushed aside as Felicity rushed out of the room, and he laughed. Oliver did too, before he stood up, and approached his friend, "Congratulations, man. I'm so happy for you, and I'm sure Felicity is too, but she had more important things to do now."

Dig nodded, "Oh, I know she does. Honestly, I struggled to leave the room with my two girls to come here and inform you about it."

"Well then, let's go back to them. I can't wait to meet the possibly most protected kid in the city." Oliver joked, but he had a serious suspicion Diggle already planned to upgrade the security of his place, maybe get Felicity to do some computer stuff and turn the place into a small fortress.

He wasn't judging his friend for that though, quite the opposite. He agreed wholeheartedly. After all he would do the same if...

And in that moment Oliver's mind short-circuited. Because in front of him was a sight that would be forever embedded in his memory. Lyla was holding her newborn daughter, which while beautiful looking wasn't what made his heart skip a beat. No, that was caused by his soulmate standing next to the bed and looking at the newborn in awe.

A small smile graced her pink lips, and as she reached out to the newest member of the Diggle family the little girl yawned and opened her eyes. Instantly Felicity sighed at the lovely sight and said without thinking, "I want one just like that."

Everyone in the room heard her, of course they did, and Lyla couldn't help but look at Oliver who was still only few steps inside and frozen in the spot. He looked at the blonde with so much adoration it was almost sickening, but she thought it was sweet.

"Come on uncle Oliver." she said, and then laughed when the younger man looked startled, "What? You didn't expect to get a honorary uncle title? Johnny already sees you as a brother."

He laughed and moved closer, "And does my niece have a name?"

"We named her Francesca, after our CO who ensured we remain in the same unit after it became known we were soulmates." Diggle responded, remembering the tough as nails woman who while understanding of their bond refused to give them any special treatment. And they both respected her even more for it.

Lyla laughed, "I remembered her cornering me the morning after we informed her. She wiggled her eyebrows and asked me if I already climbed Johnny like a tree."

"She did?" Diggle asked in surprise, hearing about it for the first time.

Felicity snorted at the look of utter shock on her friend's face.

"I love the name. Francesca. It was a pretty name. Hard to shorten though, unless calling the little girl Frankie was an option. But that was more of a name for an Italian mobster, not a little nugget napping in her mothers arms." Felicity was still gushing over the newborn, and then the inevitable happened. Lyla offered her to hold the baby.

And Oliver's mind glitched yet again.

Felicity thought Oliver would simply drive them back to Verdant but it was far to late, or perhaps too early. She needed to be at work in less than four hours, which meant she might get two hours of sleep tonight. If even that much. It was strange to feel so energized after a cat nap in a waiting room, on a really uncomfortable plastic chair, but she suspected it had nothing to do with that. Nope. It was
linked to that high of holding an adorable newborn baby girl that at one point reached out with her tiny, tiny hand and took hold of her finger in a surprisingly strong grip for someone who wasn't even six hours old.

Honestly, at that moment Felicity felt like she could leap over Queen Consolidated in a single jump.

But eventually that feeling was replaced by tiredness and Lyla told both her and Oliver to kindly get the hell out, and go home to get some rest. Neither was willing to argue with her about it.

What little adrenaline she got from riding on the back of Oliver's bike, holding onto him tightly, was wearing off once he stopped in front of her building and turned off the engine. He helped her get off, tiredness combined with jelly legs was a receipt for a a nice fall on her face right there on the sidewalk. But it didn't stop there.

Felicity opened her mouth to protest, tell him she had it handled, but Oliver refused to hear it, "I'm escorting you upstairs, so don't waste your breath. I don't want you to fall down the stairs and break a neck."

"I'm not that much of a klutz." she grumbled under her breath.

Oliver looked at her seriously, "Felicity, you've been awake for almost 24 hours now. I'm not taking any chances. Not with you. And if you chose to take a day off-"

"I'm not." she cut him off, "I'll be in the office on time, caffeinated, and ready for work."

They stopped in front of her door, and Felicity fished out her keys our of her bag. It was quite a collection of keys, each different size and shape, on a single ring and she frowned at it after accidentally dropping it on the floor. She huffed, like they insulted her, and Oliver bend down to retrieve them after it became obvious she didn't planed to do so herself, but instead just glared at them.

"The one for your car is still there." he commented after noticing one of the keys was for the little red Mini that he actually missed seeing in QC's parking lot. He briefly wondered if she ever managed to get the blood out from the upholstery, but his mind couldn't wander off into the past because Felicity grumbled something about asshole insurance agent.

"I mean can you believe that? It's a total scam. But a guy refuses to admit it, and instead kept insisting they are not obligated to pay because it wasn't technically an accident. I was intentionally pushed off the road and apparently my policy doesn't cover that. Which means I have to not only pay off the rest of the lease on the Mini, but get a new car... and with everything that's been going on I simply don't have the time to find something I like."

Oliver didn't say anything to that. Only helped her inside the apartment, and kissed her forehead before she closed her bedroom door in his face.

Felicity was asleep the moment her head hit the pillow and didn't awake until several hours later when her phone started to ring. Twenty minutes before her alarm supposed to go off.

And that put her in a bad mood right away. Realizing it was her mother calling didn't help, neither did the shriek in her ear.

"Baby, why am I learning something so huge from the tabloid?! Don't I deserve a phone call? I am your mother after all. I bet you informed Moira right away!"
Felicity pulled the phone away from her ear and frowned at it, before asking, "Informed Moira about what?" honestly it was weird calling the Queen matriarch by her first name, and even weirder when her mother did it. But it turns out while she and Oliver were at the Gala in the National Museum the two women were spending some quality time together.

Her mother, the goddess of sparkly things, became friends with always prime and proper Moira Queen. She didn't believe in Hell, but if it existed it was probably pretty chilly there right now.

"About the baby, silly! Or was it just a checkup? I couldn't have been, not that late in the evening, but I presume you wanted to avoid the press learning about it right away."

Felicity wished she was more awake, she needed a cup of coffee before dealing with her mother's enthusiasm and a tendency to change the subject in a heartbeat, "Um... it wasn't a checkup. Lyla had a baby girl last night, and we went to the hospital right away. What does the press had to do with anything?"

"Who is Lyla?" Donna asked. she too was now confused.

"Diggle's partner." Felicity took a deep breath, "Mom, what exactly is going on?"

"That Starling tabloid you dislike so much published a story about you and Oliver. They have photos of the two of you entering the hospital late last night, and according to someone from inside the hospital you went to the maternity ward. So they presumed-"

"That I'm pregnant." Felicity finished the sentence, "Let me guess, the title contains the word princess, or prince. Or in case they took the effort the royal baby."

"Starling's eagerly awaited highborn baby might arrive sooner than expected." Donna revealed the title that got her all excited about becoming a grandmother.

Felicity only groaned, "Idiots. All of them. Look mom, there is no baby. Oliver and I are taking things slow. Like snail mail slow. But now I have to rush and get ready for work. I have a feeling I'll be swamped with calls wanting confirmation, and have to speak to the PR department."

"Alright. Take care sweetheart. Don't work too hard, you hear me. Oliver has two working hands, he can get his own coffee." a snort from her daughter made Donna smile, before the two women wished each other a goodbye and disconnected the call.

Julie Walsh liked a challenge. That was why, when the opportunity came, she applied for the job in Queen Consolidated. Before that she handled public relations for several smaller companies, and wasn't sure it was enough but it turned out she was the breath of fresh air they needed. Or so then CEO Walter Steele said when he handed her the contract.

And then the Undertaking happened, and a hostile takeover attempt, and Oliver Queen became a CEO instead of his now former step-father. And she withstood it all, just went with the flow, and ensured everyone in her department did their jobs. They were a well oiled machine. And then another bomb was dropped in her lap when it was revealed Felicity Smoak, the bosses EA was also his soulmate. Her best team did a great job turning it in their favor, after all the whole city waited for Ollie Queen to find his soulmate like it was any of their business.

They dealt with a few more big things, some good and some bad, and she had her phone set to inform her of any story featuring either Oliver or Felicity. Well, technically it was the woman in question who did it for her, cause the IT department wasn't very helpful about that. It was a good way of knowing right away if some story was published, so she could prepare for a response if
necessary, even before she got to work.

And that morning her phone pinged, informing her of Starling Scandal's exclusive.

Julie was walking towards her office, her head bowed as she typed on her phone, and she almost bumped into a person waiting for her in front of the closed glass door. Luckily, she looked up on time and missed colliding with Felicity Smoak.

"Do you have a minute?" the blonde asked.

Julie nodded, "I was planning to call you after coming in. It's about the story, I'm presuming. Should I be congratulating?"

Felicity just snorted and shook her head, following the older woman into the office and closing the door. It wasn't much privacy, but it mostly did the job.

After settling down in the chair she sighed, "You met John Diggle, Oliver's driver and bodyguard." when Julie nodded in confirmation Felicity continued, "Well, he's the one who should receive congratulations. He and his partner. They got a baby girl last night."

Julie smiled widely, "That will be one protected little girl."

Felicity struggled not to laugh out loud at that. Diggle was maybe a bodyguard, a vigilante, and generally a mountain of a man, but Lyla was the one it was best not to anger. The woman was badass on a good day, but if someone tried to harm Francesca then Lyla Michaels would be like an enraged momma bear guarding her cub.

"Yep. Now, I'm not sure if we should issue a statement and explain everything, or just let the Scandal come up with idiotic ideas only for them to turn out false. Although, I doubt that would faze them."

"A statement might be better." Julie replied, "The Scandal needs big titles, and will run with the pregnancy story as long as possible. And then when it turns out there is no baby their editor just might decide to publish an exclusive that you had a miscarriage, with an anonymous insider source from the hospital confirming it."

Felicity shuddered at the words, not doubting the trash tabloid would sink so low. But a statement would just make them come up with another big story. Still, she had to admit Julie was right, and also had for more experience with this matters.

"Okay. Here's an idea. Oliver and I would like to thank everyone for their well wishes, both our goddaughter and her mother are healthy and there was no complication during birth. Unless you count Diggle's fingers. Nothing is broken, just squeezed really hard."

Julie laughed at that. She herself went through the miracle of birth twice and understood Mr. Diggle's partner completely.

"We'll do just that. Is far more amusing than just demounting the claim. Wish my job was always this easy."

Felicity laughed and then stood up. It was time to get to work. She was already a bit late, although she wasn't sure if it counted as being late since she was in the building the entire time, just not on her station at the executive floor. She wished Julie a good day, and walked towards the elevator.

Halfway to her destination she noticed the curious looks, and just rolled her eyes. In a few hours the
big exclusive will be revealed as nothing but a form of click bait for those who though a tabloid would actually publish confirmed facts.

Oliver was already in his office when Felicity reached the executive floor, but instead of doing actual job his nose was in a tabloid. Something that made her roll her eyes. She honestly had no idea how he even found out about the article, or what the hell possessed him to buy the damn tabloid.

If someone got a shot of him buying it... it would only serve as wing under Starling Scandal's wings. And the last thing they should do is encourage those creeps.

But before she could comment on it something that wasn't supposed to be on her desk caught her attention. Right there next to her keyboard, on the place Oliver usually left a cup of coffee, was now a simple small box with a silver bow on top. The location told her whom it was from, but it wasn't any special date. It wasn't her Birthday, or some holiday. There was no reason for her to receive a gift.

Oliver, who noticed her presence the moment she stepped in front of the glass walls of his office, watched her move carefully towards her desk. He almost snorted in amusement at how careful she was, like the present might get startled and run away.

He actually stopped breathing when she picked up the small box, his palms sweating from nervousness. Oliver was aware she might see it as something it wasn't, as him trying to buy her forgiveness, or maybe simply buying her. But it wasn't. It was connected to his primal desire to keep her safe.

It was an odd way to show it, but certain things he learned last night bothered him.

Felicity took a deep breath and opened the box in a way someone would rip off the bandage; just to get things over with as fast as possible. But her initial suspicion was proven wrong, and she breathed out in relief. She was probably the only woman in Starling who is totally okay with not receiving a ring from Oliver Queen. Not yet anyway. She had no doubt someday everything will come together any they will be ready for that final step. But for now the necklace, she simply couldn't get herself to remove, was the only piece of jewelry she needed from her soulmate.

Felicity shook the content of the box in her hand and stared at the key chain. She wasn't an expert by any means, but it was a bit difficult not to recognize what these were when it was written right there on top of the logo.

"What the hell?" she muttered under her breath and moved to enter the office.

But Felicity only managed to make one step through the open door when Oliver spoke, "I want you to be safe. Actually, scratch that... I need you to be safe. And driving in a bus or a cab isn't going to cut it. I'm not taking any chances when it comes to you. So it's either this or I send a car to pick you up every morning."

"Or I lease a new one. I told you last night Oliver that I had a plan, I just needed to make an appointment in the bank and deal with everything. I told you that because you asked... not so you would buy me a Porsche!" she finished in what Diggle referred her loud voice.

"I didn't."

She huffed at his response and waived her hand, the keys and the golden key chain clinking together, "I'm holding the proof in my hand Oliver!"
"It's not a new car Felicity, and I didn't buy it." Oliver clarified slowly, before he stood up and moved around the glass desk to stand right in front of her, "It's the car I got for my 16th Birthday."

"Oh..." Felicity breathed out. If there was one thing she knew learned about guys while surrounded by them at MIT it was that the first car was more important then the first girlfriend.

"It's in perfect condition, of course. All the cars in our garage go through yearly maintenance checks, and-

"You are giving me your first car." Felicity cut him off once she regained her voice.

It was obvious she knew how big of a deal that was, but Oliver just shrugged, "It matters to me, but you matter more."

Those kind of statement that made it extremely hard for Felicity not to kiss him senseless. And if his small smile was a hint then he knew exactly what he was doing to her. The cocky bastard.

"So exactly what kind of car is it?" she knew the manufacturer, but there were new models produced every single year. Quick calculation told her it was something from late 90s, considering his family's financial status. The Queen's were a family that bought only the best of the best.

Oliver's voice startled Felicity out of her musings, and a rather uncomfortable thought that occurred to her, "It's a 1999 Porsche Boxster."

Felicity's face was grim as she voiced her concern, needing to know, but fearing the answer at the same time, "Did my mark ever burned because of something that happened in the back seat?"

A shadow of shame darkened Oliver's eyes, and he looked at the floor for a moment, before focusing back on his soulmate, "Never. It doesn't even have a back seat, and the only girl I ever drove in it was Thea. Of course she was six at the time, and I got pulled over by the police, which led to my mother reading me the riot act." Oliver took a deep breath and continued, "I'm not going to lie to you and say I never invited a girl for a ride, cause I did. I was back again with Laurel at that time and thought she would think it was as awesome as I did. But she refused cause it was a convertible and-

"Whoa!" Felicity butted in, "A convertible? Seriously? How can someone say no to driving in one? The feeling of wind in your hair while you are driving off into the sunset... I always wanted to experience that. Although, it's a bit impractical in rain."

"It has a soft roof, so you don't have to worry about the weather. It also has heated seats, and no blood stains anywhere." Felicity snorted at the mention of the fact he managed to squeeze into the backseat of her mini. As scary as that evening was, with him flat-lining, it was a start of something amazing.

"Okay." she finally asked.

"Okay?" Oliver asked, just for clarification, "You accept the car? Cause it's already waiting for you downstairs. I drove it to work this morning."

"Yes. Because I understand if I'm not safe you'll do something stupid. And don't even try and deny it. Also I'm also driving us to the Foundry tonight. I want to check on those searches I left running about-

Felicity phone beeped and initially she expected it to be related to the article, or possibly the official statement the PR department will issue, but that wasn't the case. Instead it were the computers in the Foundry signaling the searches were completed and there were viable results found. She rushed towards her desk, Oliver right on her heels.
"Did something happened?" he asked after stepping behind her, without thinking taking the same position he takes every evening down in the lair. It was the most natural thing to do.

"Yeah. I just need to access my babies for results." Felicity kept the servers under Verdant protected with some heavy firewalls and ensured she could access them remotely from her work computer in Queen Consolidated, "Here we go. According to the files from Starling General morgue two people died in that particular apartment used by the Red Archer as her lair. Gloria Hayman and Jesse Ruckert. I got nothing interesting on Miss Hayman but... oh, wow... um... so... I searched in any database I could think of and apparently City Hall records had a scheduled date for a civil ceremony for Jesse Ruckert and Carrie Cutter two days after the Undertaking."

"Which is two days after he died in another woman's apartment." Oliver added, and then remembering the fallen beams and the blood splatter on the wall that could rival the best horror movie, "And more importantly in another woman's bed."

"It's not conclusive, but it's the best clue we got." Felicity pointed out.

Oliver nodded in agreement, "Do a search on Carrie Cutter just in case."

"It will have to wait till tonight." Felicity turned in her chair to face Oliver, "You need to get in your office and get working on that paperwork. I can't keep forging your signature... which I have never done... ever. You have an hour and then you need to meet with the legal department to discuss Isabel's shares."

Oliver nodded and moved to leave, but noticed Felicity turned back towards the computer screen and was now accessing what seemed to be QC surveillance feed. Something she didn't actually had the reason to do right now, "What are you doing?"

"You parked in big bosses lot, right? That one has good camera coverage."

"Felicity?" he breathed out her name.

"Oliver..." the looked at him like he was supposed to know why she was doing it, like it was the most obvious thing. But he didn't, so she clarified with a smile, "I'm taking a peek at my new car."
First the flu, and then the mind-numbing toothache, but I finally finished the chapter! I have a feeling some readers will have an issue with a certain thing that will happen in it, but it had to happen otherwise I would never finish the story. My goal is to complete it by the end of June, before my 6 week long trip, and then once I'm back I would start working on a new one. Keep your fingers crossed I make that deadline.

Felicity's middle name wasn't Multitasking. It was Meghan. But she was still an expert at it, which was a good thing, because her boys counted on her to be able do two or more things at once. And tonight that meant not only doing her usual job of keeping an eye on the crime scene of Starling city, which was usually more active than its party scene, but also start a series of searches that would dig out anything and everything about one Carrie Cutter.

What she found earlier wasn't conclusive, but it was the best lead they got so far. Now all she needed to do is find opportunity, motive, and murder weapon, and out of those three things the middle one is what got her most perplexed. Why the heck would that woman kill Isabel Rochev?

She hoped somewhere among the info her searches will produce is an explanation to that, because right now it just didn't make any sense.

Once the algorithms were working Felicity threw her attention on another project, a personal one. Earlier she parked behind Verdant, on her usual spot, and then had a small freakout at the thought of leaving the car there unsupervised. Apart from the emotional value it wasn't all that expensive, although it must have been when it was brand new, but it was Oliver's first car, and now her second one. And on top of that it was a Porsche. And she wasn't interested in knowing if those are interesting to car thieves; although they are probably not as picky as she is thinking, and don't actually chose just focus on one brand.

Be as it is once Felicity calmed down she already started to make plans on upgrading the security, installing something that would allow her to turn off the engine with her phone. But while she knew technology she wasn't so savvy when it came to cars. Hence the intense research into different apps that seem to be focused on exactly what she needed.

The blonde was so involved in her research she practically jumped out of her chair when someone touched her shoulder.

"Whoa... sorry." Diggle mumbled when he realized she didn't hear him enter the Foundry. Truth be told he should have expected it, after all when she was looking at the computer screen and in the zone, as she likes to call it, she is completely unaware of her surroundings and people coming and going.

One time, appropriately on April 1st, Oliver suggested they rearrange the lair behind her and wait to see what happens. It was a good idea until they realized that would require moving heavy stuff, and that just wasn't worth the laugh, not after a grueling evening out in the streets.
"Seriously, Dig... why can't you wear squeaking shoes? Or a cow bell? Or... something?" Felicity was struggling to talk while she tried to catch her breath. Her heart was racing, and not in the good way, like when Oliver entered the room and smiled at her.

Just as that entered her mind the lock signaled the door was unlocked and the subject of her thoughts, and a few dreams but that is beside the point, walked down the stairs and did exactly what she was anticipated he would do. He smiled brightly, and Felicity couldn't help it but smile back.

Diggle cleared his throat, and broke the moment, a smug smile on his face making both his friends scowl at him.

"So..." Oliver started to speak, but paused cause he didn't know what to say. That only made his friend's smile wider.

The archer sighed in relief when the computer pinged, drawing Diggle's attention away from him. He was well aware he looked at Felicity like she was his sun and moon and all other celestial objects. He just couldn't help it, and that obviously amused Dig.

"Oh, wow..." Felicity muttered under her breath, her eyes moving on the text written on the central screen of her station. Since Carrie Cutter wasn't a criminal mastermind she didn't spend time and money wiping her past from the net, making herself appear squeaky clean. Well she was clean, there wasn't even a parking ticket to her name, but there was something else particularly interesting.

"Who is she?" Diggle asked, as he watched the screen over her shoulder, and Felicity remembered he wasn't in the office when she got initial results from her searcher on the apartment that's been used as the red archer's lair.

"Our best suspect. Dig, meet Carrie Hartnell Cutter, age 27. Quite successful in gymnastic competitions her early years, before she switched to archers in 2004. She was apparently even better in launching pointy things at static targets because she participated in trials for Olympics in London two years ago, but didn't qualify. According to a lovely engagement announcement in The Starling City Star, something no one does anymore these days, she was engaged to her soulmate Jesse Ruckert. And this is where things get ugly. " Felicity turned in her chair and looked at Diggle, "That apartment you and Oliver visited? Red archer's lair? That's where Jesse died. It belonged to a woman named Gloria Hayman and she wasn't in any way related to either Carrie or Jesse."

"They were lovers." Oliver commented and Felicity nodded at his words.

"That was my presumption too. Why else would he be in her apartment, in a middle of the night, two days before his wedding was set to happen?" she frowned slightly at a thought that just didn't make sense, "But the hit list..." she muttered.

"It doesn't make sense." Oliver finished for her.

Diggle, who was watching them in a way one would watch a tennis match, shook his head at how ridiculous they were sometimes, before correcting them, "Actually it does." at Felicity's confused 'huh' he clarified, "She was caught surprised in the worst way possible. Imagine being called into the morgue to identify your fiance's body only to learn he died in another woman's bed."

"Ummm..." Felicity glanced towards Oliver, who looked angry Diggle would even suggest such a thing, and the older man wasn't sure if it was because of dying or cheating part of his example.

"Anyway..." Diggle cleared his throat again, he seemed to be doing that a lot tonight, "That must have made her angry, which is understandable. And she would want to revenge, which is also
understandable. But the woman who is at fault for her soulmate being in the middle of the Glades is also dead, so she can't exactly take her revenge, unless you counting spitting on her grave. So she projected... on you." he sent Felicity a serious look, "I am mostly working on presumptions here, but I think she wants to ensure you get a happy ending that was taken from her. The women on the wall, the hit list, they are to you what Gloria Hayman was to her."

"That's insane!" Felicity exclaimed, "I don't want some random chick Oliver picked up at some club to end up with an arrow in her heart! She was probably only in it so she could say she fucked Ollie Queen!"

If Oliver wasn't agreeing with that assessment of his sex life before the island he wasn't saying showing it in any way. Instead he just watched them as they juggled ideas and assumptions. Unfortunately none of these things will get them any closer to actually finding anything concrete, so far everything said is just guessing. There is no solid evidence, just circumstantial stuff.

Several minutes later, while Felicity was busy sending a text to detective Lance to update him on her finds, Oliver and Diggle were getting ready for a bit of training. After checking his phone again, and placing him on the ground just off the black mats they were standing on, Dig was ready. Oliver raised an eyebrow and his friend sighed.

"My girls are supposed to be discharged today, but the doctor wanted to wait until after the evening rounds just to make sure everything is alright. And then Lyla called earlier to inform me the doctor that is supposed to sign her papers was called away cause of an emergency, and the other one is refusing to sign them cause she isn't his patient. The call could come any minute now."

"Maybe we should skip training them." Oliver offered, "That way you can be ready to take off right away instead of having to wash up and change."

"Nah, I need the distraction right now." Diggle said, before launching an attack, "I've been meaning to ask what your car is looking for in the lot behind the club. Are you making space in the mansion garage for a new ride? And why was it here before you were?"

"Cause it's my car now." Felicity offered an explanation, and a moment later a hard slap was hears. Turning around in her chair so she was facing the mats she could see Oliver rubbing his shoulder while Diggle was glaring at him, "What just happened?"

Dig pointed at finger at his friend, his gaze serious, "Did you seriously tried to buy forgiveness-"

"No!" Oliver snapped, not giving him the opportunity to finish the question. He didn't need to hear it to know what Diggle wanted to ask, "Her Mini is gone and she's been taking a cab. You said yourself something needed to be done about that."

"I said you should talk to her about it." Diggle pointed out.

Felicity pointing out that 'her' is right here, can hear them, and speak for herself, but as usual when the two men were in this mood they ignored her completely, and instead continued with their Mexican standoff with Escrima sticks.

"I talked to her, got the explanation why she hasn't got a new car yet, and then gave her one of mine. Is me wanting my soulmate to be safe really that big of a deal?" Oliver was annoyed more then angry with his friend. He expected Diggle to understand that he sometimes steamrolled through issues to get his way. It wasn't the best way to do things, but it brought results.

"Okay... so, Oliver has an control issues when it comes to people he cares for, and things he can't
control, like a chance a cab driver is a creep, freak him out. At the same time Diggle is on the edge
due to his phone still isn't ringing, but should know better than to take out his frustration on the wrong
person. Glad we had this chat and cleared things. Can we change the subject now? Please?"

Both men turned to look towards the blonde, and identical sheepish expressions on heir faces. She
noded, pleased things were indeed resolved, before turning back towards her computers. The sound
of rhythmical hits a familiar background she is so used to while working it's sometimes strange to be
down here surrounded by silence. Those are the only times when Felicity would use her precious
computers for something other than vigilante business, namely for streaming some soft music.

A phone did in fact ring a few minutes later, but it wasn't Diggle's, much to his chagrin. Instead
Felicity accepted the call and greeted detective Lance. After only a few moments her expression
changed from serious to totally confused, before she pulled her phone away from her ear and looked
at the screen. Only when she placed it back on the desk did she turned to look at the two men.

"What was that?" Oliver was the one who voiced the question that both of them were thinking.

"Lance finally saw the text I sent him. And apparently now is not the good time to talk so he'll call
me again later." she explained, "Do you think he has a day of? An actual day when he's now
working?"

Oliver shrugged to that, and looked at Diggle who offered an explanation, "Maybe he's on a date."

Felicity opened and closed her mouth a few times, not sure what to say to that, before she muttered,
"It's no less weird thinking about Lance on a date than it is thinking about my mother on one. And
speaking of mothers..." she focused on Oliver, "How did the dinner go? I have to admit I never had
anyone call the office every hour on the hour just to ensure you are on time for an appointment. Your
mom is certainly one of a kind."

Unfortunately right before she asked the two men returned to their sparing, so the question caught
Oliver by surprise, giving Diggle an opportunity for another good hit that echoed through the
Foundry.

Oliver's dear-in-headlights look was surprising, and but not as much as his words, "My mom
informed me she's been in contact with QC board members as well as Walter about a candidate for
the Vice President position. She told me wants to keep it in the family."

"So she's returning to the company?" Felicity asked, curious what it would be link to work with
Moira now. Before things were really tense, and quite awkward considering her ability to say the
wrong thing, but the Queen matriarch now had completely different kind of stance towards her since
her mark was identified as identical to Oliver's.

"Ah... no." Oliver took a deep breath before adding, "She wants you to get promoted to that
position."

Felicity gaped at him in shock for a moment, before a shrill ringtone broke the silence, and Diggle
practically dived for his phone.

"I'll be there in twenty." he said shortly, before disconnecting and looking between his friends. Now
was either not the good time to leave them alone, or the best time to leave them alone, and he
honestly couldn't assess the situation correctly right now.

Oliver solved that dilemma for him though, when he said, "Go and drive your girls home. Don't
worry about vigilantating tonight, I'll just go on a short patrol."
Diggle nodded and rushed to the bathroom in the back to wash off the sweat quickly and change back into normal clothes, before he left to do as his friend said and drove his soulmate and their daughter home. But he couldn't help himself for stopping next to Felicity’s chair, on his way out, and murmured to her, "I'm sure Oliver would do the whole engagement announcement in the newspaper thing, a sappy photo included, for you."

Felicity watched as Diggle was stomping up the stairs, ignoring the curious look Oliver was giving her. He was obviously curious about what Dig told her before leaving, since he couldn't hear it, but he was refraining from being nosy and asking. She appreciated it, mostly cause she wasn't ready right now to have confirmation that he would in fact do what Diggle said.

Although as a member of a prominent family such an announcement would be expected, and possibly required. Sometimes she forgot that her soulmate isn't the average Joe, but a billionaire heir.

Finally, after few moments of silence that followed Diggle's departure, she turned and focused on Oliver who was still standing on the mats and observing her, "So... Vice President. Is that even possible? I mean, I was IT grunt turned EA... a promotion like that will look bad, like you are giving it to me cause I'm your soulmate. It could damage the company."

Oliver dropped the Escrima stick on the ground, something that never happened cause he was very adamant that equipment gets returned back on its place after use. Right now a stick wasn't important. She was. So he walked towards the chair she was on, and squatted in front of her, "First of all this all happened behind my back while I was busy dealing with legal department. That went well, by the way. They are in contact with the executive of Isabel's estate, the shares will be sold to cover some things. And as majority owners the Queen family has precedence over other potential buyers."

"Oliver." Felicity said his name and he smiled. He now went off the subject, which was usually her thing to do, and she completely understood him. He was happy at the prospect of having Queen Consolidated back in family hands.

That seemed to be the key word today. Family.

"The thing is I had no idea my mother was planing this, but I completely agree. She told me she'll take care of the whole thing, and that I should focus on my job."

"She's a woman on a mission." Felicity mumbled, causing him to laugh. It was a pretty accurate description of his mother right now.

"Second of all once the company is back in our hands completely my mother wants to ensure something like this never happens again. Like I said before, she wants the most important important positions to be taken by family members."

"This seems like a good time to remind you I'm not a family member." Felicity said calmly, despite her heart racing. She could even feel her hands starting to sweat, and it was a rather yucky feeling.

Oliver looked uncomfortable for some reason, scratching the back of his neck, until she reached out and touched his arm. Then his eyes snapped back at her and she saw the blush that was covering his cheeks. And that made the blonde even more curious as to what he wasn't saying right now.

Finally Oliver relented and informed her of another thing Moira Queen did, being a woman on a mission and all that, "My mom visited the family vault recently... and took my grandmother's ring to be cleaned."

"Okay..." Felicity replied with a frown, not understanding what the big deal was.
"My grandmother's engagement ring." Oliver supplied the explanation a few moments later and then watched as his soulmate's eyes widened in shock.

"Oh." was the only thing that escaped her brightly painted lips. She did not expect that one.

Oliver was quick to reassure her there was nothing to worry about though. He knew that would be far too soon, that things were still tense sometimes between them, and that he still had redeem himself. But she couldn't but feel bad for him after he mumbled under his breath, "Even though some things I can never atone for."

She knew what he was thinking about. Which choice still lingered between them, preventing them from finding peace together. And she also knew he was right, there were some things she will never be able to forgive him. But that didn't mean they couldn't move past those issues and build a future together.

"Oliver." she tried to get his attention, but he was looking away from her. Looking at the floor, with a look of anguish on his face.

"The pain I felt the night Slade stabbed you in the heart paralyzed me. I couldn't think, I couldn't breathe, I have no idea how I managed to move to your side. I was stabbed, shot with arrows and bullets, burned and electrocuted... hell, I was even bitten by a shark... but nothing hurt as much as that burn. And afterward all I could feel was emptiness. There was something missing, I couldn't describe it, couldn't name it, but it was gone." Oliver closed his eyes tightly before he began to speak of that night, the very memory of it bringing forward the feeling of helplessness he felt seeing Slade holding a knife to her throat before he stabbed her in the heart. That was why he didn't see her move towards him slowly, didn't know she was by his side until she gently placed a hand on his shoulder, causing him to flinch, "I don't even remember the name of the first girl I was with. Her photo might be among those on the wall but I wouldn't know. I don't really remember half of these women. What does that say about me Felicity?"

"That Ollie Queen was a bastard." Felicity didn't even bothered sugarcoating it, there was no point really.

"He's still a part of me. That bastard. I wanted to believe he drowned, that I'm a changed man. But I was lying to myself."

He became aware of her mark shape after the mess with Helena, and after mixing business and pleasure with McKenna, which means he knew she was the one meant for him the night before the Undertaking when he went to Laurel's apartment, in Russia, and lastly when he rekindled the affair with the younger Lance sister. That choice if the one he is most ashamed of, a fact he is repeating over and over to himself, and he knew if Sara returned tomorrow she would be welcomed in his life as a friend, and as a team member, but only if Felicity is alright with that.

Oh, he knew his soulmate would say that isn't for her to decide, and that she doesn't want to put him in a position where he has to chose between her and someone he knew for years, but the fact is she was his priority. If it would make her uncomfortable then it wouldn't be happening.

"Oliver..." she whispered his name and moved her hand to take his, but he moved away. And that hurt almost as much as the pain in her mark.

No matter how angry she was at him, Felicity knew with certainty he was even angrier at himself. And it showed in times like these when his past choices were dragged out again. She watched Oliver as he moved towards the puppet that currently wore his suit, the tension in his muscles revealing he was on the edge. He would go out in the streets looking for a fight, looking for someone to punch,
and he would be externally reckless in the process.

"I'm going on patrol." he said barely loud enough for her to hear, and Felicity knew she had to act right now.

"Will you go out on a date with me?" it was the first thing she could think of to say, and the moment the words were out of her mouth she bit her bottom lip. It was a nervous habit that she just couldn't get rid of.

Oliver froze completely, before slowly turning back towards her, his voice revealing his nervousness as he asked "What?"

"A date. We were supposed to go before, but then Isabel returned, and then other stuff happened and it just got postponed... and I want us to go on a date. Don't you?" Felicity wasn't even aware she was keeping her fingers crossed. Oliver however saw it and breathed out a laugh. Only he go him to do that.

"I would love to. We could go out and celebrate once your promotion is official and public knowledge. I think my mom is aiming at having everything done by Friday, so in four days." Oliver offered an idea, and Felicity nodded in agreement, before informing him a date doesn't only have to happen when there is something to celebrate, "But it will." Oliver said calmly, "Every time we go out on a date it will be a celebration of the fact you have given me another chance. And I-"

"I forgive you." Felicity blurted out, cutting him off.

Oliver gaped at her for a second before breathing out a shocked, "What?"

"I forgive you. For everything." she elaborated, finally feeling free.

Oliver on the other hand still gaped at her in shock, "You don't have to do that."

"I know." Felicity said with a shrug, "But I also know that being soulmates, having identical marks, doesn't mean we have to be together. There is no law saying it has to happen, there never was. We call it fate's choice, but fate has nothing to do with it. The mark is simply the sign of biologically most fitting match. Ours are a bit weirder, being mirror marks and all, but if they were regular ones I would never know about your past partners. I waited cause I was raised by a hopeless romantic, but not everyone thinks that way. People have a lover, or a partner, or even a spouse who isn't their soulmate. Your parents cheated. My father died. There is guaranteed happy ending once you found your soulmate. No love on first sight and a lifetime of happiness." Felicity paused, trying to catch her breath. All these things were on her chest for so long, it felt great finally saying them. It was probably the strangest time and place to do it, but it had to happen. For them to finally move forward she had to say it, "When I first met you I... it was probably a crush, but then I got to properly get to know you and it grew into more. A whole lot more. Not because I somehow subconsciously sensed that you are my soulmate... that didn't happened. I'm not sure that's even possible. I simply got to know the man behind all those masks you use to prevent other people from seeing how you changed. Even if you weren't my soulmate my feelings would still be present."

"When I first met you I smiled for the first time in years. But I didn't loved you instantaneously. That came with time." Oliver interrupted her, not knowing what to feel about everything she just said. He was happy because it was a step in the right direction, but at the same time it felt like he was getting away with everything far too easy, "Felicity... even if you weren't my soulmate, if they didn't exist, I am absolutely certain that eventually I would tell you how I feel about you. Because keeping it all bottled up inside me was becoming harder and harder with each day. I don't love you because of the crown shaped mark on your shoulder. I love you because you are the kindest, brightest person that
ever entered my life. You believe I can be more without pressuring me to be that person. You are right that being soulmates doesn't mean happy ending. But I want that for us, because I simply can't see myself with anyone else. Now that I got to know and love you all other women fade in comparison."

"I don't want you to spend your life trying to redeem yourself. I mean... is there a level of redemption you have to achieve to be forgiven? Do you have to give me one of your kidneys, or die for me? How do I decide how much making up for your past decisions is enough? You didn't tell me about your past, because you didn't feel worthy of me back then. I honestly can't say how I would react if I learned about them first. Maybe I would have keep quiet too, leave that conversation aside for later so that we... so that you can focus on the mission without yet another complication. And Sara... that one is still painful, because it happened right after you told me you couldn't be with someone. But you know what? You said you love me. Not Sara, not Laurel. Me. Oliver, I don't want to waste precious time on the past, when the future is a better thing to think about."

Oliver didn't stay away this time. Instead he moved to her side in a heartbeat and just wrapped his hands around Felicity's smaller form. Her hands right away moved around his waist, her head resting on his shoulder. She felt him kiss the top of her head, before tightening the hug. All those muscles moving and constructing... yum.

"I do love you. No one else. I'll make reservations for our date. Is Italian okay? We can go to Table Salt, but I thought you might want something more intimate." Oliver was the first one to break the silence.

Felicity smiled, and Oliver trembled. He could feel her lips move since they were almost touching his neck, and that feeling was exhilarating, "Italian is fine." she finally replied.

"I should really go on patrol." Oliver said, but didn't move to get out of the hug. Felicity only hummed her response, but she also refused to let go. Finally he sighed and snuggled into her embrace, "A few more minutes won't make a difference." yet again he got a hum as response. And then he suggested she head's home early.

Felicity then pulled out of the hug, looked at him seriously, and in a very calm and collected voice informed him, "Oliver, there is no way you are going out on patrol without backup."

"Dig's a bit busy right now." he reminded he.

But he got a snort in response, something that confused him momentarily, before she elaborated, "I meant me. I might not be out in the city with you, but I'll be right here watching over you."

The additional searcher were running in the background as Felicity upgraded her system. It was important to always keep it up to date to prevent some government agency from locating them. She doubted any of them were actually interested in spending manpower and resources to locate and track down Starling city vigilante, but one may never know. She wasn't risking her boys' safety and freedom by postponing something that only takes a few hours; it's not like she had anything better to do right now anyway. Diggle was already home with his girls by now, and Oliver was out there in the Glades.

Blue eyes landed on a far right screen that showed the city map with a single green dot blinking and moving in the general direction of Verdant. Felicity checked the watch and noticed it was already past eleven, which isn't late for their usual nights but it's good to get home before midnight from time to time.
A comm in her ear came to life, and she heard Oliver's voice, still altered with a voice scrambler as clear as if he was standing right next to her, "Everything is quiet. I'm coming back."

"I'm done as well. Heading home as soon as I turn off most of my computers." Felicity informed him, wondering if he'll ask that she waits for him. He didn't. Just asked her to drive home safely. Instantly she had to tease, "Are you saying that because of your precious car?"

A silence on the other side made Felicity wonder if she said something wrong, but she really didn't think that she did. Finally Oliver spoke, "The car is meaningless. You are my one and only. My precious."

Felicity made a face, and after realizing he couldn't see it, asked, "Did you honestly just quoted Golum?"

"Whom?" a confused question moments later had the blonde shook her head.

"Never mind. I'm going through the club, gonna greet Thea."

"If Roy ask why you are there-" Oliver started but was cut off halfway through.

"I was in the office dealing with the computer system. The standard excuse that is starting to get old. You really should tell him the truth so that They doesn't have to lie to him anymore. I'm certain she hates doing that to her soulmate."

Oliver hummed under his breath before saying he will think about it. Felicity simply rolled her eyes at his stubbornness. Roy Harper wasn't some random dude from the Glades. He was important to Thea, and in extent to the whole family. She had a feeling there would need to be another serious conversation between them in the near future.

Thea was behind a bar when Felicity stepped into the always crowded club. The lights were flashing, illuminating the crowd on the dance floor that moved with the bass. She wasn't much of a club person, quite ironic considering she spent pretty much every night within the premises of one, just a floor below. She was also surrounded by pointy things every night, another thing that isn't really her thing.

The music was good though, and the moves she observed contagious, so she found herself swaying as she walked towards the young heiress that smiled widely the moment she noticed her. Roy, who was currently wearing a black button up, and looking uncomfortable in it, placed a round platter on the bar and sighed. He liked the job, he was literally getting paid to spend time with his girlfriend, but there were girls out there that are seriously getting on his nerves. What he wouldn't give to be able to change into his red hoodie and a scowl, but he promised Thea he would look presentable for the customers.

He noticed the blonde as well, walking out of the hallway that led to storeroom and offices upstairs. She wasn't dressed for clubbing, but rather for office. Also Oliver wasn't present tonight. If he was then Felicity Smoak in employees only area would simply mean she and her soulmate were spending some quality time together. He couldn't fault them for that, he and Thea were like that as well. Only not somewhere they could get busted, or in an area other people use as well, the manager office for instance.

Thea obviously didn't share his opinion cause she hugged Felicity the moment the blonde was near, before yelling over the loud music, "Congratulations on the promotion! Does my mom have good ideas or what?!"
"I'm not promoted yet!" Felicity yelled back, but the brunette just waved her hand like her rise in the company is already settled and only needs to be announced, "By the way, your cameras are working without a glitch again!"

Thea frowned momentarily, before her eyes widened and she nodded, "Thanks for the help! Ollie said you can fix just about anything!"

"If it has wires then I'm your girl! Well, not your girl! I wasn't hitting on you, or anything like that! I'm the one to call!" Felicity was flustered by the time she finished speaking and Thea was giggling like a little girl. Roy too was watching his soulmate, completely besotted with her. Finally the blonde smiled and announced, "Well, I'm off then!"

"I'll escort you to your car! You still park in the back, right?! I noticed your little red car there a few times!" Roy offered. It was partially cause he wanted to ensure her safety, and partially to get away from some of the club's more persistent guests.

Some girls considered it a game to see which one could get his attention, and something extra, and hurt Thea. One actually straight out informed him Oliver is a reason her brother's heart got broken, Roy assumed the story also contained a girl that the billionaire heir went after, and she wanted to ensure Ollie Queen learn what that is like when your sibling is hurting. Needless to say Roy now avoided her in a wide arch, since her plan didn't exactly qualified for her to removed from premises and not allowed entrance ever again. Thea, who knew of the plan, thought it was hilarious. And petty. And kind of pathetic, if the chick honestly believed she had a chance with Roy, even for a night.

"Oh My God! The car! I couldn't believe it when I learned Ollie gave you his first car, now that your is busted! It was like his baby!"

"Seriously?!!" Roy looked at the blonde, who just shrugged, "Now I seriously have to come with you!"

Roy was chatting about cars, one of few things that never really interested Felicity. She knew how to change a tire, and check for oil and water levels, she also knew you could fix a small hole in a cooler by cracking an egg into it according to Mythbusters, but that was where her knowledge ended. But Roy was enthusiastic and nice to walk her out to ensure she is safe, and she knew full well what it felt like when you wanted to share something you knew with another person but were shrugged off, so she paid attention to what he was saying. Who knows, maybe she'll learn something new.

"And here it is." she waived towards the silver car all alone in the lot behind the club. It was pretty dark here, the lights that illuminated the front of Verdant not helping much. The moonlight did a good job though, and they could see the vehicle in all its glory. And Roy was enamored.

"You so need to take me for a ride!" he spoke as he started to circle around the car, but was startled at the sound coming from behind him.

Felicity's eyes widened at the shadowy figure standing by the fence that remained from the times when the building was still a successful factory. The person wasn't tall, and had long hair, which was a clue it was in fact a woman. Not something threatening, at least it would be if she didn't have a long and narrow item in her left hand, an item Felicity didn't need to see clearly to recognize. She was around one night after night.

"You will not get in a way of their happiness." the threat came just as Roy started to turn around to see what the hell was there. But he never got to face the intruder, not before he got blinded by a sudden pain in his side. Felicity shrieked in shock a heartbeat later, and possibly yelled at the
unknown person to stop, he wasn't completely sure.

Blindly he reached out for his side to feel what the hell happened, expecting wet blood and a gunshot wound. Instead he felt a long shaft sticking out and cursed. Removing that will hurt like a bitch, and then Thea will force him for another shopping trip to replace the ruined shirt. He wasn't sure what will be worse experience.

"Roy, wait!" he heard Felicity shout, but didn't really understood what she wanted of him. He wasn't doing anything wrong, just removing this thing that wasn't supposed to be there. He felt her hand on his, trying to get him to stop, but he was stronger. He did what he wanted.

Later on he will realize it might have been a really bad idea, but in that moment all Roy wanted was to get the damn arrow out. So he grabbed the long shaft and pulled. And the pain several times worse than the one when the damn thing went it engulfed him.

Last thing that registered before he lost consciousness were an actual curse leaving Felicity's lips as he dropped on the ground at her feet, and a sound of a bike slowing down and stopping close by. Then he was out cold.

Oliver would lie if he said he rushed back to the Foundry because he had a bad feeling. Quite the opposite. He haven't felt this happy in a long time. He simply wanted to get done with the day and get back to the mansion and just sleep. As strange as it sounded he simply wanted to go to sleep as soon as possible so that tomorrow would come sooner. He haven't had that urge since he was a child.

Felicity changed a lot tonight, made him look forward to the future for the first time in months.

His good mood was ruined quickly after he made a sharp turn and drove into the dark parking lot behind Verdant. Felicity was still there, right in front of the car, kneeling on the concrete and pressing tightly on Roy's stomach. Her head snapped up at the sound of his bike coming closer, and he could see the panic in her eyes.

After that Oliver moved automatic. He didn't ask what happened, the red fletched arrow on the ground told him what he needed to know. He didn't even stop to see if the red archer was still present, trusting Felicity would say something if she was. Instead he grabbed hold of Roy, putting the younger man's arm over his shoulder, careful of the wound at the side of his abdomen. It didn't looked too bad, but according to Felicity he wasn't exactly the right person to assess what classifies as a serious injury.

"Hospital or-"

"Downstairs." Felicity replied, "We're in Glades."

Oliver nodded in agreement, knowing she meant the fact none of the emergency services actually rushed to help whomever needed their assistance in this part of the city. The police was present when they knew something big was going on, and they might be there faster tonight if informed the red archer struck again, but he wasn't risking Roy's life over a maybe.

Felicity ran downstairs in front of him, turning on the lights and gathering medical supplies. She considered sending a quick text to Thea, letting her know what's going on so she doesn't worry about the fact Roy went out and still hasn't returned to work.

"She was here?" Oliver asks suddenly, interrupting the tense silence as he poked and probed at Roy's wound, checking out the exact damage. Felicity could see he was seriously displeased with the fact he would do something so stupid like ripping out the arrow. If not done right and carefully he could
have easily done more damage to himself than the crazy archer who shot at him in the first place.

"Yeah. I'll check the back camera once Roy is no longer bleeding. And I suppose I should call Lance again to let him know about this." the blonde pressed a small stack of gauze on the wound while Oliver reached for a needle and thread, "Aren't you giving him something for the pain?"

Blue eyes looked at her before landing on the unconscious body on the med table, "He's out cold."

Felicity huffed, "He's not you. Roy is a kid, not a hardcore deserted island survivor made vigilante. Poke him with a needle and he just might wake up and punch you."

A snort was a response to her words, and Felicity laughed. She also got him to do what she wanted, because moments later Oliver took one of the bottles from the top drawer of the toolbox they used for medical equipment and injected Roy with local analgetic. It took only few minutes for the area to be completely numb, so while Oliver was busy suturing the wound that apparently looked worse than it actually was Felicity took that time to contact Thea.

"Shouldn't we get him to a hospital?" was the first thing the young heiress asked after barging downstairs in her brother's secret lair, "You aren't exactly qualified to do that Ollie. What if he has internal bleeding? What if an artery was nicked and he bleeds out into his abdominal cavity? What if-"

"Thea, calm down." Oliver breathed out, "He was bleeding badly because he was stupid enough to rip out the arrow that was-"

"Wait? An arrow? Did you shot my boyfriend? Ollie, I swear I will-"

"It wasn't me!" the shout was meant to interrupt Thea's ranting, but it sounded more like Oliver was panicking and trying to protect himself from his sister's anger. And that made Felicity snicker, but when the siblings looked at her her face became expressionless and she turned towards her computers casually.

Thea rolled the extra chair set next to Felicity's station and took a seat next to the metal table. She reached out and took Roy's hand in hers, silently begging him to wake up. Although possibly after her brother is done suturing his wound. It wasn't foreign to her that her boyfriend had a thing with needles, and would probably freak out at the sight of Oliver Queen dressed in his vigilante gear sticking one in his stomach.

"What happened?" she finally asked, her voice barely louder than a whisper.

Still Oliver heard her and responded, "He was shot by the archer that killed Isabel Rochev."

That flabbergasted the young heiress, "Why? I get why her... she was a bitch. But why Roy?"

"She said..." Felicity took a deep breath and turned over her shoulder to look at the siblings, "She said she didn't want Roy to get between us. I presume she meant Oliver and me."

"Seriously?" Thea gaped at her, "She really is insane."

Roy groaned, his back was killing him. He didn't know what the hell he was lying on, only that it was freaking uncomfortably hard. His side was throbbing too, and as he remembered what happened earlier his eyes opened wide. There was a woman waiting in the shadows, and she was armed with a bow. And she fucking shot him.

A pressure on his arm made him turn his head to see what was going on, and he smiled slightly at the sight of his soulmate sleeping, her head pillowed on his forearm. But then his eyes moved from her face to the background and they widened in shock.
He wasn't in the hospital, a fact he should have realized sooner considering this place didn't smell anything like disinfectant and medicine. Nope. Definitely not a hospital.

Not unless the doctors switched from drab blue scrubs to green leather.

Roy moved slightly, trying to raise himself on the elbow of his free arm, when movement he noticed out of the corner of his eye stopped him. And then he blinked a few times, because it just didn't make any sense.

"Dude, what the hell?" he breathed out as his brain finally registered he was seeing Oliver Queen, Thea's older and overprotective brother, standing up from behind a grinding stone and slowly approaching him.

"You shouldn't move much, or you'll end up ripping out your stitches." Oliver said as he stepped next to the bed. From somewhere behind they could hear Felicity pointing out Oliver should start following his own advices, but her jab was ignored for the moment.

"You are the Arrow." Roy said. It wasn't a question, still Oliver nodded. Roy took a deep breath before saying, "And before that you were the Hood. You saved my life." and then another thought occurred to him, "And Thea knew."

"No." Felicity replied, her voice a bit harder and louder which resulted in the woman they were talking about waking up.

She rubbed her eyes absently, before she looked up and saw her boyfriend watching her closely. Instantly Thea was on her feet, smiling widely at him, "Roy! I'm so glad you are awake. I was worried cause it was Ollie who was patching you up and he's not exactly McDreamy... although if you ask Felicity he might be."

The blonde just cleared her throat at that, and Oliver smiled at her. He didn't know what his sister was talking about, but it brought a blush on her cheeks. Felicity just rolled her eyes at him, but smiling at the same time.

"Your brother is the vigilante." Roy repeated his previous words, and Thea looked at the floor.

"I'm sorry. I feel like a hypocrite right now, lying to you when I preached honesty in a relationship. But it truly wasn't my secret to tell."

Choosing to help his sister a bit Oliver offered additional explanation, "I insisted that she doesn't tell you after she learned the truth. I am the one with trust issues."

Roy nodded in understanding, now also realizing why Oliver was so pissed at him when he tried to track down the Hood to thank him. He sometimes dragged Thea with him, and in doing so placed her in danger. Those weren't his proudest moments.

"What the hell happened tonight? One moment I'm complimenting Blondie on her car and in the next my side is burning."

Before Oliver could answer Felicity butted in, "You were shot by an Olicity groupie." her words were followed by the usual 'we don't call it that' from Oliver, which she promptly ignored, "You were lucky that you were turning when she shot you, cause she missed any major organs. Not so lucky cause you chose to remove the arrow yourself."

Banging on the door startled everyone, and Oliver turned towards Felicity just as she remotely disengaged the lock. He knew what she had done, he was okay with it, but it was still odd to have
him down here.

And from the sight of it detective Lance agreed with that.

His sharp eyes looked around the large area, ignoring the people present for the time being, as he took in the equipment and the all-around setting of the basement. He was down here months ago, and it was looking completely different. It was a storage for a club, not a vigilante's secret lair like he initially suspected.

And he was right.

But this kids were faster at covering their tracks than he was at uncovering them.

Finally he focused on Felicity, only giving the Queen siblings and that kid Harper a nod of acknowledgment, "You said get here ASAP with instructions where to go. What was so important? Not that I mind finally seeing the Arrow cave. Plenty of incriminating evidence."

"You have bigger fishes to fry, detective." Felicity pointed out, "Like the red archer. She was here tonight, I'm presuming she did the same thing we did to get to her place and tracked the movement of the tracker in the arrow tip. Wanted to know why it left the police precinct and was moved to a club smack middle in the Glades. And she found Roy and me in the parking lot... where she promptly shot him."

Lance looked at the younger man, only now realizing he was shirtless and sporting a gauze on the side of his abdomen. Usually the hospital dealt with these kind of things, but it seems the vigilante team takes good care of their own.

"You got surveillance?" he asked after focusing on the blonde again. She nodded and started to type on the computer way too fast for him to realize what she was doing. It was crazy how fast kids these days typed, he was still old-school and used two fingers. It was slow, but it got the job done.

"I upgraded to night vision camera in the back a couple of months back cause there are no lights behind. And they show us this..."

Felicity let's the video roll, initially showing only two people standing next to a car and talking. And then moments later the third person appeared seemingly out of nowhere, shot one of them, and ran off in the direction of the side alley that led towards the tenement building. Those usually had parking lot and it was possible she left her car there.

"Do you have a better photo of her face, or an identification?" he asked, but frowned when Felicity and Oliver shared a look. It made him feel extremely uneasy, "You are not going to tell me again it's Laurel? Cause I'm not buying that for a second."

"I never said that detective. Only that her photo was absent." Oliver pointed out, but Lance didn't even look at him. He was completely focused on Felicity who returned back to typing.

"That was why I contacted you earlier tonight. I researched the apartment the red archer used as her lair and found out two people died there in the Undertaking."

"Yeah, the police found that out too. I'm still waiting on background searches of the pair."

"I can tell you right away that the woman isn't important. The man is. Jesse Ruckert was engaged to be married, but not to a woman who died with him. He was supposed to marry this woman... " with a few clicks Felicity had results of the search she did earlier tonight show up on the middle screen, "Carrie Cutter. Her ID photo is a match to the video of tonight's attack on Roy. She is your red
archer detective."

"I know her." he muttered under his breath, but Felicity heard him anyway.

She nodded her head, before revealing, "She is an intern in the District Attorney's office."

"Get me that video." Lance right away commanded, as he reached out for the phone in his pocket, "I'm getting a warrant for her arrest tonight, even if I have to wake up a judge."

Carrie was furious. She slammed the lid of her laptop shut and pushed away from the desk. First they find her place, her goal, and now they managed to identify her. She got careless tonight, made a rookie mistake, and it cost her.

Her plan was falling apart, has been ever since that disgusting brunette threatened Felicity Smoak. If not for her should could have stick to her plan, and start with the right one. But she had to prioritize and get rid of the bitch first, before moving to the 'girlfriend'.

Luckily her job allowed her some insights into what was going on in the DA office, so she knew right away when the police got a warrant for her arrest. They didn't know where she was, and that was her advantage. They didn't know whom she was after because she intentionally removed that particular photo from the wall. It probably puzzled them why it wasn't there among all the other whores.

Carrie turned and looked at the newspaper clipping on her bedside table. Laurel Lance smiling widely as she posed next to her billionaire heir boyfriend... who wasn't hers. He was never meant to be hers.

And Carrie will make sure she knows that before she kills her.
Chapter 22

Quentin Lance cursed when he realized where he was driving towards. He initially suspected it was a joke, because last year they searched the whole building from top to bottom, basement included, and didn't find anything. But now he realized they played him good, made him look like a fool for ever claiming that Oliver Queen was the Hood.

Truth be told he deserved everything the kid and his friends dished out back then. He was so blinded by his anger, nothing else mattered. Yes, the vigilante's actions were against the law, and as a cop he shouldn't think about it in any different way, but he had to admit the archer's presence made a difference in the Glades.

The detective glanced towards his phone that lied on the passenger seat of his car, the screen dark, but once unlocked it would show the message he needed to get inside the lair. He doubted Queen trusted him with this information, but it seemed Felicity did, otherwise she wouldn't send him a message about the existence of the back door so that he didn't have to go through the entire club.

He was fortunate Laurel went to the toilet just moments before the message arrived. His daughter knew he had a day off, and would certainly inquire what was going on and he didn't like lying to her. The fact he was keeping the real reason behind Sara's return to the League was still eating at him, but knowing the truth wouldn't do her any good. He was certain she wouldn't understand.

The front of the club was illuminated as always, people constantly entering and exiting, completely oblivious that below their feet is the base of probably most dangerous man in the city. Seeing the name sign now that he knew the truth made Lance shook his head at the ridiculousness of the whole thing. Talk about low-key rubbing the truth into everyone's faces. This time he chose not to attract attention and stop at the front curb, that was too much of a cop thing, and instead chose to park at the back where the back entrance was. Before the large lot was filled with trucks, heavy machinery and steel sheets ready for production. Now it was veiled in darkness, with only one car parked there.

And what a car that was.

Quentin exited his vehicle and looked at the silver car with a frown on his face. It looked familiar for some reason, and then it hit him. He remembered clearly when Hilton, who just became his partner back then, cut off a speeding sports car that Oliver behind the wheel, with his little sister, of all people, sitting next to him and screaming in delight as they drove way too fast down the main street. As usual Moira and Robert Queen ensured that mess is swept under the rub, but that was the last time he had seen that particular car. Later Laurel mentioned Oliver got a convertible for his Birthday, or and then grumbled about a convertible and how it was unsafe and some other things he was no longer listening. All he cared about was the fact his little girl didn't got in that car.

After a few more moments the detective shook his head, like he wanted to chase those old memories away, and got back into his own vehicle to get his phone. He ensured his car is locked, just in case, before moving towards the back wall.

Whoever designed this thing did a good job, because the door was barely visible, and only when he moved to stand right in front of it did Lance also noticed the pad hidden behind a perfectly placed dumpster that didn't stink like it was expected. That only served to convince him it was actually a prop. A bit too much, if you asked him, but then again it wasn't to expect anything less when you have a genius like Felicity Smoak working with you, and ensuring your safety. The girl didn't do anything partially, she always went all in. He will never forget the anguish in her voice in the night of the Undertaking when they learned there are two bombs, and that there is now way they could
Lance started to bang on the door. Apparently while he was trusted with the location, he wasn't trusted with the code that opened the door. A click told him the door was now unlocked, and a heartbeat later it opened automatically, but just enough for him to take hold of the edge and pull them open to enter. Once inside the detective pulled the door closed, and looked at the flight of metal stairs that led into the basement.

His sharp eyes looked around the large area, ignoring the people present for the time being, as he took in the equipment and the all-around setting of the basement. There was a tool box with a defibrillator on top of it on one side, which he guessed is used to ensure they don't have to go to a hospital and risk the doctors reporting suspicious injuries to the police. His eyes widened at the sight of the glass racks with neatly set arrows and one for the bow the vigilante used to hunt down criminals, and next to it the empty mannequin in glass case. He had a pretty good idea what usually hung on it. There was bunch of weird exercise equipment he couldn't name, obviously used by Queen to keep in shape so he can leap off buildings, and a desk with computer equipment far better than the one the police IT guys used, but then again all this was funded by a billionaire.

He was down here months ago, and it was looking completely different. It was a storage for a club, not a vigilante's secret lair like he initially suspected.

And he was right.

But this kids were faster at covering their tracks than he was at uncovering them.

Finally he focused on Felicity, only giving the Queen siblings and that kid Harper a nod of acknowledgment, "You said get here ASAP with instructions where to go. What was so important? Not that I mind finally seeing the Arrow cave. Plenty of incriminating evidence."

"You have bigger fishes to fry, detective." Felicity points out, "Like the red archer. She was here tonight, I'm presuming she did the same thing we did to get to her place and tracked the movement of the tracker in the arrow tip. Wanted to know why it left the police precinct and was moved to a club smack middle in the Glades. And she found Roy and me in the parking lot... where she promptly shot him."

Lance looked at the younger man, only now realizing he was shirtless and sporting a gauze on the side of his abdomen. Roy returned his gaze, not wavering even a bit, like he was silently daring him to say something about his presence in the vigilante base. His girlfriend was by his side, something that actually surprised Lance. He never considered that Oliver would reveal the truth to his family members.

"You got surveillance?" the detective asked after focusing on the blonde again. She nodded and started to type on the computer way too fast for him to realize what she was doing. It was crazy how fast kids these days typed, he was still old-school and used two fingers. It was slow, but it got the job done.

"I upgraded to night vision camera in the back a couple of months back cause there are no lights behind. And they show us this..."

Felicity let's the video roll, forcing him to push back the thought about how she got her hands on night vision camera and instead focus on the screen in front of him. It's initially showing only two people standing next to a car and talking. And then moments later the third person appeared seemingly out of nowhere, shot one of them, and ran off in the direction of the side alley that led towards the tenement building. Those usually had parking lot and it was possible she left her car
"Do you have a better photo of her face, or an identification?" he asked, but frowned when Felicity and Oliver shared a look. It made him feel extremely uneasy, "You are not going to tell me again it's Laurel? Cause I'm not buying that for a second."

"I never said that detective. Only that her photo was absent." Oliver pointed out, but Lance didn't even look at him. He was completely focused on Felicity who returned back to typing.

"That was why I contacted you earlier tonight. I researched the apartment the red archer used as her lair and found out two people died there in the Undertaking."

"Yeah, the police found that out too. I'm still waiting on background searches of the pair." the guys were doing decent job, but were a bit slow sometimes. He suspected it was due to the aged system in the precinct and the fact they couldn't just hack into databases like Felicity who worked outside of the law.

"I can tell you right away that the woman isn't important. The man is. Jesse Ruckert was engaged to be married, but not to a woman who died with him. He was supposed to marry this woman..." with a few clicks Felicity had results of the search she did earlier tonight show up on the middle screen, "Carrie Cutter. Her ID photo is a match to the video of tonight's attack on Roy. She is your red archer detective."

"I know her." he muttered under his breath, but Felicity heard him anyway.

She nodded her head, before revealing, "She is an intern in the District Attorney's office."

"Get me that video." Lance right away commanded, as he reached out for the phone in his pocket, "I'm getting a warrant for her arrest tonight, even if I have to wake up a judge."

He had dinner with his daughter earlier and they spend some time discussing the newest cases the police was dealing with. It was sad that they didn't have much to talk about apart of their jobs. He talked about the hit list they found on the wall, revealed who seemed to be the common nominator that linked them all which promptly ruined the mood. Laurel was still reeling from the articles posted in different tabloids that now analyzed everything about her past as Oliver Queen's girlfriend.

She had a rough several weeks behind her, and now that it was obvious an intern who worked for the DA was a killer with a quite large hit list... things will get even tougher.

While Felicity moved the security feed video on a thumb drive Lance moved to a corner of the large room to make a call. He could feel eyes following him, possibly making sure he didn't call for backup and had the SWAT team storm the basement. But that was the last thing he considered doing right now.

There was a grinding stone in front of him, and Quentin Lance could honestly say this was the very first time he had seen on with his own eyes, but he knew he shouldn't actually be surprised. They came to a conclusion early in the investigation that the Hood made his own arrows. Still, it was surreal seeing the evidence just sitting there.

It took a few swipes before he placed a phone to his ear, listening as it rang on the other side a few times before laurel answered.

"Dad?"

"Listen honey, the red archer attacked again tonight. It's Carrie Cutter, that redhaired intern from
your office." Lance didn't waste any time and right away get to the point, "I need you to be careful. You know she has a hit list, and while your photo wasn't on it-"

"Carrie? Seriously? Dad, I work with her every single day. She is a nice girl who lost someone she loved in the Undertaking, something I can relate to, and decided to change her life after that. There is no way she is a killer."

"She was caught on video shooting an arrow at an unarmed man. I'll be submitting it as evidence tonight. There is also an additional witness who was present during the assault. Please honey-"

"Look, I'll take a look at the video tomorrow once the DA gets it. But I honestly can't believe Carrie would kill someone whom, as far as I know, she never met. There is no motive."

The detective ran a hand over his face. He was so damn tired, too tired. Today supposed to be his day off, he was supposed to have some peace and calm for a change, but instead he got pulled right back into the madness that ruled this city.

"There are some things that turned out in her background check that could explain why she snapped." he looked up to see Felicity wave a black thumb drive at him, before she placed it on the desk by the keyboard and stood up to join the group by the metal med table. She stepped next to Oliver and right away his hand moved to interlace his fingers with hers. Lance raised an eyebrow at the display, and it seemed he wasn't the only one who was surprised by it.

Thea actually shrieked in delight at the sight, and right away Laurel asked, "What was that? Where are you?"

"I'm collecting evidence and will be on my way to the precinct." he responded, "I want to file this right away."

They disconnected soon after that and the detective moved towards the small group that was discussing something quietly until he was in hearing distance, then they all gotten quiet and focused on him. Yeah, not suspicious in any way.

"I got your evidence detective. Also the arrow she used to shoot Roy." Felicity pointed at the red fletched shaft on the table under a large magnifying glass, "It's possible this one also has a tracker in it, but I can't be sure without cracking it open."

"I appreciate that you left it whole. I'll be needing it to ensure the case is solid. And to do so I'll also need to file a report, that means you Harper need to come in tomorrow and make a statement. Miss Smoak, you will need to make one as well, since you witnessed the attack."

Felicity nodded right away, "I'll come by during my lunch break."

Roy, who looked uncomfortable at the prospect of voluntarily entering a police precinct, needed a nudge from his girlfriend before he sighed and said, "I'll be there bright and early."

Thea nodded, and with a smile informed Lance, "And I'll make sure he is there bright and early."

Laurel entered the cafe, glad to be out of the chill. It was her usual morning routine, one she established when she started to work for the DA, and was therefore known to everyone in the office. And that included a certain redhead who waited patiently on the other side of the street.

She briefly considered last night to just break into the apartment and finish off her target there, but she knew the police was already on her target, so instead she decided if she already had to go she
would go with a bang. This morning her plan was almost ruined, luckily she used the fire escape to leave her apartment, and she was just in time, because she could head banging on the front door. But no one was guarding the side alley. This wasn't a movie, this was Starling city, the policemen here were incompetent.

Laurel just moved forward in line when the woman behind her protested for being pushed aside. When she turned she found herself facing the intern that was, according to her father, responsible for murder and assault with a deadly weapon. Ludicrous accusations, but apparently there was proof.

Since she believed in 'innocent until proven guilty' Laurel chose to honestly inform Carrie about what was going on. But the redhead wasn't interested in listening. Just as the first words left the brunette's lips she reached out, grabbed her hand, and with a swift move twisted it behind her back. Instinctively Laurel tried to fight back. She was a cop's daughter, she knew self defense. But none of those classes taught her about what to do when a sharp point of an arrow is pushed into her throat, not piercing the skin but not far from it either.

The woman that Carrie pushed aside to get to Laurel now looked at the two women in shock, letting out a scared shriek when the redhead looked at her and winked, before she ran out of the cafe. When the other patrons realized what was going on they too rushed to leave, none of them even considering staying long enough to take a photo. Money they would get from some tabloid wasn't worth the risk.

Carrie finally turned towards the barista that stood frozen behind the counter, "Leave. You don't need to be here. You are not guilty of anything."

The young woman who worked there part time while she attended community college followed the customers in a rush. She was barely out the door when she dialed 911 to report what was going on, and them moved across the street to stand among those who left the cafe but chose to stay and see what would happen.

"She just let you leave? Did she said something?" one of the customers asked after grabbing her forearm.

"Just that I'm not guilty of anything. But it seems she thinks ADA Lance is."

Thea and Roy were sitting in detective Lance's office, the later retelling his story about the events from last night. He downplayed the injury though, saying the arrow merely grazed him, so he wouldn't have to explain why he didn't go to the hospital and who patched him up. Somehow it didn't seem smart to reveal in an official statement to the police that Oliver Queen was skillful enough to suture a wound, or that he had the necessary tools to deal with anything more serious than a scratch.

The detective was nodding, before asking clarification about why he was behind the club in the first place. Roy was about to explain when detective Hilton burst through the door without knocking. That startled the couple, and caused Thea to drop her purse, while Lance almost broke the pencil he was holding and scribing down details of the statement.

"The dispatch got several calls about a hostage in a cafe in the center." Hilton said urgently.

But Lance just frowned, "That's not exactly our division. We have negotiators for that."

His partner looked uncomfortable for a moment before revealing, "One of the callers identified the hostage as ADA Laurel Lance."
Lance got out of his chair instantly, the statement completely forgotten, and was halfway out the door, when he remembered there were two people still seated in his office. He turned to the couple, noticing Roy looked serious while Thea's eyes were wide and she watched him with obvious worry.

"We'll finish this later. Right now-"

"Go, detective. This can wait." the Queen heir said, her voice trembling a bit. She respected Laurel, even though she didn't care about her as much as before.

"You think it's the crazy redhead?" Roy whispered once the two men left the office and they started to put on their jackets. Thea walked around him and pulled out the hood of his shirt, arranging it properly. There was a frown on her face that told him she too suspected it might be the same woman.

"According to Felicity Laurel's photo wasn't on the wall of Ollie's bad choices. But that doesn't mean she isn't a target." Thea muttered back, not wanting anyone to hear they had information about the red archer that no one but the police supposed to have. After all it wasn't revealed in the papers that they located her lair, or that there was a wall covered with photos of Oliver's former fuck buddies.

"Do you want to go home or to Verdant?" Roy asked, now talking normally, as they exited the office and walked towards the exit.

"Verdant. There is a liquor shipment scheduled to arrive today at noon."

Roy checked the watch his girlfriend persuaded him to wear after he arrived late for their first three dates, "That is still hours away."

She nodded, before looking at him seriously, "QC. We're going there. Ollie and Felicity should learn about this hostage situation."

"I have a feeling they might learn before we get to the company." Roy said, pointing out at the TV station van that drove by in the direction of the city center.

Thea shook her head, "Figures."

The sirens were echoing as several cars screeched into stop around the cafe, intentionally cutting off traffic on the road, before they were turned off with only the flashing lights remaining. Men and women in uniform and suits exited hastily, many of them right away pulling out their weapons and getting ready to fire if necessary.

The vans followed soon after, the reporters exiting with cameramen at their heels, and each one right away started to report about the happenings in the cafe. It didn't matter that they didn't have any specific information or confirmations, in a competition for viewers it was important to be the first to break out the news.

Carrie smiled when she noticed the cameras. They were still standing next to the counter and therefore out of sight of everyone outside, but she was willing to walk closer to the door. The police wouldn't shoot when she had a human shield standing in front of her, and the building across is too tall to be viable as a sniper's nest.

Laurel tried to break free, but froze again when the tip of the arrow broke the skin, causing a single drop of blood to run down her neck before staining the collar of her shirt red. Safety was just out those doors, her father was out there, she could see him standing partially behind the car and arguing with his partner. It was obvious Hilton was trying to calm him down, possibly preventing him from marching into the cafe and endangering her further.
She doubted him when he called her last night, she was so certain she knew Carrie Cutter. Now she realized she was wrong. The arrow pressed to her throat was a proof of that.

The redhead was oblivious of her hostage's inner musings, she was pleased at the attention they were getting. She pulled Laurel's arm a bit, getting her attention, before she nodded towards the vans, "Isn't it great that they are here? Now more people will learn what a whore you are."

"I did nothing wrong." Laurel right away said back, "Carrie--"

But her captor wasn't paying attention to her. Her whole attention was on the a pair of uniforms slowly approaching the front door of the cafe that remained open when everyone ran out. They wanted to make contact with her. Well they will get what they want.

"Do not come any closer!" she yelled, "Move but an inch towards the door and I will kill her! I will make her suffer for the pain she caused!"

"I did nothing wrong." Laurel repeated, now more desperately. She couldn't believe she didn't noticed Carrie was completely unhinged despite the fact she saw the woman every day at work.

"Oh, but you did. You just fail to take responsibility." the redhead leaned closer so she could whisper in her captive's ear, "Tell me Laurel... why Oliver Queen? Why did you went after a man that wasn't yours? That you made so miserable he had to cheat?"

"You got it all wrong!" Laurel protested, "Ollie persuaded me. He cheated, yes, but he always comes back to me because he loves me."

"Oh... he loves you, does he? You truly believe you matter to him? Why don't we check out exactly how much. I have to admit I am curious." Carrie taunted. She bought copies of all tabloids and newspaper who published a story about Oliver and Felicity, she had seen photographic evidence of a couple who seemed unaware of anything but each other. But Ollie Queen existed in the past, and who is to say he isn't still there, still betraying his soulmate like Jesse betrayed her. It wasn't a part of the plan but she had to find out, had to see what would happen, "I am inviting Oliver Queen to come! I am giving him a choice! If he comes within one hour I will release Laurel Lance and surrender peacefully! If he comes within an hour my partner will kill Felicity Smoak! He can not have them both! So who will it be, Mr. Queen?!"

"You can not do that!" Laurel protested when it became obvious the reporters heard the invitation and were now relaying Carrie's words to the public.

"Oh, any why not? After all he loves you, you said so yourself. He persuaded you and returned to you every single time. So Miss Smoak should be nothing more than a passing fling to him, just like all the others, while you are the love of his life. You are the one who will someday become Mrs. Queen." when her hostage flinches Carrie laughed, "That's it, isn't it? You have spend years making plans, mapping out your future as Mrs. Queen that you no longer know what to do if that doesn't happen."

The words stung deep, and Laurel was ready to fight back, to use the moves she learned years ago, but the sharp point of the arrowhead was still pressed into her neck. She could take a chance and hope Carrie doesn't know any martial arts. But it was too dangerous, and she decided it would be better to depend on the police making a plan.

But that didn't mean she couldn't depend herself verbally, "I am Laurel Lance, assistant district attorney of Starling city. I accomplished this myself, without Oliver Queen. I don't need him!"

"But you want him." Carrie whispered in her ear, making Laurel clench her fists, "You can deny it
all you want. I can see it. The whole city can see it. But you know what... I bet he doesn't want you.”

Thea rushed out of the elevator when the doors opened, Roy hot on her heels. Felicity's desk was empty, which either meant they were on a meeting and didn't know what was going on in the center right now, or... the glass door of the CEO office was open and Thea could see both her brother and Felicity standing in front of the large TV mounted on the wall.

There was a Breaking news announcement at the bottom of the screen and the reporter was talking about police trying to establish contact with the women who held ADA Lance hostage. Oliver briefly looked towards his sister when the couple entered his office, but right away focused back on the news when Felicity gripped his arm.

"I am not certain if our viewers could hear this but it seems the kidnapper has conditioned the release of her hostage. And that condition is Oliver Queen's presence at the scene within an hour." the reporter turned towards the cafe for a moment, he could obviously hear something that wasn't loud enough for the microphone to pick up, before turning back towards the camera, now looking paler than before, "But there is additional condition... If Mr. Queen arrives as instructed the kidnapper will release Miss. Lance, but the kidnapper's partner will kill Miss. Smoak. To quote still unidentified female kidnapper, "He can not have them both.”"

"Holy shit." Thea muttered under her breath, her gaze now on her brother and his soulmate. Oliver was white as a sheet, he was well aware he was put in an impossible situation. But was it really impossible when there is only one obvious solution, "Ollie, you can not go there. Let the police handle the matter. The SWAT team can storm the cafe... let them deal with that looney."

"I had no intention going there." he responded, looking at his sister in shock that she would even think he would go.

"I am." Felicity said in a calm, soft voice. Thea gaped at her in shock, Roy blinked a few times not sure he understood what she was saying. And Oliver... Oliver was pissed.

"Like hell you are." he didn't need the voice modulator to sound like his alter ego did when confronting a criminal. But right now there was no criminal present, just his soulmate who was saying crazy things.

"Ollie." Felicity tried to explain, but he cut her off right away. He gripped her shoulders, although not as hard as he felt like doing at the moment, and made her look his straight in the eyes. He needed her to look directly at him while explaining why she would ever utter such nonsense.

"I know what you are thinking right now, but I need you to be selfish today." he all but begged her. His voice broke Felicity's heart a bit. She understood why he asked of her to remain in the office, to remain safe. He already witnessed her death once, and he never wanted her to be in a situation where she could get killed. But she didn't believe he had to anything to worry about, not today.

Oliver closed his eyes when she gently cupped is cheek, and took a shaky breath. Her touch always soothed him, and today was no different. But the feeling of dread remained below the surface, fear that she would be once more ripped away from him. There would be no second miracle for them. She would remain gone. And he would spiral into madness before following her.

"I am probably the only person she wouldn't hurt, Oliver. Carrie Cutter suffered a loss, and possibly became completely unhinged from the pain, but she wouldn't do me any harm. I am your soulmate and she is some twisted version of Cupid that wants to see us together, and to do that she is prepared to eliminate anyone she deems a threat. She killed Isabel, shoot at Roy... and Laurel was your
girlfriend the longest. She is the one you always came back to. In Carrie's eyes that must make her the biggest threat to the fairytale ending we're suppose to have. One she dreamed of having with her own soulmate before he died."

"I understand all that. I do. And I believe you are right. But what if she..." Oliver couldn't finish the question. Just couldn't get himself to say the words.

Felicity sighed and moved towards him until she could hug him, and Oliver froze for a heartbeat before his hands moved to pull her closer. He needed her as close as possible right now.

"I need you to trust me on this Oliver. You going there wouldn't harm me in any way, there was no sign of a partner anywhere, but it might cause her to lash out and kill Laurel despite saying she would release her if you show up. And while I don't doubt your love for me, I also understand Laurel will always have a small part of your heart." Oliver was now shaking his head at her words, denying her claim, but Felicity only smiled sadly, "She is a big part of your past. Her death would hurt you, make you feel guilty for not taking action. I want to prevent that... Because I am your future. I am your partner and will do anything I can to save you from pain."

"There is another thing you need to consider." Thea hated to butt into what is obviously an intimate moment, one she was thrilled to have witnessed, but there was another little issue that needed to be acknowledged before they made a final decision, "Detective Lance knows your identity, Ollie. He knows you are the Arrow and knows where your base is. While he is now on your side, how long do you think that would last if Laurel is killed? Sure, he might tell himself it wasn't your fault, but eventually he might snap and blame it on you because you didn't even try and save her."

"But I agree with Blondie that she should be the one to go and talk to miss Crazy." it as Roy who butted in next, and received a frown from Oliver, "You going there might make her believe you still have some residual feelings for Laurel Lance and that would make her an obstacle to..." he turned towards his girlfriend, and with a look asked for assistance.

"Obstacle to Olicity." Thea finished for him, agreeing with his assessment of the situation.

"I don't like this." Oliver muttered.

"I know." Felicity said with a sigh.

The site was buzzing with conversation, with guessing and making assumptions based on shouted rants of the mentally unstable women. The reporters all wanted to have that one shot that would make their news stand out from all the other, but in the crowd of cameras and microphones no one was standing out.

Until one reported punched his cameraman in the arm and nodded towards the approaching town car. It was a guessing game the whole time since the woman that held the ADA hostage made her demand, or rather her condition. They all wondered if he would show up. And finally he did.

The single camera turned towards the black vehicle just as the back door opened and Oliver Queen stepped out, casually buttoning his suit jacket like he just dropped by for his lunch break and not because his ex girlfriend is being held hostage. But a moment later he turned towards still opened door and offered his hand. A smaller hand landed in his before he helped the blonde woman out.

"Holy crap." the cameraman mumbled, inevitably catching the attention of the others around him, and in doing so ruined the exclusive shot because just seconds later all the cameras were directed at the approaching couple.
Even the police noticed something changed. Detective Lance, who stood next to his partner, watched in confusion as the gathered crowd of reporters separated like the freaking red sea. Only they weren't letting Moses come through, but rather the man who was supposed to be the only person who could prevent his daughter's death.

"Took you a while to get here Queen. You didn't have to bring Miss Smoak along, I'm sure she would have been safer in QC." Lance said as the pair was let to pass under the yellow police tape.

Oliver frowned, "I was more than willing to let the police handle the matter, but Felicity wanted to come."

Lance looked from Oliver to the blonde at his side, and back, "But I thought-"

"You thought I would drop everything and come to Laurel's rescue." Oliver said coldly, not caring that he was in sight, and possibly hearing distance, of the gathered reporters.

"It's your fault she is in this position." it was a low blow, and Quentin Lance knew it. But the words still stumbled out before he managed to stop himself.

The accusation affected Oliver, made him freeze and clench his fists. And then a small hand touched his and his fingers relaxed, before interlacing with Felicity's.

"I wasn't aware Oliver forced Laurel into a relationship." Felicity finally said after a tense few moments.

"He didn't." Lance responded before focusing on Oliver, "I apologize. My girl is in there and I am unable to help her. But now that you are here... where the hell is she going?" the detective looked at Felicity in shock as she started to walk towards the cafe.

The policemen around her were frozen, not knowing what to do. The most logical thing would be to stop her, prevent her from entering the cafe. She was a civilian and had no business interfering in their work. But the woman that held ADA Lance a prisoner made some conditions and it was normal to comply with them, in some circumstances anyway, if it meant the hostage would be released.

"This isn't standard procedure!" a man in a Kevlar vest, that had a patch saying negotiator on the front, protested as he approached Lance, "She is endangering everyone!"

Oliver looked at Lance, waiting for the response. Felicity too stopped when an uniformed policeman stepped in her path. She turned and looked a the detective.

"I do not believe Miss Cutter would be danger to Miss Smoak. Quite the opposite." it was detective Hilton who spoke, "All evidence suggests she is projecting to Miss Smoak, and perhaps wants Miss Smoak to have the happy ending that she didn't get."

The negotiator nodded, pondering for a moment, before focusing on Felicity, "Do not enter the premise. Stay at the doorway in our sight at all times. Is that clear?"

Oliver obviously agreed with that order, because he was nodding at the words. It was a good compromise. And Felicity agreed before straightening and walking towards her cafe. She was nervous as hell, and had to remind herself this wasn't the craziest thing she had done. It wasn't even in top 10.

Carrie too noticed the commotion outside. She saw the expensive town car stopping minutes ago, and a frown hasn't left her face since. She was disappointed in him, but not really surprised. Men
were wired like that, it was in their genes. They could pledge their eternal faithfulness to one woman, and then jump in a bed with another one the next day. Jesse turned out to be just like that.

Oliver Queen was obviously no better.

But it wasn't the handsome man that stepped at the open doorway. It was a lovely blonde woman, who looked quite uncomfortable standing there under scrutiny, but at the same time appeared resolved.

Carrie frowned instantly, "Why are you here? You shouldn't be here."

"I came to ensure you don't hurt Laurel." Felicity responded honestly.

That shocked, and angered the redhead. She just couldn't understand it, "You think she gave a damn about you? About the fact she was hurting you before. Do you honestly think if she got a chance she wouldn't jump in bed with Oliver Queen again, despite the fact it's public knowledge he is yours?"

"She won't get that chance." Felicity answered as calmly as possible. She wasn't a trained negotiator, but she had enough common sense to know it would be a bad thing to rile up someone who held an arrow to another person's throat.

The sight of the red tip pressed slightly to Laurel's throat actually made the blonde slightly queasy. She still had a thing when it came to pointy things, and also that arrow was identical to the one Oliver got from detective Lance. The one that ended Isabel Rochev's life.

"Damn right she won't." Carrie muttered darkly, obviously thinking she and Felicity were thinking the same thing.

They weren't though. Instead of agreeing that her plan is the best option Felicity questioned her, "Is that why you killed Isabel?"

Carrie made a face at the mention of her first victim, "I heard her threaten you. I was at the gala and heard what she said, heard her say she would kill you. And you see... I'm Cupid... and I just couldn't allow that. You and Oliver need to have your happy ending. I didn't got one. That bitch took that away from me." the redhead smiled at Felicity then, before leaning closer so her lips were right next to Laurel's ear, "You were supposed to be my first. You... who deserved more than any other whore that persuaded Oliver to be put down. But then that woman had the audacity to utter a threat, and you were all bot forgotten. After all she was an immediate threat. You were nothing more than an old fuck."

"Let her go." Felicity said suddenly to get Carrie's attention away from Laurel. It was obvious the request alone wasn't going to do any good, so she tried to plead to that twisted side of the woman who considered herself Cupid that wanted her and Oliver happy together. It was a long-shot, but she had to try. Everyone were watching, and she didn't want to fail. Not when failing would mean someone died, "Please. Oliver and I are making progress, but if you kill her it would ruin everything. He would feel guilty, feel responsible for the death of someone who was once a mayor part of his life."

"I will never forgive Gloria." Carrie muttered, before shouting, "You shouldn't forgive Laurel either! She hurt you! She selfishly took something that wasn't hers!"

"But what about Laurel's soulmate? He was betrayed too." it was a dumb thing to say, but Felicity said it anyway, "I mean-"

Laurel flinched when the tip of the arrow was pushed deeper in her neck, causing another drop of
blood running down and staining her shirt further. Carrie was angry for having her logic questioned, and she was taking it out on her hostage.

No one outside knew what was going on. Felicity was standing at the doorway as instructed, but even the closest policeman wasn't close enough to hear the words exchanged. So far there was no change in the status, but those responsible were unwilling to storm the cafe if a peaceful solution could be found.

The sound of car doors slamming shut made few uniformed officers jump, quite a embarrassing thing really, because it shown they were completely unaware of their surrounding. District attorney Adam Donner marched right to Lance and started demanding an explanation as to why the SWAT team wasn't inside already and taking down that lunatic that held his assistant hostage.

The detective wasn't thrilled to have his decisions questioned, and pointed out towards the cafe, "We have someone negotiating Laurel's release."

DA Donner huffed in annoyance. He recognized the blonde ponytail from the numerous photos published in the tabloids his wife usually left lying on the coffee table, "Felicity Smoak is hardly a skilled negotiator. For all we know they might be working together. Carrie did mentioned she had a partner." at that point he turned towards Oliver, "From what I understood it should be you in there, discussing things with that woman."

Oliver was not in the least amused with the barb that Felicity might be working with the red archer, so he fought back, and threw Carrie Cutter's employment in his face, "By that woman you mean your intern, someone who was inside your office every single day, someone you hired? Felicity doesn't know her, but you do. So for all we know you might be working with her."

Donner gaped at the younger man in shock, like he couldn't believe such accusation would be made against him, "How dare you-"

"Enough!" Lance butted in, "It's my daughter who is in there with that unhinged woman! And I have full faith in Felicity Smoak and her ability to talk Miss Cutter into releasing Laurel."

"It's against police procedure." DA Donner pointed out.

Detective Hilton, who observed the altercation with objectivity, pointed out that it wasn't. There were instances when the police was encouraged to use the assistance of a civilian in negotiation. Usually it was a family member, in most occasions a mother or a spouse, but there are few exceptions.

"You are wrong!" they heard a shout coming from the cafe, and instantaneously everyone was on high alert. It was Laurel who yelled, but it seemed there was no change because Felicity was still calmly standing on the doorway.

She did turned for a moment and glanced in Oliver's direction. He couldn't see her expression clearly from that distance, and that bothered him. He needed her safe and out of danger's reach. And this was everything but that.

Carrie didn't care about the outside, she couldn't care less if the police was getting ready to storm the cafe. Laurel would be dead before they entered anyway, she was ready to thrust the arrow deep into her throat at any moment. The only thing preventing her was the blonde who was still pleading for her worthless life.

"Am I?" she asked mockingly.
There were tears in Laurel's eyes, and she tried her best to prevent them from falling. She refused to cry right now, and in front of Felicity, "Ollie survived the island for me." she said with every inch of certainly she could muster.

"You are the one who is wrong." Felicity hated to do this right now, it was possibly the worse timing possible to go into that subject, but at the same time she could use it to sway Carrie into releasing Laurel, "Oliver survived the island because he is strong. Ollie didn't. It seems to be a common mistake made by those who knew him before, or they simply refuse to see the change in him. But that boy that loved you... he drowned. Strange thing is... I should thank you." Laurel's eyes widened as the words left the blonde's lips, "If you weren't so pushy in getting what you wanted, without regard that he wasn't ready, he never would have been stranded on Lian Yu and grew up to be a man he is now. Now don't get me wrong, I wish he never suffered the way he did on that damned island, but those experiences shaped him into the man I love. I could never love the selfish boy he was before."

"Is that why you want me to spare her? Because you are thankful? That isn't enough! She deserves death!" Carrie was shaking her head frantically and shouting.

"And you deserve more than you got out of life." Felicity said calmly. She surprised herself that managed to remain so collected at the sight of the redhead getting more and more angry. At Laurel for representing what she despised the most, at her for wanting to save Laurel, at Jesse for betraying her and dying, and at herself for loving him when he didn't deserve it. But Felicity was already in too deep to give up now, "Your soulmate betrayed you, and that betrayal turned you bitter... turned you into a killer."

"Jesse never deserved me. I loved him. I still love him." Carrie was ranting now, "Does Oliver deserve you? After everything he has done. Does he?"

Felicity took a deep breath and revealed, "Oliver tried to stop me from coming here. He chose me today. He chooses me every day."

It wasn't enough for the redhead, "Did he told you he loves you?"

A small smile actually appeared on Felicity's face as she remembered the moment he revealed his feelings for her. She doubted him in that moment, but no more, "He did. He also told me he wants to marry me."

She didn't have to say that. It wasn't important in any way. But she hoped it would have a desired effect on Carrie. Her whole plan was to ensure the redhead that Laurel wasn't in any way dangerous for her and Oliver's relationship, for their future together.

When Carrie started to laugh she wasn't sure if it did what it supposed to do. The hysterical laughter was actually quite unnerving. Finally blue eyes landed on her, a wide grin, that made her look happy rather than insane, decorating the redhead's face.

"You didn't notice it? The way Miss Lance stepped back when you mentioned marriage. It was like you slapped her." the taunting was obvious in Carrie's voice, "She is obviously still living in delusions... still dreaming she will someday be Mrs. Queen. But here you are, saying Oliver wants to marry you... and all her plans are suddenly on the bottom of the ocean together with the cursed Queen yacht. You know, you are actually on to something here..."

"I don't understand." and she didn't. Felicity was used being the smartest person in the room, but Carrie Cutter's lane of thoughts was all over the place. The blonde briefly wondered if she was perhaps bipolar, that would certainly explain some things.
"Death is no punishment. Quite the opposite. It prevents the person from truly experiencing it." she leaned forward so her lips were once more close to Laurel's ear. She liked toying with Miss Stuck-Up like that. ADA Lance, the woman who was always acting all high and mighty, but was in fact just a sad little girl, "She came here to save you. She didn't. But don't worry, I won't kill you. Death would be salvation, life will be witnessing your dreams going up in flames. She will be Mrs. Queen, you will remain nothing more but an ex-girlfriend. The mansion, the fortune, jewelry... future children... they will all be hers. You on the other hand... you will get a few lines in a tabloid and spend the rest of your live being compared, and falling short, to the woman whose life you tried to steal."

It took Laurel a few seconds to realize the arrow was no longer pressed to her neck. The moment she recognized the absence of the sharp tip pushing into her skin she broke free of Carrie's grasp and ran out of the cafe. Stumbling out in the sunlight Laurel rushed towards the awaiting policemen, knowing her father would be there. She needed him right now, needed his support. But he was there as well, standing there all tall and handsome... and Laurel wanted to slap him. She wanted to shout at him, blame him for everything.

She didn't, because her father was at her side moments later and pulling her towards the ambulance that waited to the side, opposite of where the reporters were all standing. Her exit caused them to once more start shouting questions, asking for a statement and offering exclusive interviews at prime-time so she could tell her side of the story. And detective Lance wanted to keep her away from it all.

Couple of policemen pushed past Felicity into the cafe. No one told her to move, to get back towards where Oliver was still patiently standing and waiting for her. The arrested Carrie who wasn't even trying to resist them. She dropped the arrow before Laurel ran out, and was now only holding a small piece of paper. One she dropped to get her hands behind her back.

She noticed Felicity looking at it, and as they were leading her out, informed the inquisitive blonde, "She was smiling so smugly on that photo, while he looked like he wanted to be anywhere but with her. I wanted her to see it."

Blue eyes landed once more on the paper and she finally understood why the photo was missing from the wall. She was broke out of the reverie by shouting and cheering, which was quite shocking considering the circumstances, and Felicity finally turned to look what was going on on the street. It turned out Carrie was being escorted towards a police car and the gathered crowd was yelling encouragement at her.

Between calls of 'good job', and 'those bitches deserved it', someone shouted she should plead insanity. And Felicity couldn't help but think all this was insane. And finally she moved towards Oliver.

She could hear DA Donner answering some reporter's question, saying how the police conducted themselves with highest professionalism, and handled the crisis perfectly. And then someone asked if Laurel would be thanking Felicity for saving her life and the blonde in question actually tripped. Luckily Oliver was there to catch her.

After that no one actually paid attention what the DA was saying, although maybe they should have. Instead all eyes were now on the couple that held each other tightly.

Oliver had his arms wrapped around Felicity's waist, and hers around his. The sound of his heartbeat under her ear was soothing as everything finally came crashing down and she realized how close she was to watching Laurel getting killed. One wrong word, and all would be over.
"Oliver! Oliver!" the reporters were trying to get his attention, but one particularly persistent reporter was asking a question he just couldn't resist answering. The brunette wanted to know if Felicity was now his girlfriend.

So he answered the woman honestly, "Felicity Smoak is more than that. She is my always."
"It was that selfless act by Felicity Smoak that ultimately saved ADA Lance's life, and led to an arrest of the dangerous criminal. Some details about the case have still not been released to the public, but we have a reason to believe the woman in question, Carrie Cutter, is the person behind the murder of Queen Consolidated's Vice President Isabel Rochev. Several witness statements claim Miss Cutter held a red fletched arrow, the same kind the police found on the scene of Miss Rochev's murder.

It is still unknown if the mayor would reward Miss Smoak for her act of bravery, or if ADA Lance thanked her.

Queen Consolidated PR department issued a statement an hour after the hostage crisis, and assured the public Miss Smoak is unharmed from the ordeal and back at work. We are still waiting for the statement from the DA office."

Thea grinned as she turned towards her brother, who stood leaned on the doorway and watched the large TV screen that showed the local news. Channel 52 wasn't the most reliable source of news, but she had to admit their reporters had a certain flair for dramatics.

"They are calling Felicity a hero." she informed him.

Oliver smiled and moved to sit next to his sister on the couch, "Felicity was a hero long before today."

"Yeah, but no one knows that. Well, now they do." Thea pointed out, "I just hope DA doesn't cause any troubles for her."

A frown instantly appeared on Oliver's face, "Why would you think that?"

He got a snort in response, but a glare she was receiving from him told Thea she should better elaborate that statement, "Because it's... they need to make it look like they weren't in any way connected-"

"Thea." Oliver called her name, causing her to bit her bottom lip. That wasn't what she initially planed to say, and they both knew it.

"Look, Ollie... no woman likes to be portrayed as the other woman. And that is exactly what the tabloids did when it was revealed that Felicity is your soulmate. They were extremely rude towards Laurel, and-"

"And you think she might use this thing with Carrie Cutter to exact revenge?"

The very thought sounded crazy to Oliver, and Thea could see it on his face. But her brother obviously had no idea what a scorned woman is capable of. She wanted to give Laurel a benefit of a doubt, believe she would move on and leave this behind. But with everything they are saying on the news, with the petition someone apparently started to give Felicity some sort of award for being a hero, and the fact a few groups online are cheering on Carrie Cutter for teaching soulmate thieves a lesson she feared Laurel wold try and influence the DA to stir some trouble for Felicity.

Not that DA Donner would require much persuasion to try and place a blame on someone else. Carrie being a brainwashed and acting on someone elses orders sounded so much better for his office than the fact one of his interns was a killer with an extensive hit list.
Thea sighed, her brother was so stubborn sometimes. So she asked for a second opinion, "Mom, just tell him I'm right."

Moira Queen has been standing on the doorway long enough to hear most of the conversation. She didn't want to interfere, just enjoy the sight of her kids safe and home. But then Thea asked for her insight into the matter. A part of her believed her daughter might be right, but she had some doubts based on one simply fact.

"Honey, Laurel has enough dignity not to use Miss Cutter's deadly obsession against Felicity."

Thea snorted and nodded in Oliver's direction, "She took his cheating ass back every single time he strayed while they were in a relationship. How much dignity can she have?"

"Honestly, Thea..." the Queen matriarch breathed out. Sometimes her daughter lacked tact. In the exclusive world of the wealthy, when you didn't know who is actually your friend, that was refreshing. But sometimes it was better to bite your tongue and remain silent. And judging by the pained look on her son's face, now was one of those times.

Thea seemed to have noticed it too, because she instantly apologized to her older brother, stating she never meant to throw his past indiscretions to his face like that. Oliver just hugged her and kissed the top of her head. It was his way of showing her he wasn't mad.

"Do you sometimes wish you could go back and undo all those things you did to Laurel?" the young heiress asked.

While the answer way definitely 'yes', it wasn't because of his ex girlfriend. Not exactly. So Oliver sighed sadly and replied, "I wish I could go back and not hurt Felicity the way I have. She is my priority now."

Before Thea could call her brother a sap, or something in that manner, Moira asked, "Where is Felicity, by the way? Dinner is in seven and now it's quarter to. Please tell me she doesn't share your tardiness Oliver."

He actually had to laugh at the horrified look at his mother's face. His inability to be somewhere on time was something she tried to fix for years now, and was still unsuccessful. It showed the few times when he first became CEO of Queen Consolidated, but Felicity quickly fixed that by making sure all the meetings in his calendar are marked to begin ten minutes before they were actually scheduled. He hasn't been late on a single one since.

"She and Roy had to go to the police station and give their schedules about last nights attack. She supposed to go during the lunch break, but the reporters were stationed outside of both QC and the station. So Lance agreed to meet them tonight instead."

"I don't get it why Roy had to go back too." Thea complained, "He was pretty much done with his statement when detective Hilton barged in and told Lance about the hostage situation."

"His daughter was held captive. Lance probably wanted every single detail from last nights attack recorded to ensure Miss Cutter is convicted, and for the longest possible time." Moira pointed out, as a parent understood Quentin Lance's actions.

"Think positively Thea. Felicity is there with him and will drive his to the mansion." Oliver pointed out.

"And the positive thing is... what? He'll be here on time?"
"He'll get a ride in the Porsche."

Thea's bubbling laughter filled the large sitting room. Moira just shook her head at them. It felt so good to have the mansion filled with laughter again, with bickering and silly arguments over dinner. Before she discouraged such behavior at the table, now she was grateful it was happening. Thea was so different during those five years Oliver was gone, and before she met her soulmate.

While Roy wasn't someone she would ever consider a good match for her daughter Moira had to admit the young man made Thea happy. She was used to discriminate based on certain things, the nature wasn't. The nature knew what her daughter needed better than she did. And Moira learned her ways weren't always right.

It was quite similar with Felicity. They didn't have much contact, and then suddenly the blonde came to see her, and tell her she knew Moira's darkest secret. She still remembers the dread she felt when those words left brightly painted lips, it was only years of experience of moving in high society circles, where any sign of weakness was filed for later and exploited when needed, that helped her hide how she truly felt. And because she wanted to protect her secret at all costs she threatened the blonde. It was in vain. She told Oliver anyway.

And then Thea learned the truth as well, and things weren't as horrible as she always pictured them. Her children weren't despising her for her indiscretion. They accepted that she was unhappy with Robert's constantly straying and, in an attempt to make him jealous or maybe show him she could do the same thing, she fell into Malcolm's bed.

An act she would call a mistake if it weren't for the fact it gave her Thea.

A knock on the door interrupted Moira's musing, and caused Oliver to practically jump of the couch and rush past her to open the door. Thea couldn't help but taunt him, "Faster Oliver! You don't want to make your soulmate waiting out in the cold!"

"Your soulmate is out there as well!" he shouted back just as he pulled the door open, startling slightly the two people on the other side by the sudden action. A smile that could only be described as sappy spread on his face when his eyes landed on Felicity, "Hi."

Roy just sighed and walked past him. Honestly, those two were sickening. They seen each other less than an hour ago, and acted like it's been months. He wasn't like that with Thea.

And then he saw his soulmate sitting on the couch, her smile widening when he entered her sight, and Roy knew he was lying to himself. He was exactly like that as well.

"Where are Ollie and Felicity?" Thea asked after a moment, when it became obvious her brother and his much better, and smarter, half weren't coming.

Roy sighed, "They are busy staring into each others eyes to move."

A moment later a rather loud, "I heard that Harper!" was was heard, followed by a startled, "Whoa, it echoes in here."

Oliver was smiling at his soulmate when he felt someone's presence behind him. Years on the island still made him aware of his surroundings and to react in a heartbeat, and only the knowledge he was safe inside his family home prevented him from lashing out at whoever sneaked up on him. Instead he took a deep breath to calm down, and a gentle touch on his hand told him Felicity noticed his tension as well.

"Oliver darling, could I please borrow Miss Smoak for a few minutes?" Moira asked politely.
She wasn't in tune with him as his soulmate was, but she didn't failed to notice the way he froze and scowled herself for approaching him from behind. It completely slipped her mind not to do that. To be honest she wasn't even aware it was an issue until Mr. Diggle mentioned it after Oliver lashed out at her a few weeks after his return. He was lost in thoughts back then and didn't noticed her presence until it was too late. And today he was so focused on his soulmate everything, and everyone else, faded to the background.

"Dinner is about to start." he pointed out after turning to look at her.

"I'm aware. So why don't you, Thea, and Roy head to the dining room. We'll be joining you shortly." Moira said with a smile, the tone of her voice making it sound like an order, rather than an suggestion.

Oliver stared at her for a few minutes, as if he was trying to figure out her reasons for wanting to talk to Felicity without his presence. It seemed like he would refuse her, when a hand wrapped around his elbow, and he looked down on his soulmate.

Felicity smiled at him widely, "Go ahead." she encouraged him, "Roy can't wait to complain to you about my driving."

Oliver shot his mother one more look before walking off to the sitting room. It startled the older woman, the mistrust she had seen in his eyes. It seemed while he has forgiven her about her foolish choice to threaten Felicity into keeping her secret, he hasn't forgotten it. And he obviously didn't believe she wouldn't try and do something like that again. And to be honest it hurt that he thought she would repeat that particular mistake.

"Why don't we go to my study for some privacy." Moira finally suggested and turned on the heel, before walking down the long hallway towards the back of the mansion. Heels clicking on the hardwood floor told her Felicity was following her, and she was grateful for the vote of confidence from the blonde.

The office in question had the large windows that pointed towards the large gardens in the back, and during the day the view was quite spectacular. Now it was illuminated by a rather modest crystal chandelier. While Moira moved to retrieve an item from the drawer of her desk Felicity observed the room. She liked the sight of wooden shelves filled with books covering one wall, and a fireplace taking up most of the space on the opposite wall. But what really caught her attention was a fairly large painting, which she presumed was oil on canvas, hanging over the mantle.

It showed a much younger Oliver sitting in a leather armchair, one far too large for his small frame, with a toddler Thea nestled in his lap. He was holding a children's book and reading it to his sister. The siblings looked so adorable together, and Felicity couldn't help but wonder if their children would be like this.

And then she almost jumped when that particular line of thoughts actually registered. She was getting way ahead of herself.

Moira waited patiently for Felicity to focus on her. Usually she lacked patience, and demanded attention, but the sight of the blonde looking at the painting she loved more than all the artworks hanging in the mansion was so heartwarming. That was why she noticed the bright blush that spread over Felicity's cheeks, and she couldn't help but wonder what went through the young woman's mind that caused that reaction.

"Did they pose for this?" Felicity finally asked. She honestly couldn't imagine Oliver, who was the
most active person she ever met, willingly sit for several hours a day till the painter was finished with
the portrait. And considering Thea's nickname she was pretty certain the young heiress was exactly
the same as her brother.

"No. It was a candid shot Robert made one evening. I adored it and commissioned a large paining
based on it." Moira said, remembering those days with nostalgia, "So many professionally made
family photos, and this one turned out to be the most beautiful."

It took few more tense moments of silence before Felicity went to the point, "You asked to speak to
me. I'm presuming it's about something important."

"What do you think the conversation is about?" Thea asked, and then noticed her brother wasn't
paying attention to her but was instead staring at the doorway. It was like he was willing their mother
and his soulmate to appear right this instant. And the way he was tense made the young heiress
believe he was ready to get up and march to the study to be by Felicity's side, make sure she's safe.
But she wasn't on some mission, wasn't a decoy for some homicidal maniac, she was just down the
hallway, talking to their mother.

She looked towards her own soulmate, and Roy just shrugged his shoulders. He didn't understand
what was going on either. And when she sent him a glare the young man cleared his throat and
asked, "So, Oliver, what made you give Felicity your first car?"

Thea sighed and rolled her eyes. Of course her soulmate would use the car as the way to get Oliver
in a conversation and away from staring at the empty doorway. It didn't work though.

And Thea had enough, "Ollie!" she shouted his name, starting him slightly and making him stare at
her, clearly annoyed, "Don't give me that look. You've been on the edge since Felicity went to talk to
mom. It's mom, Ollie!" there was something in her brother's eyes, the look that taster for just a
moment, but enough for the young woman to suspect there was something going on that she wasn't
aware of, and that made her angry, "Do we need to have the conversation about honesty again? You
made it very clear there are no more secrets between us."

Oliver looked ashamed at that. His sister was right, they did made that deal, but he was
uncomfortable talking about this particular event. Still, his sister noticed he was nervous and asked
about it. He just couldn't lie to her. He glanced towards Roy, curious if the teen knew about his
soulmate's parentage, because this wasn't how he should find out. But Thea must have notices his
hesitance, and understood what it was connected with, because she informed him Roy in fact knows
who her biological father is.

Oliver nodded at that, and then explained what was bothering him, "After learning the truth, before
telling me about it, Felicity talked to mom. She wanted mom to be the one to tell me, and I agree she
should have been the one to reveal that particular information. Mom however didn't agree, and
threatened Felicity. She wanted to scare her into thinking I would hate her if she told me the truth."
Thea gaped at her brother in shock, her hand wrapped around Roy's arm and squeezing tightly, "I
have since forgiven mom, I understand the desire to keep secrets at all costs. And I am fine with two
of them in the same room as long as someone else is present as well. But having them alone...

"Mom would never do anything to endanger Felicity, or your relationship with her." Thea pointed
out.

"Your sister is right. I have learned from my mistake, Oliver." Moira spoke sadly, frozen in the
doorway. She stood there long enough to hear her children's conversation, "Miss Smoak loyalty to
you is one of many things I actually admire about her. And I harbor no illusions that you would ever
pick me over her. And that is the way it should be."

"Where exactly is Felicity?" Thea was the one who asked.

Moments later the woman in question stepped into the sitting room, only to stop when noticing three people staring at her, "What? I had to pee, it's a normal human urge." after realizing her mouth was faster than her brain, yet again, Felicity sighed. Thea on the other hand started to laugh. To her the lack of filter is the most amusing this ever. She thought that was ultimate honestly, something that was severely lacking in the elite circles. Eventually Felicity tried to change the subject by commenting, "Love your shoes, Thea." but for some reason that made the young heiress laugh even harder.

She had no idea what was so funny, even after Thea revealed she got a special pair for her. She didn't know until the young heiress ran up to her room and returned with a lovely pair of white heels that had doughnuts with pink frosting printed on them. Moira sighed, and tried to inform her daughter such shoes were hardly appropriate for a Vice President of a Fortune 500 company. She wasn't completely certain her words were even taken in consideration, because Felicity instantly tried them on and decided they were her new favorite pair.

Those shoes were dangling on Felicity's fingers as she walked down the hallway towards her apartment. Oliver insisted on coming with her and then walking her to her door. She of course found it unnecessary, but he wouldn't hear it. Not after holding pressure, and feeling blood seeping though his fingers, despite the leather gloves, before the paramedics took the victim away.

And the evening started so well, before the night became rough. Diggle was home with Lyla and Francesca, leaving the Arrow without any backup. Sure, Dig made it clear he was one phone call away if Oliver needed him, but they were both reluctant in contacting him, even when it became clear help would be needed.

A group of masked men broke into a house and held the family hostage, demanding the father comes with them and opens the safe in the restaurant he worked in as a manager. When the man refused one of the masked ones shot his wife in the knee. It was in that moment that the Arrow dropped by and there was standoff, and it was then that Oliver wished he had backup, someone to serve as distraction if nothing else. And just moments later his wish became true when the couple's younger son bit the calf of one of the burglars. The man shouted and ripped of his mask accidentally, revealing his identity in the process, but it also served as a distraction Oliver needed to take all four men down.

The neighbors called the police who stormed the house moments later, a stupid thing to do if one asked Felicity, because they didn't know that the men were already unconscious and relieved of their weapons. The uniformed men all pointed guns at the hooded man, instead the burglars, one of them even shouted at him to get his hands up. And Felicity, who was listening to everything thanks to the comm Oliver always wore, had to laugh as the older son, who refused to be outshined by his little brother, called the policeman a moron because the Arrow is the only reason his mother wasn't bleeding out to death.

Between the commotion of the paramedics arriving, and the boys intentionally making a scene, the resident vigilante managed to slip out unseen. And that just before detective Lance entered the scene. They chose to call it a night, since apart of that the city seemed peaceful.

Felicity was fine with that. She was tired, both physically and mentally, and couldn't wait to get back home. And then Oliver insisted on driving behind her on his motorcycle and walking her to her door. That told Felicity the evening affected him more than he led believe. Once they reached her apartment Felicity reached inside her bag and pulled out an stiletto shaped key-chain. That was when
a particular key caught Oliver's attention.

It was strange, because he never paid attention to things like that, but tonight he somehow noticed it. Before Felicity could push the right key in the lock he reached out and took hold of a particular key. He was certain he had an identical one in his pocket.

"Is this a key to the mansion?" he asked.

Felicity nodded. She looked uncomfortable for some reason, before answering, "Your mother gave it to me tonight. Insisted I take it, really. Said I am not a guest that needs to knock, but a member of the family. It freaked me out."

Truth be told Oliver thought about doing that himself, giving her the key to his home, but he didn't want to rush her. It seemed his mother didn't care much about that. He didn't comment on it though, but instead asked, "Is that all she wanted to talk to you about?"

After a brief pondering Felicity shook her head, "She also wanted to apologize."

"For the way she reacted when you confronted her about Malcolm." Oliver concluded instantly. That certain event seemed to have been in the forefront of mother's mind, not just his tonight. Finally, after a minute he added, "Good."

Felicity managed to unlock the door and was ready to wish him goodnight, before retreating into her own home, but she didn't want to part in such a tense moment. So she blurted out the first thing that came to her mind, "Please tell me the key isn't made out of real gold."

Oliver opened and closed his mouth a few times, before finally admitting, "I honestly don't know. It's yellow. We all have yellow ones. If you want I can have a regular one made for you."

Felicity once more shook her head, "That's okay. I can tell it apart from the others easier. Not that I will ever use it."

"You can. You should."

Oliver's voice could have made her swoon if she wasn't so tired. Instead Felicity just deadpanned, "Yeah, I'll use it to get in and eat all the ice cream from your fridge."

"I'll make sure Raise stocks it with chocolate mint chip." the simple comment made Felicity laugh. And then she did something unexpected. She got up on her toes and kissed Oliver's cheek. It startled him momentarily and got him to ask, "What was that for?"

"For sweet dreams?"

Oliver just laughed at that, before reaching out and moving a lock of hair that escaped Felicity's ponytail behind her ear. And if his hand ran gently over her cheek and made her tremble... well, that was completely by accident.

"They will be if I dream of you." he replied, his husky voice making Felicity groan. She muttered something that sounded suspiciously like 'goodbye ovaries', and she was certain she wasn't as silent as she wanted, because he smiled at her widely, but he didn't comment on it.

"Oliver-" she started to speak, but he cut her off.

"I want to kiss you," he blurted out, starting his soulmate, "But I won't. Not tonight. I told you I'll take you on a date once your promotion is announced, so we can celebrate. And then I'll drive you
home, and escort you to your door like I did tonight. And then I will kiss you goodnight. I hope knowing that will give you sweet dreams."

Felicity just stared at him with her mouth open for a few moments, before gulping and muttering, "It's more likely that will give me wet dreams... I mean... yes... I... frack..."

"Goodnight Felicity." Oliver said finally, before he turned on his heel and walked down the hallway towards the elevator. He could feel her gaze on him and it honestly felt like the most difficult thing he had ever done.

Friday morning was gloomy, the sky threatening to release a downpour any minute now. Combine that with a chill of an rapidly approaching winter and you get one woman wondering if wearing a dress to work that day was a right choice. A quick check of the forecast app told her something other than her usual attire would be better.

So Felicity dug deeper into her overflowing closet, she really needed to donate some stuff she wasn't wearing, and pulled out a gray midi skirt that reached mid-calf. The first and only time she wore it was during the initial interview for Queen Consolidated, and that turned out great. It was far more sensible, and combined with a jacket of the same shade it would make her look like a serious, professional woman. Or to be more specific, like a Vice President of a large company. After brief consideration she chose a simple black top that had no embellishments. It was a great choice, cause it made the crown shaped pendant she got from Oliver stand out.

Of course Oliver noticed it the moment he entered the front office where her station was. He stopped in front of her desk and waited patiently until she looked away from her computer screen and focused on him instead. That was when he handed her a travel mug, the unmistakable scent of roasted coffee filling her senses the moment she opened the lid. She gave him a thankful smile and took a sip, enjoying the rich aroma, when he pointed out, "You usually wear a different necklace every day."

"That was before, and those were pieces of costume jewelry I got online. But now..." she trailed off upon seeing a smile on Oliver's face, "You love seeing me wear it, don't you?"

"Of course. Although the rest of you looks strange." Oliver commented casually, which earned him a glare from Felicity. Instantly he went to defend himself, "I just meant that you usually go with brighter colors."

"I wear gray too. In fact my favorite dress is gray, you know the one with orange squares on my waist. Oliver?" Felicity was frowning now, at the goofy smile on her soulmate's face and the distant look in his eyes. She snorted then and commented, "You like to stare at my ass when I wear that one."

"Of course not." Oliver replied, a bit too fast. It was obvious Felicity didn't believed him, and he just smiled and winked at her, before retreating to his office to do some work, her laughter following him.

Once Oliver was behind his desk Felicity focused on her computer screen again, checking the schedule for today. It was a light day, she rescheduled everything, at Moira's suggestion, so that they only had to deal with a public announcement and an important board meeting. The Queen matriarch pointed out the following week will be stuffed with meetings, the investors will definitely request to meet her once her promotion becomes public knowledge, and it was still her job to organize all those meetings, and collaborate with HR to find a replacement for her position.

Ten minutes before ten o'clock the elevator doors opened with a familiar ding and Moira Queen
walked out. Her heels clicked on the marble tiles as she walked towards Felicity's desk, a smile on her face. Their talk before dinner three days ago didn't make them bff's, but it helped dispersing the remaining animosity between them, and that was mostly due Moira apologizing and admitting she was wrong, not only in threatening Felicity but also in believing her children would despise her for her actions.

"Are you ready Miss Smoak?" the older woman asked, but didn't expected an answer. What she expected was for Felicity to be prepared to face the reporters with all the charm and elegance fit for a future Queen. Moira herself looked collected as always, and Felicity didn't know her good enough to properly read her, but she could swear the woman seemed excited beneath the calm demeanor.

"Did the board give you any trouble?" Oliver asked, and Felicity almost jumped in her seat. One of these days she would glue something to the soils of his shoes that would make them squeak, and therefore make it impossible for him to sneak up on her.

"Of course not dear. The meeting was just a formality, they are well aware Miss Smoak is by far the most capable person in the company to fill the place of Vice President. Miss Rochev might have been a smart businesswoman, but her expertise lied in acquisitions, with a side of blackmail, but she was clueless when it came to cutting-edge technology this company was working on."

"And here I thought Mr. Dennis would complain about nepotism." Felicity muttered under her breath, but was heard nevertheless.

"As far as the board in concerned the mark on your shoulder is as good as a wedding ring." Moira said honestly, and Felicity blushed brightly, her eyes instantly moving to look at Oliver. He too had a blush on his cheeks, but he was also looking down on the floor and a small smile played on his lips. The Queen matriarch couldn't have not noticed the reaction her words caused, but she chose to ignore it, and instead turned to look at her son, "Speaking of rings... I had grandma Dearden's ring sent to be cleaned. The main stone is an aquamarine, but that can be exchanged for a diamond... or maybe an emerald."

"Too soon." was all Oliver said to his mother, while Felicity gaped at them in shock. She honestly didn't expect Moira to be this bold, although she probably should have. Moira Queen was a woman who was used to get what she wanted, and it seemed that right now she wanted Felicity as her daughter-in-law.

Finally, after a few long moments of Oliver enduring his mother's hard gaze, the woman sighed and complied, "Fine." but then she added, "We'll discuss this tonight. We have a press conference to attend. Go put on your jacket Oliver, you need to look professional. And Felicity dear, are you certain those are the shoes you want to wear?"

It took the young blonde a few seconds to reply that she was quite content with her footwear. After that Moira nodded and turned to wait for them by the elevator. Once she was out of hearing distance Felicity muttered to Oliver, "I would expect this from my mother, but it seems it's a common thing. Next thing you know she'll ask if she'll become a grandmother before turning sixty."

"If it was just my call she would become a grandmother tomorrow." Oliver said honestly, and Felicity gaped at him in shock.

It took her a few moments to compose herself, and notice Moira was watching them with interest, before Felicity teased, "If you paid attention in Biology you would know it takes a bit more time than that. And maybe have a higher grade than a D. Honestly Oliver, I hope out kids inherit my- Oh..." her eyes widened as the words that slipped past her lips registered, and she looked at Oliver, curious to see what his reaction would be.
And he just watched with, what They would call, heart eyes.

The flashes were pretty close to blinding her, and Felicity desperately tried not to blink too much or make faces. It would probably look really, really bad if she did that and it got published. Like catastrophic bad because she was standing a bit behind Moira and it would seem like she was mocking her.

Oliver of course didn't have that problem, and Felicity secretly hated him for it because he was so damn perfect without even trying. He was standing calmly on her left, a polite smile on his face, the one he used in public that she knew was as fake as the boobs of a female reporter from the first row who kept glancing at him instead of focusing on the woman behind the lectern.

"With her extensive knowledge in technology Felicity Smoak is not only the perfect choice for this position, but also a person would would ensure Queen Consolidated paves a path for new groundbreaking technology, lead out best researchers in creating new products that would help the mankind. It seems like a lot of pressure on just one person, but I have complete trust in Miss Smoak and her abilities. And I am certain my late husband, Robert Queen, would have been proud if he could have witnessed the company be started remain completely in family hands. Thank you."

Of course the questions followed, despite it being said before Moira's announcement that the family wouldn't be answering any at this point, but they were all welcome to submit requests for interviews to the company's PR department.

"The tech breakthrough you mentioned reminded me of something." Oliver said looking at his mother who walked beside him through the large hall, "I wanted to mentioned it earlier, but with Isabel's return it completely slipped my mind. There is a brilliant guy working in SCPD cyber department, and his skills just might be wasted there. I witnessed it when Felicity and her mother got kidnapped. He knows his stuff."

Felicity was listening on their conversation, but was focused on texting her mother and informing her about the promotion. Donna Smoak made it clear she didn't want to learn about the next big thing in her daughter's life from some tabloid. Of course, the older woman expected the next big thing to be engagement, but becoming a Vice President of a Fortune 500 company was also something to be proud of.

"I do not see any reason why HR should not look into him, maybe organize an interview. The company needs smart people." Moira pointed out. Oliver didn't need her approval, but he appreciated her insight.

Felicity's phone signaled the message was sent, and she put it in the pocket of her jacket, before joining the conversation, "Are you sure it's wise to leave SCPD without good IT help?" she asked jokingly, "You never know, this guy might be the backbone of their IT department."

"Like you were for Queen Consolidated?" Oliver asked back with a wide smile.

The blonde beamed at him, "Just like that. What is his name, anyway? I can look into him myself."

"Lance called him Holt. I'm presuming that's his last name." Olive answered and Felicity nodded. It was all the information she needed, getting into police database to learn everything about this guy wouldn't take more than a few more minutes for her. He sighed, it felt good to see things finally moving forward. He no longer felt the need to watch his back, while in QC anyway, because he was now supported by one person he knew he could trust with just about anything. Felicity wanted QC to thrive just as much he did, Isabel wanted to tear it down.
"You okay Oliver?" Felicity asked, noticing he had suddenly gotten very quiet.

He blinked a few times, realizing they reached the executive elevator without him even realizing it. Finally Oliver just smiled and voiced his thoughts, "I just realized how easier it will be now when Isabel is no longer here to stonewall everything."

"Yes, you must be glad that problem is now solved for you, and you didn't even have to get your hands dirty." a male voice startled all three of them, and Oliver grasped Felicity's hand to stabilize and calm himself. His survival instincts were screaming at him to attack right now, but this wasn't the island, neither was he under the hood. He was Oliver Queen, the CEO, and that guy couldn't fight his way out of a wet paper bag.

Also punching someone in public would be bad for his reputation, as well as for the company; or so a voice in his head that sounded suspiciously like his mother reminded him.

District attorney Adam Donner observed them like a hawk, looking for any sign of nervousness. But all he got was three people who watched him with displeasure.

Moira was a sticker for punctuality, and she didn't have the time for the DA and his little power plays, they had a board meeting to attend. Oliver was annoyed because Laurel was standing next to her boss, her eyes boring into his soulmate. And Felicity simply couldn't stand the look of smug superiority she was getting because it reminded her of the way Isabel looked at her after she caught the woman exiting Oliver's hotel room.

"Is there something you needed Mr. Donner?" Moira was the one who asked, intentionally ignoring the man's title. She was being petty, and she couldn't care less.

"We are here to speak with Miss Smoak about the events in the cafe downtown three days ago, and about the attack at Verdant she witnessed." the DA answered, his sour expression clearly showing he was less than pleased with the attitude he was getting.

"I already spoke to the police. I am certain you can access, or more than likely already have, my statement." Felicity answered. She tried to be as short as possible to prevent the babbling and innuendos, since it wouldn't be appreciated in this crowd.

"Yes, I have read it. But there are some additional questions now." the DA was acting politely, but Felicity didn't trust the man. He was the one who decided not to prosecute Isabel due to a lack of conclusive evidence. It didn't matter how many criminals he managed to send to jail in the past months, mostly due to the evidence she collected and the Arrow handed over to the police, that one decision is something she will never understand. And resent him for it a bit.

She worked her ass off to gather that evidence, detective Lance told Oliver it would definitely be enough, the judge who signed the arrest warrant thought it was enough... but this guy didn't.

"And you came to ask those questions personally?" Oliver got involved in the conversation when it became obvious something was going on, "That isn't usual procedure."

"Since you didn't go to law school you hardly know standard procedure." DA Donner was getting more agitated by the second. He had a feeling things would go like this and he made sure to point out, "And I made the decision to come personally since the Queen family is well known for doing some stonewalling themselves."

If he managed to upset Moira by pointing that out it wasn't noticeable on the older woman. She merely looked at Felicity and smiled, "Why don't you use the smaller conference room on the
executive floor, dear. I'll inform the board of this... unplanned delay. They will understand that Miss Lance wishes to speak to you after you so selflessly risked your safety to save her life."

Felicity had to bite the inside of her cheek to prevent herself from laughing out loud at the scandalized look on Laurel's face. So she just nodded silently and pressed the button to open the elevator doors since she was the closest. She also entered the elevator first, and moved to the corner. And when she turned towards the doors but could only see Oliver's broad back. He intentionally stepped between her and the pair that came to question her, physically making a barrier between them.

His actions didn't escape anyone's notice. And while Moira looked quite pleased at his decision, his former girlfriend just sent him a glare before focusing on the warm amber-like panels that decorated the sides instead of sterile gray metal. Oliver knew she felt betrayed, knew her well enough to read it in her gaze, but he no longer felt like he had to do anything and everything to repay her for his foolish actions, for the cheating and lying.

He felt bad for doing it of course, for stringing her along without ever planning to settle down with her, but he honestly couldn't understand why she believed that he would do that. Never did he even hinted at a desire for them to move in together, but somehow she concluded that is what he wanted and started to look for apartments.

When the elevator stopped on the executive floor Moira exited first, and headed directly towards the main conference room where the board members probably waited already. She didn't believe DA's interest in Felicity would be damaging, but if the man was persistent in proving something where wasn't anything to prove it might look bad for the company. It all depended on Felicity's ability to hold her own in a room with a District Attorney and her soulmate's former girlfriend, and Moira wasn't certain which one of them represented a bigger threat.

Oliver stayed behind long enough to kiss Felicity's cheek, and whisper in her ear that he believed in her, before following his mother. He did mutter something about Thea being right and how he couldn't believe it, but Felicity didn't pay much attention to it. Instead she led the pair of lawyers to the smaller conference room that was just off the CEO's office.

They settled down on the soft leather chairs, the oval mahogany desk between them, with Felicity alone on one side, and the two people who observed her, one with curiosity and the other with animosity, on the other. A good EA would have offered them coffee, she did no such thing. Instead she just crossed her hands over her chest and leaned back in the chair, and if she looked annoyed... well that was exactly the point.

After few moments, when it became obvious she wasn't going to ask anything, DA Donner sighed and spoke, "Tell me about the reasons behind you exposing yourself to danger."

It was an odd way to phrase that, but Felicity wasn't interested in analyzing his speech right now. She just wanted to get things over with, "I wanted to prevent Carrie Cutter from harming anyone else."

It was Laurel who asked the next question, "How did you know she would react positively and release me? You are not trained as a negotiator."

Felicity shrugged before replying, "I didn't know. I just said what I believed she wanted to hear."
"So all of it was a lie then." Laurel said with a barely noticeable smile.

"No." was the answer she got from the blonde who smiled sweetly at her after responding.

"Which part of it was true?"

Felicity closed her eyes and took a few deep breaths, while her hands clenched the armrests of the chair tightly. She should have expected this to happen. Of course that dealing with an unhinged woman who wanted to kill her soulmate's ex wouldn't cause it, but dealing with said ex would ensure her bloodlust wakes up and threatens to burn her alive.

It only took a few moments, although it felt like hours, before Felicity opened her eyes and focused solemnly on the DA. The man observed her like a specimen under the microscope, and it annoyed the hell out of her. So if she sounded bitchy when she asked, "Is this really about taking my statement, or about your assistant wanting a first-hand scoop about her ex-boyfriends relationship?" well, they had it coming.

"You have quite a temper." Adam Donner said before taking a note in the large leather notebook. The fact this was the first thing that was written down, and the fact he was the one taking notes and not Laurel, told Felicity something more was going on here.

"No, what I have is a woman who can't even look me in the eyes acting all condescending." Felicity replied sharply, before blue eyes arrowed on Laurel. She wanted information, well she's going to get it, "Yes, Oliver really wants to marry me. He also wants to wait until our first wedding night to have sex, because I matter to him more than all the women he was with combined."

Laurel was taken aback by the bluntness, a gasp escaping her lips, and her eyes widening. Seconds later DA cleared his throat, his face flushed, and went back to the subject they came to QC for, "Tell me about Carrie Cutter, have you met her before?"

"No, I never met or spoke to Miss Cutter in the past."

DA nodded, turned a few pages in his large leather notebook and then looked back at Felicity, "I have seen the video surveillance video you surrendered to the police, from the night Roy Harper was attacked behind the club Verdant. It's an odd place to park an expensive car, but I suppose you can afford a new one if this one gets stolen. Anyway, what I am more interested in is why there aren't any hospital records."

Felicity chose to ignore the taunt about the car. She didn't want to mention it was a gift from Oliver, although she suspected Laurel knew it already, cause it wasn't any of his business. Instead she went about explaining something they suspected might raise some questions, "It was a scratch. We wanted to get him to a hospital, I believe Thea planed to call the ambulance, but he refused. He's a teenager, probably thinks he's indestructible."

"Do you know the motive behind the attack?" DA Donner asked the next question.

A snort escaped before Felicity could prevent it. It got her weird looks, but she ignored them and replied, "Apparently she didn't want him to get in the way of our happiness, between Oliver and me."

Laurel leaned forward, her hands folded on the polished surface of the table, "Does that mean you are in a relationship with Roy Harper?"

That question was so ridiculous Felicity wanted to laugh in Laurel's face. But she somehow managed to remain calm and collected, Moira would be proud of her, and replied as sweetly as she could, "Of
course not. I don't have the habit of sleeping with someone else's soulmate."

In an attempt to ease the tension Adam Donner repeated the question he already asked. Felicity wasn't happy with this waste of time, and pointed out she had already answered that one. She hasn't met Carrie Cutter prior to the redhead shooting an arrow at Roy. Her annoyance seemed to make the man amused because then he asked, "If you haven't met or had any contact with Miss Cutter before why are you paying for her legal defense?"

Felicity thought he was joking. She actually expected a tv crew to jump from behind the plant in the corner of the room and shout that she was being punked. But the District Attorney continued to observe her every movement closely, and Laurel was now leaning back in the chair with a small smile on her face. They acted like they caught her in a lie or something, but Felicity was honestly shocked.

"You do realize I'm working as an Executive Assistant, right? I'm not earning thousands of dollars every month, and the money I do make goes to tech and shoes. Heck, I didn't even own the car after my Mini was destroyed in a crash until Oliver gave me his Porsche." she went back on her decision of not mentioning her car was actually Oliver's previously. And the flinch her words caused felt surprisingly good. She wasn't generally a petty person, at least she liked to believe that, but right now all politeness went out the window.

"That is exactly the point." the DA said seriously, but got a blank look in response. She might be a genius, but Felicity honestly didn't understand what the hell he was saying right now. What point? The heck was going on?

They were double teaming her, possibly in an attempt to get her to say something incriminating, because Laurel suddenly took over despite her boss already opening his mouth to explain his words, "Isabel Rochev was a suspect in your kidnapping, during which your car was totaled, but was released due to lack of evidence. Less than a week later she is found dead, and the suspect's lawyer is paid from an anonymous source. You are a computer expert, I remember that from the times I have seen you in Verdant setting up a network for the club. So it shouldn't be a problem for you to set up something like this as well. You might not have the resources, or so you say, but the Queen family does." Laurel crossed her hands over her chest and leaned back in the chair, "And let's not forget the fact that with Miss Rochev's death the VP spot was conveniently opened for you."

If Laurel tried to ruffle Felicity's feather by implicating the Queen's were behind Carrie Cutter's crimes then she succeeded. But Felicity refused to allow that to throw her off. Instead of going to defense she squared her shoulders and suggested one thing she knew neither DA or his assistant would want, "Perhaps the members of the Queen family should be present since you are accusing them of... what exactly?"

"It's suspicious." DA Donner spoke out before she could stand up and leave the small conference room to get Oliver and Moira. He might be the District Attorney, but he had people over him in the food chain, and those people wouldn't be pleased if he accused members of a prominent family of a crime without solid evidence. And right now he didn't have anything, and it wasn't a crime to pay for someone's legal defense.

"Suspicion isn't evidence." Felicity deadpanned, "If it was then Isabel Rochev would be in jail right now, but alive. Instead she is dead because, unlike the judge who signed the arrest warrant, you didn't think there was enough to convict her. If I had to guess I would say you are still recovering from your failed attempt to convict Moira Queen, and didn't want to bring another high profile case to court without warranty, since too many lost cases might look bad for your career."

"You can guess all you want Miss Smoak, but there wasn't enough evidence, not to mention it was
obtained in a rather questionable way. Only the fact you are employed by Queen Consolidated protected you from charges for hacking. And I don't appreciate your insinuation that I pick which cases I would prosecute based on what they can do for my career."

"Well I don't appreciate your insinuation either that we were in any way involved in Carrie Cutter's choices to kill. You say I gained most from Isabel's death... you claim the Queen family is paying for Miss Cutter's defense... none of us every had any contact with her. You and those employed in your office did. " Felicity pointed out, she had the need to protect Oliver and his family, her future family, from everything... even ridiculous claims, "That fact won't change no matter how many ridiculous scenarios you come up with."

Before she managed to say what she really wanted Laurel interrupted her, "I don't see why that scenario should be considered ridiculous. You did in fact gained the most from Miss Rochev's death, and became the youngest VP of a Fortune 500 company in history. No one in DA's office had anything to gain from Carrie's actions."

"You could." Felicity blurted out, her mouth faster than her brain.

"Excuse me? How dare you?!" Laurel stood up from the chair, causing it to roll away and almost hit the wall.

It was too late to take it back now, and if she was honest she didn't want to. If Laurel wanted to come to QC and act all condescending, she could. But that didn't mean Felicity would just sit and keep her mouth shut, and allow the woman to continuously act like she is superior.

"Your father called you from Verdant to inform you about Carrie, about the attack on Roy, and you dismissed his words. Now don't act so surprised, I was right there pulling the video feed for the detective and heard the entire conversation. That could be interpreted as you knowing you weren't in any danger from her. You claim I was involved because I wanted Isabel's position, and I will claim you were involved because you wanted to play the damsel in distress and have Oliver come to your rescue like some knight in a shining armor."

"That's absurd!" Laurel exclaimed, interrupting Felicity again, her face now red from the anger she felt. Her boss was trying to calm things down, but both women were ignoring him. This confrontation was a long time coming, and neither was willing to back down and make it look like the other was was victorious.

"Is it? Carrie Cutter's only demand for your release was Oliver coming to the cafe, while cameras were present and the hostage situation airing on all local programs. Now, why would she ask that, if not to prove to everyone that he loves you enough to chose you over me, over his own soulmate? Only thing is Carrie wouldn't actually gain anything from that... you would."

"Miss Smoak, that is slander!" DA Donner exclaimed.

"No, that is my take on what happened three days ago based on the facts I have. You don't see it that way, being biased since Miss Lance works for you, but someone actually objective might." Felicity said with a shrug, "Now-"

Before she could say anything else the conference room door opened and Oliver took a step inside. His raised an eyebrow when he noticed Laurel was standing, her chair pushed back, before giving Felicity a look that was a mixture of amusement and annoyance. He found it funny that she managed to rile up Laurel enough and got her to lose control, but he didn't want that to bring her any problems in the future.
Finally he focused on DA Donner and asked politely, "Are you done here, because there is a board meeting Felicity is supposed to attend, and we can only postpone it for so long before we completely mess up everyone's schedule?"

"No, we are not done." Laurel was now standing ramrod straight and glaring at him.

"So you have more questions about the incident in the cafe? Because I told the police what happened, I answered your additional questions which basically boiled down to you wanting to know if you could somehow pin Carrie Cutter's actions to me... and then I spent the last ten minutes or so in a pissing contest with a woman who just can't-"

"Felicity." it was just one word, just her name coming out of Oliver's lips, and it calmed her instantly.

"We have no additional questions at this point for Miss Smoak." Adam Donner finally answered, after realizing things got more complicated because he failed to keep things in check. And he knew he had no one to blame but himself for this mess, he should have declined Laurel's offer to accompany him today. He wanted to find a hole in Felicity Smoak's story, not to pin it on her like she claimed, but to prevent Carrie from claiming temporary insanity because her lawyer was good and had a solid defense.

"So I can go now?" Felicity asked calmly, all the tension evaporating from her. She wasn't scared before, but having Oliver present helped with keeping calm in the presence of the DA and his, still fuming, assistant.

"Yes, but we'll keep in touch. There is a big possibility you will be called in as a witness against Carrie Cutter once the case goes to court. It's very important the jury hears all the facts to ensure the conviction in the first degree murder."

Felicity, who was nodding her head in understanding, suddenly paused and frowned, "How is that supposed to pass? Doesn't first degree murder mean she planed it in advance, cause that is how it works on Law and Order? Isabel's murder wasn't planed, Carrie said herself, in the cafe, she only killed her because she heard the threat I received. Before that she probably didn't even know who Isabel Rochev is. I actually mentioned that in the statement I gave to detective Lance." she took a deep breath before opening her mouth to say something else, but Oliver's hand suddenly grabbed hers, and she turned to look at him instead of speaking.

"We really need to go to that meeting." he said calmly, but Felicity could see apprehension in his eyes, and that confused her. But she didn't comment on it, and instead nodding silently, before turning towards the DA who now looked like he swallowed a lemon.

"If you have any additional questions you are welcome to contact me. I wish you luck with your case." Felicity spoke calmly, before she and Oliver excused themselves.

They were halfway down the corridor when DA and ADA exited the small conference room and headed towards the elevator. Felicity didn't know what possessed her to get up on her toes and kiss Oliver's cheek, but it got her a wide smile from her soulmate. And if it annoyed Laurel, well that's just the bonus.

"I'm sorry for dragging you away while you were on a roll, but you tend to babble, and it was only a matter of time before you mentioned the hit list on the wall, and the fact Isabel's photo was added after she was killed cause... you're not supposed to know about that." he stopped in the middle of the hallway, just few steps away from the double doors that led to the boardroom, causing Felicity to stop as well since he was still holding her head, "I didn't want you to give them ammunition against yourself."
Felicity just gave him a sappy smile before uttering, "You do love me."
Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

It took far longer than planned to finish this chapter cause I wanted it to be just right. And after several failed attempts here it is...

Oliver breathed a laugh at Felicity's words. She was such a bright person, and he knew he could always rely on her to lighten the darkness that wanted to swallow him whole. And her words were true. He loved her. It was so easy to admit it now, it seems insane that he struggled with that realizations, with those word, before.

Some of that brightness seemed to dim when she admitted, "It wasn't easy in there. I... had a bit of an issue. With the bloodlust."

Oliver's eyes widened in shock. He remembered, in great detail, the night she returned to Starling and the way he reacted. And he remembered her reaction. The rage, the shouting, the words that cut deep but every single one of them true. It didn't happened since. Not even when Isabel returned and taunted Felicity with the fact she got away with her crime.

"Was it because of something Laurel said?" he asked right away and then sighed. Of course it was because of his former girlfriend. His sister will be very kind in pointing out she was right the moment she hears about the additional questions the DA had for Felicity.

"Don't worry. I set her up straight and informed her you want to wait until our first wedding night, since I am worth more than some random chick you fucked on the first date. I worded it slightly different though. I didn't say fuck. I said sex. Cause I don't really like to curse. But I just did. I said fuck twice... now three times." Oliver blinked in shock when she punched him in the arm and glared at him, "Why didn't you stop me from cursing so much?"

Laughing apparently wasn't the right thing to do, because she punched his arm again. At this rate he'll have more bruises from her than the criminals he fights at night.

"She was trying to get a reaction out of you." he eventually said and got a nod of agreement from Felicity.

"My thought exactly. Maybe they wanted to say I had a temper, I don't know. Well DA Donner did mentioned I had a temper actually. I was kind of bitchy after that. Ra's warned me it would never go away, but remain dormant my whole life. I am afraid of it some times, when I allow myself to think about the future... when we have kids."

The words, the mentioning of their potential children, almost brought a wide smile to Oliver's face. But the sobering thought replaced the elation. She was afraid of the bloodlust and how it made her lose control, how it made her rage. And he instantly understood what she didn't voice. It was the same issue he had about being with her.

It was an unbearable thought that she might be hurt because of him, because of who he is. She was harmed already. She was almost injected with Vertigo because he is the Arrow, she was killed because he is Oliver Queen. He lived in perpetual fear of something like that repeating.
She struggled with the similar fear. What if she lost control of her bloodlust and somehow harmed a child they might have some day.

Before he could say anything about the matter, console her, and tell her he knew she would never do such a thing, Moira opened the door and stepped out of the boardroom.

"You've been standing there for five minutes now. We've been waiting you to enter so we can get this meeting over with and focus back on running the company. So come inside already." she scowled them halfheartedly, since she understood Oliver needed to make sure she was alright after the interview with the DA that Laurel was sitting in on.

"We'll discuss kids later." Oliver whispered to Felicity, but not silent enough, because Moira heard them and send a bright smile to the her son's soulmate. And the young woman instantly blushed brightly, before glaring at the man on her left who pretended he didn't notice the said glare as he was entering the boardroom.

Felicity smiled politely as the group of middle-aged men turned to look at her. She didn't noticed before that there wasn't a single woman sitting on the board, mostly cause she didn't really had much contact with the full QC board. And that realization made her worry that they would perceive her as nothing more than Oliver's former EA who was handed the position she didn't deserve because she was also his soulmate.

"I apologize for the wait. The DA wanted to ask me some additional questions about the events from three days ago." Felicity chose to right away bring up the subject, before one of the board members asks about it.

"That's quite alright. Moira had explained the reason for the delay already." it was Walter Steele who responded, and Felicity couldn't help but smile at the Brit. She wasn't aware he would be present today, but seeing as how he ran Queen Consolidated for over five years after Robert Queen's death, and was the main backer that helped Oliver retain the half of the company's stocks during the crisis, she understood why he was invited.

The fact he had a high opinion of her and knew how skillful she is, and that therefore she is the perfect candidate for a position that would deal with inventing and manufacturing part of the business, was just a bonus.

Oliver moved past Felicity, their fingers interlacing for a moment before he moved out of her reach. It was such a small, insignificant contact, but it still made her heart beat a bit faster, and brought a smile to her face. Of course now wasn't either time nor the place, as proven by Moira clearing her throat.

It brought Felicity back to reality and she moved to sit on her usual spot on Oliver's right. She didn't care if that was some sort of breach of etiquette, if as the VP she was supposed to sit opposite of Oliver and not next to him. That chair became her spot while they were fighting Stellmoor, it was their way of portraying an united front against anyone who wanted to take the company from the Queen family.

And now it would be their way of showing the board they are still working together, that they are still partners who are making sure Queen Consolidated prospers. Because both of them knew few board members had some doubts about the younger generation taking over, despite it basically being Oliver's birthright.

"May I start this meeting by congratulating Miss Smoak on the promotion." it was Ned Foster who spoke first. He has been a family friend for decades now, and knew Robert would be proud to see
his son in the CEO office. It has been his dream to witness it, but unfortunately he never did. And now the second most powerful position belonged to Oliver's soulmate. He just couldn't help but point out, "I believe I speak for everyone when I say it is good to see the leading positions are once more in the hands of the Queen family."

Felicity blinked in confusion at the man. It will take some time before she got used to the fact she was already seen as Oliver's wife, when she wasn't even his girlfriend. Well, it's possible she was, she just wasn't sure. She never had a boyfriend, and he didn't technically asked. Although people probably didn't do the whole 'will you be my girl' question past middle school.

"Yes, it will show stability to our current investors." Moira pointed out, earning a few nods of agreement from the board members. It was left unsaid that Oliver's past caused some damage to the company's image, he simply wasn't seen as a reliable CEO and a man who made wise choices, so several investors pulled out. The Queen matriarch was certain those investors will regret their haste decision.

Felicity will, as the Vice President, work with Oliver, instead of against him like Isabel Rochev has in her attempt to weaken the company. Her son already talked to her about their idea of how they would divide responsibilities, apparently he and Felicity discussed that already, and she just told him to do what they thought was best.

She could see on Oliver's face that he appreciated her trust in him, her belief that he would do the right thing for the family company. And right thing was having the woman who understood today's technology, and knew how to improve things, in charge of decisions regarding projects their Applied Science was working on. It was time QC starts moving forward with the green energy like they planed for years, something that will certainly affect their standing on the stock market.

"Now, Miss Rochev was in charge of-" Dennis Lewis started to speak, but was promptly cut off by Oliver. It earned him a displeased look from his mother, but he needed to make a point that things would not be run as they were when Isabel was haunting the hallways.

"Miss Smoak and I already discussed the best course of action. And we came to a conclusion the way things were run wasn't working for us. While neither of us had a MBA in business, I at least have some experience in running the company, due to the summer internships my father insisted on, which were just me shadowing him on meetings and helping him with paperwork. Miss Smoak on the other hand has two degrees from MIT, which makes her the best person for making sure QC is on top when it comes to our research and development departments."

If Felicity was surprised with the fact Oliver was referring her as Miss Smoak it didn't showed on her face, although she expected he would slip up and call her by her name a few times. It was better this way, they were showing the men, who doubted her promotion was a good choice, that there was a line between their personal and professional lives. Here in QC, in this boardroom, she wasn't his soulmate, here she was his partner and right hand.

"Yes, that would make sense." Walter cut in before any one else could, "I have to admit Queen Consolidated has been lagging behind in the past several years in comparison with a few other companies, and that is partially my fault. Some of the projects looked exceptionally good on the paper, but once approved ended up being a waste of money and time. Miss Smoak will have no such problem."

"I suggest a full audit of the departments that will be in your jurisdiction." Moira advised Felicity, and then after a pause, when the older woman realized how her words might be interpreted, added "Please don't see this as me telling you how to do this job, it is merely a suggestion that you would become more acquainted with all the projects and people working on them."
"Oh, I fully intended to do a full audit. It would be wise to know what I'm dealing with exactly, and then seeing if all those projects are even viable. Well I know for a fact several are questionable." Felicity replied, and then noticed several curious, and some worried looks, coming from the board members, "All the project reports went though my hands, since I was the CEO's EA."

"She is also the one who elaborated some terms that made no sense to me." Oliver added, looking at his soulmate with pride in his eyes.

"I remember those reports." Walter added with a smile, "I admit I had to use the dictionary several times. Not my proudest moments since, as the CEO, I was supposed to understand without a problem what it was we were working on. Today's technology is not really my cup of tea."

"If Mr. Queen and Miss Smoak believe that is the best course of actions, then the board will support them." Dennis Lewis spoke, "Although I suggest board meetings every two weeks for the next six months, mandatory for all executive officers, so we can follow the progress of this new and improved Queen Consolidated leadership."

Oliver tilted his head at the words. It didn't escaped his notice that what Lewis words were basically an insult veiled as a innocent comment. Few of the board members suddenly found the surface of the mahogany desk very interesting, while Moira was just smiling from the opposite side.

This moment, this one look, told her Oliver was holding all the threads in his hands. He would establish control over the board, and remind them he is in fact Robert Queen's son, son of the man who placed them all in this position of power.

"I'll make sure the meetings are marked in the calendar." Felicity said more coldly than she planed. Sure, she understood they had their doubts about her promotion, Moira pretty much decided and didn't leave them any choice but to agree with her nomination for the Vice President. But there is a fine line between being worried about the company's future, and being condescending and basically expecting her to fail.

"Oh, that reminds me Oliver will need a new assistant." Moira chose to change the subject and ease the sudden tension in the conference room.

Oliver, upon hearing his mother's words, turned towards Felicity and sighed, "Guess you will have a lot to do today, despite it being your final day as my EA."

Felicity just shrugged, "Just cause it's my final day it doesn't mean I can slack off. I already made plans to talk with Mr. Doyle in HR, have them check in the company for a viable replacement, or if necessary for a new hire. And set up meetings for the next week. With my promotion announced there are bound to be some investors requesting meetings to see now my naming would effect the company, and in relation them."

"Actually, Miss Smoak, HR will need to find two assistants." Ned Foster pointed out, and when Felicity looked at him in confusion he smiled at her kindly, "As a Vice President you are required to have one to manage your schedule. And we will also have to find you your own office. You are of course welcome to move into Miss Rochev's former office, two floors below the executive floor."

Oliver sent his mother a look, and she just nodded. She already made the necessary calls, all he needed to do is sign the all the forms that were already waiting on his desk.

"That won't be necessary. Since I am no longer holding any function in the company I won't require an office that Robert ensured I have on the executive floor when he founded the company." Moira informed the board, and Felicity turned to look at Oliver and see if he knew what his mother was
talking about. By the smile on his face it was obvious he was well aware of this decision. She knew there was another office on the executive floor, she also knew it was the office Oliver crashed into in his full you-have-failed-this-city glory. That particular evening ended with him bleeding out in the back of her Mini and her officially joining the team.

"And with that I believe we have covered everything." Ned Foster said with a single nod. Felicity bit her lip not to say anything. There was really no need for her to point out the board meeting didn't serve for anything but to confirm what was already decided previously, either by Moira, or by Oliver and herself. The board's agreement with the changes was more for the sake of them being in the loop.

After the meeting was done she left went downstairs to speak with the head of HR personally about the best course of action for getting assistants for Oliver and her, instead of just calling the man. Mr. Doyle was a big supporter of the believe a married woman should quit her job and become a stay at home mom. That seemed to be his only flaw, because he was an excellent department head; he was efficient and reliable. His whole department was functioning as a well-oiled machine.

He was just really old-fashioned.

Felicity herself had an unpleasant encounter with him in an elevator shortly after it became public knowledge she was Oliver's soulmate. She made it very clear back then that she would not be quitting her job, no matter how much she disliked being a glorified secretary. And today she was going to speak to him face to face because she was feeling petty, blame it on 'interview' with DA Donner and ADA Lance.

The conversation went better than expected, and they quickly agreed the best course of actions would be to find someone already employed in the company. There were few viable candidates for the positions, and since Gerry Conway worked as her replacement before, while she took time off to visit her mother, and was therefore familiar with how Oliver operated he was perfect for the position of CEO's Executive Assistant. Felicity on the other hand would get an intern as an assistant for the time being. She was fine with that. An intern was a better option than the guy who worked for Isabel, since she always clashed with over last moment changes in schedule. Those weren't his fault, but he was still a jerkface about it.

The elevator opened with a familiar ding and Felicity walked outside. She quickly looked in the direction opposite of her usual path she took every morning and wondered how many times she'll instinctively walk towards her EA station before realizing she was going in the wrong direction.

Felicity shook her head with a laugh before pushing open the glass door that led to CEO's office spaces. Her phone already buzzed a few times, signaling incoming e-mails, and she knew she couldn't waste any more time but get to work on setting up a schedule for the next week. It will be a long one, filled with meetings with investors for both of them, and with departments heads for her.

And then she saw it.

It looked ethereal, bathed in the light that passed through floor to ceiling windows. All shiny chrome and spotless glass. A beautifully crafted piece of art... but Felicity will not for a second miss her desk that was placed strategically in front of Oliver's office.

Nope.

No more secretarial duties for Felicity Smoak, MIT class of ’09.
Well, there are still some today, since she will formally become the Vice President on Monday.

"Everything alright, dear?" female voice made Felicity realize she was standing still in the middle of the room and staring at the desk.

A blush spread on her cheeks as she turned and noticed Moira watching her carefully. Oliver on the other hand was watching her with knowing eyes from his position behind the desk. He read right through her, the bastard.

"Yes, fine." Felicity finally answered, after realizing Moira was still waiting for her response, "Just caught in thoughts."

Oliver covered a laugh with a cough, a move that earned him a confused look from his mother and a halfhearted glare from his soulmate. Felicity actually adored seeing him like this, so carefree and playful. It rarely happened, since he was more often struggling under the pressure of living two lives, keeping them separated, and also one of them a secret from the general public.

"I was just about to ask Oliver if he would be home in time for dinner tonight. You are of course more than welcome to attend any time you wish, I know for a fact Raisa is already planing each meal with a possibility you would be present."

While Felicity was shocked by her words, wondering if Moira would seize with surprises today; first the office, and now a standing invitation to family meals, Oliver replied for her, "Actually mom, we have other plans."

"Oh?" the small smile on her son's face told the Queen matriarch he had a specific reason he wouldn't be attending, and she had a pretty good idea it was linked to his lovely soulmate.

"I am taking Felicity out on our first date, and also to celebrate her promotion." Oliver explained with a wide smile. He has been looking forward to this evening for a while now, to their first date, that got postponed too many times.

"That is wonderful! Did you already made a reservation? I'm presuming you chose Table Salt, they are the best restaurant in the city after all." Moira instantly went into planing mode, wondering what he had in mind for tonight.

Felicity snorted when Oliver shoot her a look. The Queen matriarch looked at her in confusion as she reached out and pulled the doors of the office closed, with her remaining outside of it. But then the older woman laughed, realizing how in tune they were. And that her son tried his best to keep his plans a surprise from his soulmate, a rather difficult feat considering they were together for over 12 hours a day.

Felicity ignored the muffled voices coming from behind the glass walls, the office wasn't soundproof, but not everything could be heard from it either. Especially if people inside spoke in hushes voices like they did right now.

She didn't liked surprises... Well technically she didn't like mysteries and had the need to solve every one she came across. But she chose to let Oliver keeps his plans a secret, instead of hacking his phone and finding out what he has in plans for their date night. It was a struggle, and her palms sometimes itched with the need to get into his call history, but she resisted. She wasn't blind, she could see how happy he was and how much he wanted to do something special. She didn't want to ruin that for him.

The official e-mail account she handled as Oliver's EA was overflowing with messages from
different investors and partners, as expected, all demanding a meeting as soon as possible, in nicer words of course. In another screen Felicity opened Oliver's calendar and sighed. His schedule wasn't overflowing, but he didn't have many free slots either. She made sure he had at least two hours a day free to deal with reports and she rarely scheduled lunch meetings.

But it seems now back to back meetings will be a must if they wanted to deal with everyone as soon as possible, so they could go back to dealing with more mundane stuff needed to run a company the size of Queen Consolidated.

Felicity understood she stepped in what was still very much a man's world. Soulmates weren't usually given high positions in companies, but were instead expected to stay in the background and act as dutiful wives. Moira was an exception since she helped her husband start the company by investing the money she brought into their marriage. But exceptions like her were rare.

The ding of the elevator was heard in the background, but Felicity didn't even noticed. She was too absorbed in her attempt to stuff as many meetings she could into one week, without any investor believing that another one was more important for getting a better slot in Oliver's schedule. For high risk takers those men, and a few women, were quite fragile when it came to their feelings of importance. But when a person stepped right in front of her desk Felicity had to look up and see who it was that is pretty much demanding her attention.

And then a wide smile spread on her face at the sight of John Diggle looking down on her.

Before she managed to greet him Dig pointed towards the office and asked, "What's going on? Mrs. Queen isn't taking back her decision to promote you, right?"

The blonde turned to look towards the office, saw Oliver was still deep in a discussion with his mother that he didn't even realized Diggle arrived, before she shook her head and focused back on her friend, "Nope. I'm starting on Monday. Today is my last day as Oliver's glorified secretary."

"Well, that deserved a celebration. And a congratulation, which is why I came in today. You'll do great as VP Felicity." Diggle said with a smile, and she just had to jump up and go around the desk to give him a big hug.

"I'm glad to see you, but you really should be home with your girls. I don't want you to miss any big moments."

Dig just snorted, "Right now all I can miss is feeding time and diaper change. Francesca isn't doing much just yet. So... celebration."

"Yeah." Felicity leaned on her desk, and then froze for a moment when she nudged the computer screen. She so did not want to accidentally knock it down, so she carefully moved away and turned to look over her shoulder if everything was still on it's place; while ignoring Diggle's smile of amusement at her antics. Deciding it would be safer the tech if she just went back on her seat, and concluding that as her friend Dig wouldn't mind if she was sitting while he was still standing in front of her station, Felicity moved back around the desk and plopped down on the office chair, "What were we talking about just now... celebration. Right... um..."

"What's going on?" now he was starting to worry. If John Diggle knew one thing it was that Felicity Smoak never declined an invitation on a party of any kind.

"I'm sort of already having a celebration tonight. Oliver is taking me out on a date."

"Good." Diggle said shortly, before noticing Felicity looked sheepish, "I am not upset in any way
that you would rather celebrate with Oliver only, instead of having a bigger get together. The two of 
you kept postponing that date I started to worry it would never happen."

"It just wasn't the right time before... with everything. But now things are calm and there is no 
homicidal maniac stalking the streets. We can have a night off from all the madness." she pointed 
towards the office, "That is what's going on, by the way. They are discussing Oliver's plans, as odd 
as that sounds."

Dig frowned at her, "Why would that be odd?"

Felicity just shrugged, hoping to avoid the answer. But her friend had a very specific look that 
always made her fess up, and she had a feeling that look will make it impossible for little Francesca 
to keep anything from her dad in the future, "Mrs. Queen gave me the key to the front door of the 
mansion." she lowered her voice to ensure her words can't be heard on the other side of the glass 
wall, "I felt like she disliked me for months, and now she's basically my biggest supporter."

"That is a good thing Felicity. And there is also no need for you to be worried about the date either."

The sudden change of subject threw her off for a moment, "Worried? I'm not worried. Why would I 
be?"

"Because the two of you already exhausted every possible conversation subject." Diggle offered, his 
eyes sparkling with mischief, "And also you already seen him shirtless."

"Funny." Felicity grumbled, but she had to shrug cause it was true. The shirtless part anyway, 
because they have so many things to talk about, so many things they didn't know about each other. 
And while Oliver's life was mostly plastered on the front pages of tabloids, there is a side of him that 
no one but his family knew, and that is the side she admired. Not the playboy billionaire who liked to 
party, but the boy who read books to his sister, who was a loyal friend, and a hero.

"I like to think so." Dig said with a smile.

"For your information there are still a lot of things for us to discuss." Felicity said in a-matter-of-fact 
voice.

Her friend looked at her for a moment, an amusement obvious in his expression, before asking 
casually, "Like marriage and children?"

Felicity gasped at his words, aware that he was joking and, because he knew her well and knew she 
was actually nervous, trying to distract her. But while her brain was aware of the fact her mouth was 
one more faster, and she ended up shouting, "We don't even live together!"

Diggle instantly started to laugh, his large frame shaking. Felicity ignored him and focused back on 
her task. Or more accurately, she was ignoring the curious looks of the mother and son who turned 
towards her when they heard her outburst. She could feel her cheeks flaming in embarrassment, and 
she silently swore revenge. John Diggle will remember the day he messed with her. She will dig out 
that ancient ringtone of chipmunks having sex, that forever ruined the experience of watching Alvin 
and the Chipmunks for her, and set it up as his default ringtone.

And then call him at the least appropriate time.

"Mr. Diggle, it is good to see you again." Moira's voice made Felicity turn away from the computer 
screen for a moment, before her eyes snapped back on the screen when she saw the Queen matriarch 
was looking in her direction, "I heard you became a father. Congratulation."
"Thank you, ma'am." Diggle replied politely. Felicity was right, it is weird having Moira Queen acting all friendly.

The older women than wished them both a good day and walked away in the direction of the elevator. She was unaware of the look the two friend shared, her mind already working on planing the next charity event. Now that the company is in good hands she can dedicate more time helping people, something she enjoyed immensely, even though it brought with itself the requirement of playing nice with the remaining elite of Starling city. She might be one of them, but even to Moira handling them was extremely tiring.

"It's great to see yo Dig, but shouldn't you be home with your girls?" Oliver asked his friend, unknowingly using pretty much the same words as Felicity.

"I had to come and personally congratulate Felicity on her promotion. Saw the public announcement on TV, and decided to drop by despite the week off you basically forced me to have." Diggle replied, and got a snort from Felicity. Forced. Yeah, that is not exactly the right word to use, but it works in lack of any other that could be used to describe Oliver informing his friend spending time with his partner and a newborn daughter is far more important than acting as a bodyguard for a man who doesn't actually need one.

Oliver was about to point out just that, when Felicity's phone signaled she had a new text. A quick check to see who it was, and what was going on, and she started to laugh. Her boys were looking at her strangely, but she just couldn't stop herself. She took a few deep breaths to calm herself, looked at Diggle, and instantly started again.

"I think she's laughing at you, man." Oliver commented offhandedly.

"Seems that way." his friend responded, wondering what in the world got that reaction out of the blonde. What the hell was written in that text that got her in stitches.

"Sorry... sorry..." Felicity wheezed out, "It was Lyla, letting you know you left your phone at hoime in your haste. She's also letting you know you can come back now, she's not mad at you anymore for waking up Frances, and she's sorry for throwing you out. You are calling her Frances for short? That is so sweet."

"Lyla threw you out?" Oliver asked with a smile, earning himself a glare from his friend.

"Don't you have work to do?" Diggle asked back.

"Yes he does." Felicity offered an answer, looking pointedly at her soulmate. He really did have things he should be doing.

"And I'll get right onto it. But first." Oliver looked at Diggle, "I need your input on... some things."

Both men threw Felicity an amused look as she sputtered about schedules and paperwork. She huffed when the glass doors of the office closed, because she now had no excuse not to get back at setting up the meetings. The whole thing reminded her a lot of the long nights in IT department filled with report tickets filled by people who supposed to be skilled professionals, but didn't know how to solve the simplest problem on their own.

Ten minutes later, ten minutes filled with some serious discussions and hand waiving, Diggle exited the office, looked at Felicity, and shook his head. The reaction confused, and for some reason made her worry, so right away Felicity asked, "What?"

"Don't worry. I reared him in." Dig replied.
"What?" Felicity's eyes moved from his, to the man behind the glass wall, before turning back at Diggle. "What do you mean-"

"I'll be picking you up at 7 tonight." was all he offered before turning around and walking away. It was time he got back to his girls anyway. Although he was glad he decided to drop by today, cause that boy... Diggle honestly couldn't understand him sometimes. He really thought his plan was a good idea, and it was... just not for the first date.

It was obvious Oliver Queen didn't know how to keep things simple, but even he should know it was over the top to turn a first date in a whole weekend away on a whole different continent. He couldn't wait until he was home again so he could share it all with Lyla. She would have a blast hearing what Oliver initially planed. And then possibly ask him when he would so something so romantic for her.

Felicity spend another few minutes after Diggle left staring at Oliver through the glass wall. He of course ignored her gaze intentionally, she was certain he knew she was looking at him. Someone as aware as him always knew when he got someone's attention. But he seemed focused on work, for a change, so finally she sighed and returned to managing his calendar.

Usually she was working late, but today the moment the clock in the corner of her screen showed it was 5PM Felicity was turning it off and packing her things. The movement got Oliver's attention, and he walked out of his office just as she was putting on her coat.

With a snort of amusement he moved around her to assist, due to the fact one sleeve just wasn't where it was supposed to be and she kept turning on the spot trying to catch it. A warm hand touched the side of her throat as he fixed her collar and Felicity looked over her shoulder to send him a grateful smile. Today was a day she doubted would ever happen, but somehow they managed to repair the damage between them. It took a lot of courage on her part to jump in and trust him with her heart after everything, and she still wasn't completely certain she had made the right choice. Those insecurities will probably never go away completely, but will remain as dormant as her bloodlust.

"Diggle said he was picking me up tonight." Felicity said after picking up her purse.

"He is." Oliver replied, "I wanted to be the one to do it, and initially I was going to, but with the change of plans I found it would be better if I was here to ensure everything is set."

"Here? As in Queen Consolidated here?" Felicity stared at her soulmate in confusion, "Please tell me we wouldn't deal with paperwork for our date."

Oliver breathed out a laugh at her panicked voice. The halfhearted glare she sent him only made him laugh even more, and he couldn't help it but reach out and take her hand in his. It was such a small thing to do, a completely innocent tough that felt so damn right. He never done that before, never intentionally reached out to take a girl's hand. He made a move to kiss one, to seduce one, but this felt much more intimate than that.

"Tonight will not be about our jobs, but about us. And no, we will not have our date in the office... or anywhere inside the building." he assured her.

"But you said-"

"Felicity." it only took him saying her name, in the way only he does, for her to bite her bottom lip and blush, "I want it to be special... our date. Unique, like you. And I want us to have time for ourselves, without anyone intruding. So go home and get ready, and don't worry about anything."
She wanted to press the matter, but it wasn't important. Not really. Truth be told she would prefer dinner in the Foundry over trying to figure out which fork to use in some fancy restaurant that Queen's are expected to visit regularly. Instead she focused on more important matters, namely clothes, "What should I wear? I mean-

"Whatever you want. You don't have to dress up for me Felicity. I think you look beautiful even if you wear jeans and..." Oliver looked down and smiled, "And shoes with doughnuts. You are aware the press will mention it in report about your promotion."

But Felicity shrugged, "I like them."

"And I like you." Oliver replied before giving her a peck on the cheek, "You can always wear that knitted dress you ordered online. That's right, I noticed you using the computers in the Foundry for something other than Arrow business."

"Hey! I put those computers together, therefore I am their God and can use them for anything." Felicity poked him in the chest and Oliver looked down and noticed her nail color matched the pink frosting from the pastries printed on her shoes. He adored this little details about her, and was so focused on it he didn't hear her add, "It's the rest of you who are a menace for the system."

"What?" he asked after a moment of silence.

But Felicity just shook her head instead of replaying. She got up on her toes and planted a soft kiss on his cheek, "I'll see you later." she said gently before moving away, forcing him to let go of her hand finally. She did looked over her shoulder when she reached the elevator and noticed him giving her a seriously heated look. A look that made her gulp and look forward to that goodnight kiss he promised her.

During the ride down to the underground garage she pondered on his suggestion. That dress she ordered was really nice, not exactly first date material, but it was a new dress for a new beginning. She could work with that.

Diggle was at her front door at 7 o'clock sharp. Unlike his friend, and boss, he was the epitome of punctuality, probably a result of his military training. Felicity opened the door, without even looking at him, and rushed back to her bedroom to put on the boots that were in the back of her closet since Russia. She was a bit late due to a long phone conversation with her mother.

Donna Smoak was a gusher. She went on and on about how happy she was for her daughter, and how proud her little girl made her. And then she made both of them cry by mentioning Felicity's late father would have been just as proud at her amazing accomplishments. Donna of course made her promise to visit again in the few months, even suggested she and Oliver drop by together in February because nothing beats Valentine's day in Las Vegas.

The casino where Donna worked had a big party organized, but Felicity experienced enough Vegas Valentine's day parties, and she really didn't want to live through another one, so she made an excuse of February being over two months away and Oliver possibly planning something special. That got Donna to drop the subject and gush some more.

"Looking good there, Miss Smoak." Diggle commented with a wide smile. Honestly, today was the day he had been waiting for since that time he followed Oliver, who was still battling the effects of Vertigo, to Queen Consolidated so he could hand over the sample of the drug to someone he knew there to analyze. That someone turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to his friend. The fact she was his soulmate was just a bonus.
Although Felicity probably cursed her mark and its existence a few times.

"So... what exactly did Oliver planed for tonight?" she just had to ask. Chances were Diggle wouldn't tell her, but she had to try and get the information out of him.

"A surprise." was the answer she received, and Felicity sighed. Yep, no info sharing tonight, "A smaller surprise than he initially planed though."

"You aren't going to tell me what that one was either, aren't you?" It was a rhetorical question, something Diggle was well aware of, so he just smiled at his friend who was now exiting her bedroom with a pair of boots in her hands.

Felicity plopped on the couch and pulled on her footwear of choice for tonight, before grabbing a coat that was thrown over the backrest and pulled it on after getting up. Her ID and phone were safely tucked in pockets, since she decided to forgo a purse.

Diggle happened to glance on his watch just as she looked at him, and Felicity was about to mention she's aware that she's running late, when he interrupted her, "Don't worry about the time. Oliver will be right there waiting for you. I'm just checking cause I need to figure out the best route to our destination right now."

Felicity wasn't completely convinced, but she nodded in acceptance anyway. She took a deep breath and grabbed her keys from a fruit bowl that was placed on the kitchen peninsula, that's where she usually drops them after returning home.

"Let's go. I have a date." she said with a flourish, making Diggle smile at her widely.

Felicity was watching through the window as the lights were moving by. It all felt so surreal, and she expected to wake up any moment now, in the darkness of her bedroom, and face the reality in which Oliver doesn't love her. It was her greatest fear; to remain alone with nothing but a burning mark.

She was snapped out of her gloomy thoughts when Diggle pressed the car horn. She caught his gaze in the rear-view mirror and smiled when he rolled his eyes. They were friends long enough to know each others biggest pet peeve. She hated when someone abused their tech, he detested drivers who waited almost ten seconds to move once the light turned green.

Fortunately for them the traffic wasn't as bad as it was sometimes at this time of the night, which made Felicity wonder if there was some important sports game going on right now, cause she once experienced streets completely void of all vehicles and later realized it was cause of Super Bowl. Whatever it was she wasn't going to complain about it. It meant Diggle could return to his girls sooner since they were right on time at... Felicity looked outside and her eyes widened. He said they wouldn't have their date here, so why the hell...

Diggle either didn't noticed her confusion, or ignored it because he knew exactly what Oliver has planed for tonight, because he silently parked the car in front and walked out to open the door for her. Felicity stopped out on the sidewalk before the stairs that led to Queen Consolidated building and turned to look at her friend.

"Go upstairs to the executive floor." he instructed shortly and turned to get back inside the car and drive away. Felicity pondered briefly if she should stop him and ask yet again what Oliver has planed, because this was just odd, but she let him drive away instead. He had a soulmate and a baby girl to go home to, and she had a date to attend... no matter how strange the location seemed.

And she trusted Oliver. That was why she looked up, towards the top most floor, and smiled widely.
That man was so infuriating sometimes, but he loved her. He asked her on a date several times before she agreed, he was upset every time they had to postpone. She would have been okay with them going to some random restaurant, maybe the nice Italian place a few blocks from here, the one she heard him mentioning a few days ago while talking to his sister.

That made her wonder if this was merely a pit stop, so to speak. Maybe he stayed longer at the office to deal with all the things needed to ensure the smooth transition Monday, and they would go to the location of their date from here together. There were so many possibilities. But only way to know for sure was to go upstairs where the CEO's office was and find out.

And that is exactly what she did.

Felicity waved at the night guard at the reception, who send her a smile, and a nod, before turning back to the screen in front of him. The security feeds switched every fifteen seconds, a feature she personally installed just weeks after getting employed when QC switched to better quality cameras on every floor. It was her first big project; she did it in record time and it still worked without a single glitch.

The elevator seemed to move slower than usual, and after a few moments Felicity started fidgeting and playing with the hem of her coat. She was suddenly feeling nervous for some reason, and not even the Pepto she had just before Diggle picked her up didn't helped with the slight nausea.

The ding signaled she arrived on her destination, and the doors began to open. And it was like in some romantic movie; she slowly lifted her gaze from the floor, higher and higher, until their eyes locked and the time stood still. It didn't actually, as proven by the elevator doors that started to close while she was standing frozen and staring at Oliver instead of exiting.

Instantly his hand reached out and stopped the metal doors from closing, from cutting her off from his heated gaze, and then he reached out with that same hand... offered it for her to take. And she did.

In his other hand Oliver held a bouquet of pink roses, which he held out to her the moment Felicity stepped out of the elevator. She accepted it with a smile, before pointing out, "Usually a guy gives his date flowers when he picks her up from her place so she can right away put them in the water."

Oliver just shrugged, "I had to make sure everything is ready and to my standards." that got him an intrigues look from his soulmate. She looked so beautiful tonight... for their date. Before Felicity managed to blink he leaned down and kissed her cheek, "I promise to do that next time."

She remained silent as he led her away from the direction of his own office, and towards the other side of the building. For a moment she wondered if he was taking her to see the office that would be hers coming Monday, but Oliver paused in front of the door opposite of the big conference room where they attended a board meeting just this morning. Felicity never checked but she thought that was an additional supply closet.

It wasn't.

Beyond the door was a staircase, and she threw Oliver a confused look. But he only smiled at her mysteriously and led her forward and up the single flight of stairs until they reached another door. This one was made out of metal and in that moment Felicity realized where they were going. And she couldn't believe she didn't realized it sooner, since it was so obvious. Oliver said their date wouldn't be inside the building. And it wasn't.

It was on top of it.
The chilly air greeted them once the door was pushed open, but Felicity ignored it, and instead focused on the lovely sight in front of her. An immaculately decorated table for two near the edge of the roof, but not too close because Oliver knew she was scared of heights. Several candles placed in lanterns that illuminated the area with a soft glow, and another candle in the center of the table because that is the biggest cliche when it came to romantic dinners. And because the November was coming to a close an outdoor space heater to prevent them from freezing and ruining the romance of the first date.

Two plates of food were already waiting for them, covered with shiny metal cloche that was keeping the food warm. And just off the round table was a trolly, one Felicity was pretty sure she saw in the mansion during a dinner her mother and she attended. Only then it was in the corner of the large dining room and contained bottles of liquor. Now two more cloches were placed on the bottom shelf, while the top one held a bottle of red wine and two glasses. And an empty vase already filled with water for her flowers.

"You had all this set up after I left. It's been only two hours." Oliver snorted at her words, something that earned him a curious look from his soulmate.

"Actually Thea and Roy were waiting in the van down in the parking lot for you to leave." he revealed with a smile, "I never expected the vehicle we use exclusively for vigilante business would someday be used to haul tables and chairs. And two dozen candle lanterns. Because apparently solar lamps don't set up a proper mood."

Once the flowers were safe from withering away Felicity moved to remove her coat. It was cold outside, but the heater helped tremendously, as did the fact her dress was made out of soft wool. Oliver took the coat from her hands before she could place it on the back of her chair, and did so himself, before he pulled it out for her to sit.

Felicity watched him move around the place with ease, watched him open the bottle and pour them both a glass of wine, before he carefully placed it next to her plate. Gone was the tension from his shoulders, gone was the frown and broodiness. Oliver Queen was content tonight, happy, elated. He watched her like he couldn't believe she was here, like she was the most precious being in the whole world.

With a flair he lifted the metal lid from their plates, revealing their meal for tonight, before he took a seat opposite of her.

"Will you tell me what it is?" she asked once he was seated.

"Of course. It is duck breast with gratin dauphinous." Oliver revealed, "I went with desert instead of a starter, I hope you don't mind."

Felicity shook her head, "I don't mind in the least. But... French?"

"Yes. Ummm..." Oliver scratched the back of his neck, "It's because my initial plan, one that Diggle informed me was way over the top for the first date, was to take you to Paris."

"Oh." was all Felicity said. Because what else could she say at that revelation?

"Yeah." Oliver nodded, "Apparently a whole weekend on another continent was too much for the first date. My mother on the other hand thought it would be perfect, but then again she prefers things to be a bit grand. She particularly liked my idea of taking you to visit Roschchild vinery."

Felicity almost sighed at that idea. While she agreed with Diggle on the trip being too much for the
first date, that particular field-trip she wouldn't mind taking. Her filter malfunctioned, and she blurted out, "We can go on our honeymoon."

She expected to see amusement on Oliver's face, since that was his default expression when her mouth ran faster than her brain, but instead he was looking at her with so much adoration she blushed and looked down on her plate.

"I would gladly take you wherever you want to go. We can go to Paris, London, Rome. We can visit Bali and enjoy sunny beaches. Hawaii works too. Australia."

"Nope." Felicity interrupted him at this point, "No place with kangaroos."

"Right." Oliver breathed out a laugh, "No Australia then."

The conversation trailed off at that, and instead they focused on the food in front of them that was rapidly going cold. Another proof that an actual restaurant might have been a better choice, but the way Felicity looked around them, over the city, told Oliver she liked being so high despite her fear. They had the perfect, unobstructed, sight over the city they protected at night.

Felicity bit her lip and glanced towards Oliver. Diggle teased her earlier about two of them not having things to talk about, instead of her making things awkward by saying the wrong thing. Only it didn't seemed like Oliver minded. Not in the least. She was the one who felt awkward after the gaff of mentioning marriage. Her soulmate, the man who was once called a relationship-phobe and voted 'least likely to ever settle down with one woman' by several tabloids and internet sites, seemed to be dead set on marrying her. He told her so weeks ago.

And he told her he loves her.

But deep down there was a spark of uncertainty that refused to be put out. Her own doubt in happy endings, fueled by her father's death and her mother's heartbreak, and the fact he went out almost every night and fought criminals armed with far more advanced weapons chances didn't helped either. She would never ask him to stop though, not when she knew being the Arrow is a big part of who he is as a person.

"You are thinking too much." Oliver's voice made Felicity blink and realize she's been staring at him this whole time without actually seeing him. His brow was furrowed, and he was watching for for signs of distress, "What's wrong?"

Felicity shook her head, she didn't want to reveal her uncertainty to him and hurt his feelings. She didn't doubt his words or his love for her, not anymore. But Oliver was persistent. He reached out and too her free hand, his grip firm but at the same time she could pull free at any time if she wanted. That tenderness, that worry, was what finally got her to admit her fears of losing him. And Oliver understood.

"I don't want you to quit being the Arrow for me, I can't put my own desires before the safety of thousands of people living in the city. But I am so damn terrified of hearing you die over the comms and not being able to do anything."

Oliver listened to her words carefully, silently agreeing with everything she said. All except one thing. Her desire was far more important than the entire population of Starling. All she had to do is say the word and he would lock the hood in the chest and leave it to the past where it came from. But he knew she never would, she was far to selfless to put herself first. But there was one thing he could do.
"I want you to do something for me. I'm giving you free reign, you can have it any way you want." he started and instantly Felicity bit her bottom lip. That combined with a blush on her cheeks made it clear she was considering something quite different than what he had in mind, and he couldn't help but chuckle.

"Get on with it Oliver. I can have it any way I want..." she waivered her hand for him to continue.

"I want you to redesign the Arrow suit." he said seriously, causing her to gap at him, "I know this isn't exactly a subject fitting for the first date, but-

"This is exactly the right subject." Felicity cut him off, "This is you wanting to ease my mind about your dangerous night activities, and I totally approve. And don't worry, I will make sure the hood remains the same."

"You don't have to do that." Oliver said honestly, surprising his soulmate. She knew how much the dark green fabric meant to him, she understood the need to make someone proud. She wasn't jealous of Shado, of the connection she once shared with Oliver. She wasn't resentful that the long dead woman slept with her soulmate. And she didn't mind him wearing the hood in her honor. Shado was one of those who helped Oliver become the incredibly strong man, both physically and mentally, he was today.

That was the man she loved.

Felicity squeezed his hand, causing Oliver to look down on the table where they rested. Her grip was strong, she wasn't letting him go.

The sudden gush of wind caused the candle on their table to go out, causing Oliver to sigh and murmur something about battery powered ones and Thea's opinion on right mood under his breath. The ones in the lanterns placed all around them were still lit, so they weren't bathed in complete darkness. Felicity expected him to use one of them to rekindle the one that had gone out, but instead she watched him move the candlestick on the trolley and place the metal lantern on it's spot in the middle of the round table.

"You didn't really think things though." Felicity couldn't help but hide her amusement at his annoyance with the weather and opinionated sister.

"I wanted it to be special. Private. No one staring at us, no staff member informing the paps where we are, but no... I didn't really think things through. Paris is still an option." Oliver finished with an offer and a wink.

Felicity let go of her fork, she kept holding it despite the fact she hadn't taken a bite in the past ten minutes, and leaned forward so she could take his hand with both of hers. Oliver instantly followed her lead and moments later they we both leaning forward, their hands in the middle of the table, their fingers interlaced.

"I would go to the end of the world with you. I went to Lian Yu for you. And I want to go to Paris. But not today... and it doesn't have to be for our honeymoon." she smiled widely at him as an idea came to her mind, thinks to her mother's suggestion earlier tonight during their phone conversation, "We can go next year. For Valentine's day."

Oliver smiled widely at her words. It was another step forward for them, making plans for the future that was suddenly looking far brighter. He would not forget what she just suggested. He would inform whomever becomes his EA, right away Monday morning when he gets to work, he needs three days in February in his calendar cleared, not just 14th but the days before and after, because
just one with Felicity in Paris won't be enough.

Felicity was first to look away, her eyes moving to the plate in front of her. She wasn't as hungry as she thought she would be, and she didn't even finish the small restaurant portion of her delicious food. She still had few bites left, but because their emotionally charged conversation caused them to ignore their meal, it has gone cold now.

Oliver quickly replaced the plates with small round bowls filled with vanilla custard creme with a layer of crunchy caramel on top. Of course he went with Creme brulee for French desert, something she was really happy for since she loved it, but Felicity couldn't help it but to tease him.

"And here I was expecting cheese fondue. I love cheese."

Oliver shook his head at her words, before revealing, "I'll make you cheese souffle someday, Raisa has a great receipt. Thea actually wanted to go with chocolate fondue. But I informed her that is better for more intimate setting."

Felicity looked around, confused by his words, "What is more intimate than the top of a building without anyone else in sight?"

Oliver gave her a wicked grin before replying, "A bedroom."

"Oh." escaped Felicity's lips for the second time tonight. He really went above and beyond to leave her speechless tonight. She would not get him away with this one though. Felicity bit her bottom lip and batted her lashes a few times, looking as coy a she possibly could, considering she was struggling not to laugh at his suddenly shocked expression, "I like the way you are thinking, Mr Queen."

Oliver muttered a curse under is breath, a blush spreading on his cheeks, and moved a bit on his chair to rearrange his pants, causing Felicity to laugh at his discomfort. Suits him right.

After a moment Oliver cleared his throat, his face still a bit flushed from the sudden physical reaction Felicity caused his body to have. And here he was certain he had control over himself. He should have known when it came to his soulmate all bets were off.

Felicity chose to give him a moment to compose himself, and instead took a desert spoon and broke the caramel layer of her desert. The crunchy sound was so loud in the silence that surrounded them and Oliver looked at her just as she was taking a small amount of the creme and moved to eat it. His gaze followed the spoon, watched her slowly move it out of her mouth and lick her lips to ensure nothing escaped. And he gulped.

So much for calming down his more primal urges.

"So Thea is annoyed." he suddenly blurted out, surprising both Felicity and himself. He reached for his own spoon, his other hand now lying on his thigh clenched into a fist, and ate a bit of the desert. It really was as good as he remembered.

"Annoyed about what?" Felicity asked when it became clear he wasn't going to elaborate his words.

"She stared at Roy a few times while we were setting everything up and then sighed. She probably wishes he would do something romantic for her."

Felicity rolled her eyes, "Roy can't exactly cash out a few thousand dollars for lanterns and patio furniture, not to mention gourmet food, in a blink of an eye. But he's being romantic in other ways. I thought they understood that he's showing his affection by cooking for her when she stays over at
his place, and dealing with horrible girls who either come to Verdant to poke fun at him and call him inadequate, or to seduce him to hurt Thea."

"What girls?" that revelation got Oliver's attention, but Felicity refused to tell him their names.

"Look, I already dealt with them in my own way after finding out. But apparently they are leaving good tips, despite being bitches, so Roy doesn't want to have them blacklisted and leave the staff without that extra money. Any just so you know, he is saving those tips money to buy a ring for Thea, so in the end he wins."

"A ring?" Oliver asked after a moment of silence.

"Of course you would focus on that." Felicity mumbled, before pointing a spoon at him, "You will not reveal that to Thea under any circumstances. And you will not interfere."

She was staring at him seriously, and Oliver couldn't help but laugh at her protectiveness of Thea and Roy's relationship. But when she raised an eyebrow at his reaction, without backing down, he sobered, "I promise you I wouldn't do anything that could endanger their happiness. But if he hurts her I will shoot him in the knee."

Felicity just shook her head at his words, "I wouldn't expect anything less."

"Okay, enough about my sister. It's time to go back to us." Oliver suddenly said, making Felicity smile widely. She loved it when he refereed to them as *us*. They were an us, they were together, a couple... dating.

"Am I your girlfriend?" Felicity blurted and then blushed. She didn't mean to ask that, but she honestly wanted to know what he thought about her, what she was to him.

The adoration in Oliver's eyes made feel more cherished than ever before. As his his words when he informed her, "Girlfriend is not powerful enough word to describe you and your meaning to me. Not even wife would be enough. You are the other half of me, the half I was missing for so long. You are my always and forever, and... I love you Felicity."

She wanted to say it back. She really did. But her throat closed off, and a few tears escaped. Rarely was Felicity Smoak left speechless, and unable to hide her emotions. She would say it though, she would. Before their date was officially over she would tell him how she felt about him, she would reveal to him how much he meant to her as much as she meant to him.

They were standing in front of her apartment doors when that opportunity came. He drove her back home himself once they finished their desert and indulged some more in good wine and even better company. One of his ostentatious cars waited in the CEO's space in the underground garage, something silver and sleek and truly a miracle of technology. Felicity didn't care which logo was on the hood, she was more interested in all the options the computer integrated in the dashboard offered.

The ride was too short, the night came to a close too soon. She asked about going to the Foundry and check the searches and police scanner, but Oliver wouldn't hear about it. Diggle was home with his family, and he didn't want to go out without his partner as backup. He didn't want for her to worry about losing him, not when the night started to wonderful.

As a gentleman Oliver followed her up several flights of stairs and down the hallway to her apartment. Felicity stopped in front of her door and took out the keys from her coat pocket, absently pushing it in the lock and unlocking the door while she pondered on how to broach the subject. Finally she decided to just say it.
"You promised me a goodnight kiss." she turned to look at him over her shoulder, and noticed his gaze was focused on her.

"So I did." he replied and took her hand. Gentle pull caused her to turn around and face him, her head leaning back as she moved closer to her, right into her personal space. He was so freakish tall, she had to look way up to keep eye contact.

"Oliver?" his name was merely a whisper that filled the air between them as he leaned down, his nose touching hers for a moment.

"Hm?" he mumbled absently, intoxicated by her mere presence.

"I love you too."

Oliver didn't say anything to that, didn't replied.

He just kissed her.
Chapter 25

One year.

An entire year has past since their first date, and at times Oliver still felt like he was dreaming. Feared that he was dreaming. Because everything seemed far too good to be true, to be his life. The journey he started when he returned from Lian Yu had always meant to end with his death somewhere on the streets of Glades, fighting alone to protect the city. It is what he envisioned, what he expected.

But then things changed. Diggle joined. Felicity followed soon after. The Hood was gone, with him the mindless recklessness. Now he was the Arrow, the hero of Starling city. The protector, rather than a killer.

The old suit was gone as well, packed away with other things that reminded him of those five years he spent fighting for his bare existence. He no longer wore it, no longer felt the need to honor Shado by hiding under the green hood that was once hers. It might have seemed like a difficult decision to make, but it was actually quite easy.

A memory could not keep him safe on the streets. Cloth, no matter how sturdy, no matter what its sentimental value was, could not keep a bullet from piercing his heart. And that is exactly what would have happened last night if he still wore it.

With a sigh Oliver tossed the cover off and sat up. It was still too early to get up and get ready for work, but he couldn't sleep anymore. He could barely sleep during the night, tormented by the events from previous evening. Felicity’s startled cry, her panic and fear. The way she called his name, and begged him to say he was alright.

He was far too close to death, and they all knew it. The high-density kevlar armor could withstand gunfire at point-blank range, but the bastard he was after was packing certain type of armor piercing bullets available only to the military. The fact helped them narrow down a list of suspects responsible for the latest heists of armored bank trucks, but seriously pissed off Diggle.

The person next to him stirred, but did not wake, something Oliver was grateful for. She was practically dead on her feet when they stumbled into her apartment, and he didn't want to accidentally wake her up before her alarm clock started blaring. He'll try and persuade her to stay home today instead of going to the office, to go to the spa with his sister and just relax, but chances were her sense of responsibility to the company would win and she'll spend next eight to ten hours dealing with paperwork and in meetings. That was just how Felicity was.

Oliver carefully closed the bedroom door behind himself, and walked to the kitchen. His first task was to turn on the coffee maker, and only when it started to make weird noises, that made him
suspicious of the machine's reliability, did he focused on preparing breakfast.

It wasn't an everyday thing for them, him spending the night in Felicity's apartment. In fact it only happened a few times in the past year, and only after a mission ended badly and he got hurt. At those times he couldn't force himself to leave her alone, didn't want her to wake up in the middle on the night and not be there to ensure her that he was alright. They weren't living together, far from it, but he was thinking about it. Felicity might be too, but she never mentioned it, and he didn't want to presume.

She was setting up the pace for their relationship. It progressed when she wanted it to progress. Except in one thing. He was sticking to his decision of waiting for their first wedding night to make love to her.

And so far he hasn't regretted it, because for the first time he was in a relationship that was based on respect and communication, rather than sex. It was more than he ever had in the past, and he loved every day of it.

Felicity's fridge was filled with things that were easy to prepare without danger of burning down the whole building, but hotdogs didn't seem like food one had early Monday morning for breakfast, and he didn't feel like eating cold sandwich before a volley of meetings. He could dash to the bakery down the street that had the delicious pastry both Felicity and he liked, although she preferred the disgustingly sweet version while he sticked to plain one, but they won't open for another forty-five minutes.

Five minutes later Oliver settled on the couch with a bowl of home-made muesli in his hand. He was the one who made it for Felicity. It was his way of ensuring she are something healthier than those sugar filled, artificially dyed, cereals she bought in the store. She claimed it was all natural. The ingredients list on the box said differently.

This was a compromise; a much healthier, definitely nut free, option he prepared fresh once a week for her right here in her own kitchen. Shirtless.

That too was a compromise.

A tablet lying on the coffee table caught his attention, and Oliver reached out for it. He planed to check the results of the games he missed lately, but decided to check what the damn tabloid wrote about them this time instead, and if it would require a response from the PR department like it has a few times in the past year. Of course their response only contributed Scandal's popularity, but it was either that or let people believe some disgusting lie.

Two of them became their most popular subject ever since Felicity's neighbor sold them several photos she took the evening of their first date, when he accompanied his soulmate to her front door and kissed her for the first time. He will never forget Felicity's reaction when she came to work the following Monday.

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1 year ago

Oliver just took off his suit jacket and placed it on the back of his chair when the knock on the glass door of his office informed him he was needed. He expected it to be Gerry, his newly appointed EA, with this week's schedule. It wasn't.

"I think you took a wrong turn on the Executive floor." he right away teased with a wide smile,
“Your office is on the other side.”

Felicity didn't say anything, and she didn't entered the office, making it clear something was bothering her. She just stood there, and for the first time in a while he couldn't properly read her expression. She wasn't revealing anything.

The elevator dinged and moments later Gerry did appear in the outer office where his desk was stationed. He was ready to start the day on his new permanent position. For months he moved from department to department, filling in for those who took time off. It was challenging to adapt to a new environment, new people, and new way of doing things practically every week, but he loved it. He learned more about how the company worked than the department heads.

During one of those fillings he worked on the top floor, and got to experience Oliver Queen's unique way of doing things. At first it seemed like his boss was barely staying afloat, but then he was asked to pull out last months report from Applied Science and it turned out it was identical, right down to the same typo, to the new one they submitted.

That was when Gerry Conway first time witnessed the CEO showing exceptional skill of dealing with those who doubted his ability to lead a Fortune 500 company. For someone who dropped out of four colleges he sure had a large vocabulary and good understanding of when people were trying to pull one over him.

Now that production was in hands of the newly appointed VP Gerry was certain the guys at Applied Science will have even less success in getting large funds approved for project that are pretty much dead ends.

The VP that he didn't expect to see standing frozen at the doorway of Oliver Queen's office first thing in the morning, while the man in question looked uncertain about what to do. Gerry knew they were soulmates, the whole city knew, and he made a personal decision, when HR informed him of his permanent position, that he would stay out of their business unless it involved official QC business.

"I'll just go to the breakroom and make coffee." he said casually, not even bothering to drop the messenger bag he was carrying on his desk, before he turned on his heel and went in the other direction.

Not to say he wasn't interested, cause he was. It was like a freaking romance novel his sisters devoured. But if he wasn't there to witness it then he had plausible deniability and could with clear conscience say he didn't know if Oliver Queen had sex in his office when asked.

And he will be asked.

In fact the biggest gossipers in the company already started. He was lucky and the elevator door closed before the woman from Accounting, he didn't know her by name but by reputation, managed to slip in and offer him money to relay to her anything interesting he might witness. It's her MO. How she could afford to bribe employees for information he has no idea. Unless she's embezzling.

The elevator dinged again, announcing someone else's arrival and Gerry froze in horror. What if it was her? He whirled around and instantly recognized the unmistakable physic of John Diggle. The bodyguard was a constant presence at the office when he was filling in for Miss Smoak, and he liked the man who looked like he could give you fatherly advice while strangling you at the same time with those giant hands of his.

Dig felt someone watching him and turned to look at the younger man a few feet down the hallway. He recognized Gerry Conway from before, and Felicity did mentioned he was Oliver's new
Executive Assistant. Frankly the kid looked like he was still in High School, but from what he remembered from that week a few months ago he was well organized and capable handling Oliver, and his schedule.

Only time he saw Gerry losing his cool was when the schedule on his computer mysteriously changed and Oliver showed up late for a meeting. But that wasn’t his fault. As Felicity later on confirmed an entry level IT guy switched it, and the guy sang like the bird about who persuaded him to do it. No one was surprised it turned out being Isabel Rochev.

Looking towards the CEO's office Diggle noticed Felicity standing there, with Oliver in front of her telling her something, his hands gently cupping her cheeks. It was a private moment, one definitely unsuitable for the workplace, but he wasn’t marching over there to inform them of that particular fact. Instead he moved closer to Garry to get info.

The younger man shrugged, "I have no idea what happened. Miss Smoak was already there when I got to the office. There was no arguing... they were just standing there?" he leaned closer to Diggle and whispered, "Is that something I should expect more often?"

Dig glanced back towards the office before replaying, "Honestly, with those two one can never know."

"How did you even found out about this?" Oliver asked gently, "You don't buy this trash."

"Christine gave me the copy. Woke me up this morning and apologized for taking the photo." the words surprised him, of course. He's been on covers of countless tabloids, had his photo taken not only on streets but at places where he thought he was safe, and not once has a person who took the photo that got him there apologized for invading his privacy for profit.

"And who exactly is Christine?" he was curious.

"My neighbor. Blonde, blue eyes, works as a nurse in Starling General." Felicity replied and got startled when Olive suddenly stood up straighter, "What?"

"I think that's the neighbor who reported you missing after those imbeciles broke into your place and kidnapped your mom and you."

Felicity knew it was someone who lived on the same floor who called the police, but she had no idea exactly who it was. Actually, her money was on Mrs. Hudders from down the hall who seemed to be permanently attached to her peephole.

"She's using the money to go back to school." came out in almost a whisper.

"Why does it bother you so?" Oliver finally asked, "You must have known it was a possibility someone would catch us together and take a photo. I ensured our date was as private as possible, but afterward..."

"I don't really know." Felicity replied honestly, "I'm acting like a crazy person. I don't know what's wrong with me."

"There is absolutely nothing wrong with you. You just haven't yet experienced the full blown media frenzy. So far things have been rather tame, even after it was revealed we are soulmates." Oliver commented, remembering all the times he was haunted by paparazzi after some dumb stunt he pulled; like when he was caught making out in courthouse bathroom with judge's daughter less than ten minutes after said judge threw out the charges against him, or now legendary moment he was arrested for peeing on a cop's car. He pushed all that back in his mind and instead focused on the
woman in front of him, a woman who looked so uncertain right now, "But no matter what happens please remember I am right by your side, and will not allow anyone to harm you in any way."

"You can't punch a photographer." Felicity warned him, fully aware of what he just insinuated.

"Sure I can." Oliver replied with a shrug.

"No." she repeated, "I'll handle the press... it just caught me off guard this morning. The cover, as well as the article. And the money... Oliver, the money will almost completely cover her tuition. I'm talking five figures, and not the small ones either. And that just for a couple of photos of us kissing!"

Ignoring the part about the money, he was well aware how much tabloids are willing to pay from previous experiences, Oliver practically ripped out the magazine out of her hands and started to flip the pages to find the text that accompanied the photo. Felicity tried to take it back from him, but he moved it out of her reach in the last moment and then paused. An angry mutter of, "What did those bastards write?" escaped him just before he found the right page.

He didn't hear Felicity saying the article was actually really nice, and maybe even a bit romantic, she just didn't like people she never met, and who never met her, making assumptions about their private lives. He was far too focused on the photo that accompanied it.

The photography on the cover was pretty tame, it was taken after they broke the kiss and were staring lovingly into each other's eyes. Just looking at it felt to Oliver like was invading the couple's privacy, and he was on the photo. It was a smart choice by the editor who knew how to attract the people, and forcing them to buy the edition so they would get a look of what they were really after.

The photo that too the entire page seemed to be well worth the money they cashed out to the woman that took it. It looked gentle and tentative, like a first kiss should be, and at the same time like they have been together for years.

The title of the article was on the top of the other page, so absolutely nothing covered even a single pixel of the photo, which caused Oliver to fight the urge to rip it out and frame it; replace one of dozen the old family photos he kept in his office for appearance wise with this one that would actually mean something to him.

'A true love kiss' was the name of the article, and Oliver was just about to move to the couch in his office to read the whole thing, something he never done before, when a sound of someone clearing his throat brought him back to reality.

And the reality was they were in QC, it was Monday, and the work week was about to start with early morning teleconference with the company's most important backer. A blush on Felicity's cheeks revealed she too became aware this wasn't the time or the place, but the freak out she had didn't really give a damn if it was convenient for her or not.

Both turned to see who it was that sort of ruined the moment, and neither were surprised to see Diggle standing in the middle of the space with his arms crossed in front of him and a look of amusement, one that he sported quite often around them, on his face. And right behind him stood Gerry, looking rather uncomfortable, like he didn't want to be present when they were interrupted but it was his work place and he supposed to be there.

Felicity lifted a finger just as Diggle was about to speak, making him pause and wait to see what she had to say instead.

"I'm sorry. I was being unprofessional right from the start. I know. But I had an early morning
freakout and needed to see Oliver cause he was partially to blame for it and cause he was used to this stuff. The stuff being tabloid covers, not my freakouts... although he’s probably used to that by now too." she turned to look at the man in question and asked, "Are you used to me freaking out? I mean... why am I even asking you this?"

"Relax." Dig said calmly, and cracked a smile when she took a deep breath and slowly breathed out.

Oliver turned the tabloid to his friend could see the front page, and received an understanding nod from Diggle. The older man knew exactly this was the reason he chose to have the date on the roof of QC, but it seemed they didn't managed to completely evade the camera lens.

Gerry was still looking uncomfortable, so Oliver took pity and him and tasked him with calling down in PR department and informing them that all questions received about the photos and accompanying article should be answered with 'no comment'. The young man practically jumped at the opportunity to do something productive instead of just standing there.

"I'll be going now." Felicity said with a smile, now calmer than when she arrived, "$To my own office. With my own assistant. And do my own job."

“You do that madam Vice President. And don’t forget the meeting in 10." Oliver replied with a wide smile.

His words caused her to laugh, "$Look at you, remembering the exact time of the meeting and reminding me. It’s supposed to be over before noon. Wanna grab lunch?"

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The interest in their personal lives never vanished after that, no matter how many times he told Felicity they would be eventually left alone after someone more interesting came along. That has been his experience in the past, but it seemed Oliver Queen in a serious relationship was far more interesting than Ollie Queen doing dumb shit. Who knew?

It took a few moments until the page loaded, and instantly Oliver regretted his decision. He knew it. He knew it. He knew it. Damn.

Bumping into Laurel last week was completely by chance. He was just leaving the jewelry shop after picking up the ring his mother dropped off few days previously to have it cleaned and the central stone exchanged to something more fitting for his soulmate's personality and taste. Oliver only hoped she never finds out exactly how much he paid for the pink diamond.

He was so focused on the fact he was holding what is supposed to be Felicity's engagement ring in his hand that he didn't watch where he was going and bumped right into his ex-girlfriend on his way out.

It's been months since they had any contact, and he didn't know what to say to her. He greeted her, of course, because it's not like he could pretend he didn't see her. He thought that was it, that was what years of friendship and mess of a relationship has come down to. And after a few minutes he wished it was.

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4 days ago

"I saw the cover of Starling Scandal this morning. Such a nice picture... portrait of a fairytale."
Laurel didn’t even try to hide the anger and bitterness from her voice. If only he wasn't here today, if only she didn't bumped into him, then she would have just got rid of it all and moved on.

But here he was. Acting like they were acquaintances, like there was never anything between them in the past.

"Laurel, don't."

"How are you, Ollie? I'm okay. At least I was until this morning when someone decided to rub your bubbling relationship in my face... yet again." Oliver glanced towards the young woman who just walked past them as Laurel was talking, her eyes briefly meeting his, before she walked by. He didn’t have to turn around to know she was already pulling out her phone and sending texts about what she just witnessed and heard.

"I'm sorry." Oliver knew his words wouldn't be well received, but he didn't know what else to say. He certainty wasn’t willing to say what he suspected she wanted to hear.

"You're sorry?!" she shrieked, attracting even more attention from people passing by, "Well I'm sorry too, Ollie! I'm sorry that I wasted years on you, believing your empty promises and accepting your gifts. Because while I was hung up on you my own soulmate was moving on without me. I met him, you see, in the hospital a few weeks ago. He works there." Laurel looked down on her left wrist, on the mark that looked like a mixture of a gavel and a reflex hammer, "He's happily married. That was the first thing he told me after we realized we're soulmates."

"You can still find happiness." the whole conversation went out of hand quickly, and Oliver didn't know how to react anymore. Apologizing was a waste of time and breath, but that was the most he was willing to offer. Anything else would be unfair to Laurel, cause it would make her thing he was trying to patch things up between them, lead her on.

And more importantly it would go against the promise he gave Felicity. There will be no other for him.

"I would have been happy with you, but you just had to go and sleep with my sister!" Laurel snapped at him.

Oliver sighed. She just didn't understand, and probably didn't want to hear the truth, but he had to say it, "That happiness would have lasted until I met Felicity. Don't think you would be able to keep me once she entered my life. I would have eventually chose her. She is my always. You were-"

Realizing he went too far Oliver bit the inside of his cheek to prevent himself from finishing that sentence. But the damage was already done. Laurel knew exactly what he meant to say. She might no longer know him, not in the way Felicity did, but she knew enough.

With a huff she pushed walked past him, pushed the glass door and entered the shop he exited minutes ago, leaving him alone on the sidewalk.

A young couple walked by just then, with the boy muttering to him, "You tell her, man." making Oliver realize he wasn't as silent and discrete as much as he would have preferred.

Looking around he noticed several people with phones, and one sleazy looking man with a camera, staring at him. They didn't even bothered to evade his gaze, making it look like they weren't staring and taking photos. And Oliver wanted to bang his head at the nearest lamp post. He just gave Starling Scandal material for the new cover.

He didn't turned to look inside, didn't want to see why she went there. He already had a pretty good
'Price of forgiveness'. That is how they named their newest article, featuring Oliver and Laurel, and the small pile of jewelry he bought for her over the course of three years they were dating.

Late anniversary gifts, belated Birthday gifts, a bracelet he got for her during the trip with his family to France which he claimed was cause he missed her but was in fact cause he cheated on her with the maid, necklaces from Brazil and New York for the exact same reason. Gold, silver, and precious stones. His go-to choice for getting back in her good graces.

Oliver glanced towards the closed bedroom door and sighed. He hated when they did that, when they dredged out his past choices, his past relationships with women who weren't her. Felicity tried to hide it, but sometimes he got to see the pain in her eyes, at the mention of Laurel being the one he went back to over and over again for years, because she knew Laurel was the one whose photo he carried with him during those five years in hell.

And in those moments he cursed his younger self for being so damn stupid. So impatient and self-absorbed.

And wasteful apparently, if the six-figured number listed in the article is accurate.

He didn't mind Laurel chose to sell the gifts he had given her, they were hers and she could do whatever she wanted with them. And if she decided to finally let go of the past and get rid of things that reminded her of their relationship good for her. It was a step in the right direction. One that he made the day he removed her photo from his room. When he chose to finally stop denying that Felicity was his soulmate. And he was hers. In all possible ways.

"What are you doing up so early?" how she managed to sneak up on him Oliver will never learn, but suddenly she was right there behind him and looking over his shoulder, "And what are you... I see they have a new exclusive story."

"Yeah." Oliver acknowledged her words but exited the browser and returned the tablet on the desk where he found it. He leaned back on the sofa and looked up towards the still sleepy blonde, thinking he would get scowled for touching her tech, or that she would comment on the story he was certain she skimmed over, but instead she leaned down and kissed him.

Oliver instantly reached out and touched her face, turning in his seat so that he was kneeling on the soft cushion and kissing her back until they were both breathless.

"Good morning." Felicity mumbled as they broke the kiss.

"It is now." Oliver replied and meant it. Everything was better when she was around.

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Oliver was frustrated beyond words. How the hell did that reporter managed to get the hold of the number of his direct line? He slammed the phone receiver down a bit harder than he probably should have, startling his EA who was just about to knock, and made the man look around for assistance from either Diggle or Felicity. That was Gerry's usual move when his boss was in a seriously bad mood, and it amused Oliver. And it also told him his assistant knew him well enough to know who could make him talk about what's bothering him, or calm him down, depending on what was needed at that moment.

But his trusty bodyguard was absent right now, having taken a morning off, and Felicity was in her
office combing through project ideas Curtis Holt delivered personally to her office Friday night.

Oliver was there when the man arrived, he was picking up Felicity and driving them to a new restaurant that opened a few days ago, and was taken momentarily off guard when the two of them started to talk in tech terms that went way over his head. Sure, he had gotten better with technology in the past year, much to Felicity's elation, but this was advanced stuff.

Stuff Felicity didn't want to deal with right away that evening but left it for Monday morning, when she wasn't tired and hungry, so she could go through it all with clear head and weed out the ideas that were likely to blew up the building.

"Sir, your mother called." Gerry began, but was cut off.

"The opening. I know. I haven't forgotten. Thank you, Gerry." Oliver said as he leaned back in his chair, "I'm sorry for the tantrum you just witnessed."

"Miss Williams, I presume." the look of surprise Gerry received from his boss got him to elaborate, "The loud 'no comment' gave it away. I will talk to IT, see if there is a way to filter your calls."

"I would appreciate it. What is the agenda for today?"

The younger man right away started to recite the unusually light schedule, made so intentionally to give both Oliver and Felicity the chance to get out of the office early and get ready for tonight. It was their one year anniversary, and while Oliver would have loved to take his soulmate to Paris, that trip wouldn't happen just yet. Instead they would stay in Starling and attend an event that was in the making for a long time. Far too long.

He went along with the plan he made over a year ago and started a foundation in Tommy's name, a plan those closest to him supported wholeheartedly. It was official two days after the first anniversary of the Undertaking when they held the first fundraiser. That was a rather eventful evening.

***

10 months ago

The large garden behind the Queen mansion was bursting with activity as the finishing touches to the venue were made. Usually these kind of events happened somewhere in the city, the elite preferred high-end hotel ballrooms to gardens, but Oliver wanted something different. Something memorable.

And he had achieved that.

"Moira, darling, is this really a fundraiser and not... something else?" Doris Sutton was just one of many who approached the Queen matriarch within the first half an hour to ask that particular question.

And one of many who looked crestfallen after receiving the answer, "It is exactly what it said on the invitation. Oliver simply wanted something different than the usual venue."

"And where is your son? He is the star of the evening, but I haven't seen him yet."

Moira did all she could not to sigh. The evening supposed to go without a hitch, Oliver was supposed to look incredibly handsome in a tux as he greeted the guests upon arrival, with equally beautiful Felicity by his side, but the criminals of the city obviously didn't get the memo.
Last she heard, thanks to Thea who was in constant contact with her brother's soulmate via some phone application, the police was on the scene and Oliver was on his way to the lair where he would get ready. Why her son had a spare tux there she didn't know, and frankly she didn't want to know. She just presumed it was due to Felicity being prepared for anything and left it at that.

Of course she couldn't say that, just as she couldn't reveal the truth to all the other who asked about Oliver before her, and she was about to use the previously used excuse when Doris gasped in shock. Instantly Moira turned to see what's wrong, her mind right away going to the worst case scenario, only to be left without words at the sight in front of her.

Oliver arrived, and was walking down the illuminated path towards the tent. He looked calm and relaxed, like he spend the entire day in some spa, and not like he faced armed criminals within the past hour. Moira was certain the woman on his arm was a reason for that. She had seen firsthand the calming effect Felicity Smoak had on her son. Just a word and a touch and the tension vanished from his shoulders.

A woman that looked radiant as she walked in tandem with her soulmate, her smile bright as the sun.

Vintage cocktail dress made out of white silk and lace looked like it was created specially for Felicity, enhancing her natural beauty and giving her an almost angelic appearance. The tea length of the skirt revealed matching white shoes, and Moira briefly wondered if the pair would have doughnuts on them, or maybe some animal's face, but pushed that thought aside. To be honest she no longer cared about that. Details like that one were what made Felicity stand out from all the other women her age that moved in this elite circle, and frankly it was a breath of fresh air.

Their arrival didn't went unnoticed by the gathered guests, and slowly the voices trailed off as all eyes turned on the approaching pair. The moment they stepped under the white silk canopy of the tent the orchestra stopped playing as well, to ensure Oliver had everyone's complete attention.

"Thank you all for coming, and showing your support to this noble cause. As you all know Thomas Merlyn was my oldest friend, my companion in many things throughout the years... most of which could be considered legally questionable, and the world has become a bit grayer after his passing. Tommy had his father's name, but he had his mother's kind heart, and her desire to help others. So tonight I wish to assist him, and I hope you will help me in accomplishing that. Tonight I announce the opening of Thomas Merlyn Foundation, whose sole purpose would be helping the Glade's youth."

Once Oliver got their attention Felicity took over and went into details, "The Foundations already received its first donation, one made by Queen Consolidated. All current, and future, profit made from recently marketed security program will to into creating the better future for the next generations of children loving in Glades. Building a school and youth center are just some of the goals we hope in achieving in the next three years. We need to educate so we can employ. But we can not look into the future without remembering the past."

Felicity turned towards Oliver when he remained silent instead of speaking of the Foundations first agenda. She didn't have to look int his eyes to know he was momentarily lost in the past, revisiting the hardest moment from the night of the Undertaking. Her hand moved down his arm before reaching his, and once their fingers interlocked she gently squeezed, giving him her silent support. Oliver's eyes met hers, and a grateful smile appeared on his face, before he faced the gathered crowd.

"Because of that the Foundation's first project will be the creation of Susie Rhodes Memorial Park. Three-year-old Susie was the youngest victim of the senseless destruction, and it is my wish to
commemorate her brief existence, and leave a reminder for future generations. It wasn't just life that was lost, but a potential to achieve great things."

It was later in the evening, while he was discussing urban planning and environmental influence with the mayor, that Oliver realized people were genuinely expecting a wedding ceremony. That was when he realized what the reason behind the blush, he witnessed on Felicity's cheeks earlier, was. His mother's female friends were always a nosy bunch.

But there was no wedding happening tonight.

Even though a part of him wished it.

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Thinking back about that event caused Oliver to lean back in his office chair, with a small smile, as his eyes landed on a single frame among the collection on the sideboard that stood out.

He was never one to put family photos on display, but he allowed his mother to make that alteration in his office. According to Moira Queen, the master of business etiquette, it made him appear like a stable family man and therefore more appealing to potential investors. And so an array of photos, in fancy silver frames, found its way to his office.

It was a mixture that contained an old Queen family photo, one made while his father was still alive and his sister a little girl; a candid shot from his first conference as the CEO, with his mother and sister by his side; the photo his sister actually acquired from the paparazzo who took it, like she said she would, of him and Felicity dancing during a Gala over a year ago; and another one of the two of them, from their Fundraiser.

It was placed next to that particular photo, the paper that did not fit. The paper he refused to remove no matter how many times someone commented that it was hardly professional to display something like that. Oliver refused to stash it in the drawer.

It wasn't a real thing, but it was the closes thing he would have until Felicity was ready.

She understood it wasn't there to pressure her, that was not why Thea scribbled it, or why he kept it in sight. Felicity understood. And the few times he caught her staring at it, with an expression he couldn't really read, gave him hope that someday might be closer than he dared himself to think.

Who would have thought that a paper towel with a hastily written marriage certificate for Oliver Queen and Felicity Smoak could do so much.

A knock on his door got Oliver to stop staring into the distance and focus back at the present. He expected Mrs. Anderson, his first meeting for the day, but instead he found himself looking into a much younger face of his soulmate. As always seeing Felicity brought a bright smile on his face, one that she instantly matched.

"What brings you here?" he asked right away, "Not that I mind seeing you, but don't you have a meeting with the head of IT department?"

"He's a bit late. There is an issue with a server that needs his attention." Felicity replied as she moved into the office and took a seat on the chair opposite of Oliver.

Leaning back in his comfortable office chair Oliver's blue eyes observed her closely for any signs of panic. He knew how she tends to get when something is going on with the company's lifeline, as she referred the system of servers she personally installed shortly after becoming the Vice President. But
she was unusually calm and collected, and that confused him.

"And you aren't on your way down to assist? Is something wrong?" he just had to know.

Felicity actually snorted at his words, "I have complete faith that they will be able to handle it without me."

Oliver eyes her suspiciously for a moment before asking jokingly, "Who are you, and what have you done with Felicity Smoak?" his question brought a wide smile to her face, something he reeled in. He loved to make her smile, "No, seriously. Usually you would be down there, breathing down their necks, or just taking over and fixing the issue yourself."

She shrugged in response, but when it became obvious Oliver wasn't going to let it go until she answers Felicity sighed, "Dade Murphy's promotion was my decision, and it was a good decision. He was the perfect candidate for the position."

"Felicity..." Oliver called er name gently after she paused, and struggled to continue.

"The hacking attempt last week... after I took over and fixed things myself, like you said I do... he asked me why I suggested him for the position of department head if I didn't have faith in his abilities." Felicity's mood pummeled as she recalled the tense conversation, "And he was right, don't get me wrong, he was absolutely right to ask me that question. Because the way I acted made it look like I didn't trust him to fend off a simple hacking attempt, and a move like that can easily affect the way others employed in the IT department view him."

"It's not your fault for wanting to personally ensure corporate secrets remain just that."

"But I had him placed on the position for that exact reason, Oliver. Because he can do it just as good as me. He mayored in cyber security just like I did."

Oliver watched for for a few moments before calmly asking, "How come you haven't mentioned that conversation earlier? It's obvious it made you upset."

"Because I know you would offer to fire him, and since he is the best there is on the market right now QC can't afford to lose him." Felicity offered an explanation, but Oliver obviously wasn't convinced, "Because I know how protective you are of me, and I didn't want you go all grr on him for upsetting me. And let's face it, that is exactly what you would have done."

"So you came here to get your mind off of things. And here I thought it was cause you missed and wanted to see me."

Smiling at the fake hurt in his voice Felicity turned around to see if Gerry was paying attention to them, and when realizing the EA was focused solemnly on something on his computer screen, she rushed around the desk and kissed Oliver deeply, making him gasp for breath when she pulled away.

"I always miss and want to see you."

A sound of someone clearing his throat made both of them turn towards the doorway only to see flustered Gerry, with an older woman standing behind him, "Mr. Queen, your meeting."

Oliver was actually curious what the papers would say about him, and his choices, that day. It was probably the first tie he wanted to have the public's support, not for himself though but for the cause he was supporting. For what he was trying to achieve with his actions and example.
That was why he chose to avoid the Scandal in the wide arch, since he was certain they would make a big deal of Laurel's presence at the opening instead of the actual event. Instead he picked a more respectable newspaper during his early morning jog.

"When one mentions an event organized by a member of Starling City elite everyone instantly thinks of abundance of diamonds, couture gowns, and gallons of expensive champagne. But that is not what happened yesterday. The opening of Susie Rhodes Memorial Park past without the usual pomp linked to the members of the city elite.

Oliver Queen, the patron of the recently started Foundation named after his late friend Tommy Merlyn, looked as handsome as ever even in a bit more casual look that expected on an important event. Dark gray slacks and shirt with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows and no tie. Not the usual look for, now already acclaimed, CEO of a family company, and undoubtedly not a look his mother, the always perfectly poised Moira Queen, would approve of.

But a different blonde, who arrived in Oliver's company, did not seemed to mind the more casual look he sported. It was, after all, a look they shared, since Miss Felicity Smoak, who looked equally gorgeous in a simple navy blue a-line dress with a thin red belt, also chose a more leisured wardrobe than the professional one she was wearing during all public announcements made in the name of Queen Consolidated.

And there were a few of those lately, the last one being the upcoming cooperation of QC's Research and Development department with the brilliant inventor and philanthropist Ray Palmer.

Same Ray Palmer with whom Felicity Smoak was photographed having dinner in Table Salt with a few weeks ago. Obviously the rumors of an affair between the blonde and a good-looking billionaire is false, since it is doubtful Oliver Queen would go into business with a man who was chasing his soulmate. Nor would be invite him to the opening of the first Foundation's projects for the Glades.

A park dedicated to a little girl, a place of remembrance for all that was lost.

The small public library that was situated in the North-East corner of the park is scheduled to open in two weeks time, and will house over two thousand books donated by big publishing houses and Queen family themselves. There is a playground that includes equipment for children with special needs, as well as a fenced section for dog owners that features a small agility course.

And in the center of the park stands a tree, a ten-year-old Japanese Maple, that stands out with its red leaves and reminds the visitors of the loss of life Glades have endured in the night of the Undertaking. Not just with it's presence, but with the decoration hanging from it's branches.

It was Miss Smoak who procured a large cardboard box filled with blank clay ornaments and then handed one to her soulmate together with a pen. It was only after he hanged the ornament on the tree, now carrying the name of his childhood friend, did the true purpose of them become clear and the gathered people followed his example.

Five hundred and three ornaments, for five hundred and three senselessly lost lives."

Upon the sound of someone clearing their throat Oliver looked over the top of the newspaper in his hands and saw his mother standing on the doorway of the home office that once belonged to his
father. Still as paranoid as ever, although he preferred to see it as vigilance, Oliver instantly wondered if something was wrong. But the small smile that played on her lips told him he didn't need to get the spare bow he kept in the secret compartment in the bookcase.

"The Herald wrote a positive piece about the park." Oliver commented after his mother remained silent for longer than he expected her. And when she eventually spoke it was not in any way connected to the events from yesterday like he expected. Instead she caught him completely by surprise.

"You looked so much like him right now, like Robert. I can't count how many times I walked in and found him hidden behind the newspaper, muttering about something he read."

"Probably about something I have done that reached the news." Oliver muttered offhandedly, not really sure why he said what he said.

But Moira shook her head, "He never judged you for your actions, no matter how bizarre they were sometimes. Robert understood. I didn't, not always, but he understood. I think it was because he saw himself, his own youth, in you. And he would have been proud to see how far you have come since those days, how much you have achieved."

"I never wanted to follow his footsteps." Oliver admitted.

Moira nodded silently. It wasn't something she hadn't known already. After all he made his opinion clear so many times in the past, especially after his return from the Island. She won't forget anytime soon the drunk ramble in front of cameras the day they opened the Applied Science Division.

"But when it became necessary you stepped up and showed everyone you are not to be underestimated."

Oliver leaned in the comfortable leather office chair, and sighed. Stepped up. More like dragged back by his ears, courtesy of Felicity and Diggle. If he had his way he wouldn't have returned to the city when he did, but instead remained in his self-imposed isolation of Lian Yu. If he had his way Stellmore International would own the company, his mother and sister would have been evicted from the home that's been in their family for generations, and worst of all he would still live under the impression he didn't deserve to be happy and in doing so convicted another of a life of loneliness.

How selfish of him.

His phone vibrating on the desk brought Oliver back to reality and he right away reached for it, intentionally ignoring his mother's curious gaze. As always, when his thought carried him away, she asked if there was something she should know. But this time he knew he couldn't confide in her, not just yet anyway. He didn't want her to know that Tommy's death drove him back to that damned place.

Didn't want her to conclude that Felicity's death, as temporary as it was, would have eventually done the same thing. He would try to function, but it was only a matter of time before the sense of obligation towards his family got overruled by the need to condone himself to the lifetime on Purgatory.

His grim thought were pushed away momentarily when he read the message he received.

Moira watched in amazement as a serious expression got replaced by a wide smile, one that made her son look years younger and carefree as he once was. And it warmed her heart every time she saw that change in him, the little spark of the boy that didn't experienced the horrors of Lian Yu, didn't
fought for bare survival against some of the worst scum humanity had to offer.

Finally, after a few moments, he looked up at her and with a wide grin said, "I'm skipping family dinner tonight. Felicity asked me out on a date."

"Oh? A late anniversary dinner?"

Oliver shook his head, "No. Just a date. Just two people getting to know each other better."

Felicity was already waiting in the small bistro when Oliver pushed the door open and entered. He didn't liked it when that happened, didn't liked to have her wait for him all alone, but with him being stuck in a finance meeting and her spending the whole day in Applied Science building they couldn't leave the office together and have Diggle drive them both to the restaurant she chose.

Although, to be honest, he preferred those dates when he picked her up from her apartment and drove her back home. And got to kiss her goodnight.

Felicity was actually startled when Oliver sat opposite of her, before a blush colored her cheeks. All those lectures about being aware of her surroundings and he still managed to catch her by surprise. And in a public space, no less. If Diggle finds out about it she won't hear the end of it.

"How was your day? Did you have fun?" Oliver chose not to comment on the fact she was obviously deep in thoughts when he arrived, or ask what was going on. If there was a problem with the company, their night activity, or between them then she would let him know, otherwise he knew not to press the matter. Thea was just as sensitive as his soulmate when it came to privacy, so he knew from experience it was better to wait until she was ready to speak about the subject.

A smile appeared on Felicity's face, and the tension from her shoulders vanished, as she began to speak with great enthusiasm about some rather genius ideas the researches they recently employed had.

"They remind me of myself when I first started working in QC, but unlike me they won't have mundane tasks sucking out their desire to work after a week of cleaning out viruses and reinstalling software for people should know better. Bright minds, eager to work, to learn, and discover amazing things. And I get to lead them. Me. Felicity Meghan Smoak."

Oliver had the sappy expression as he was listening her babble, and he was aware of that... and he didn't care. Her happiness made him just as happy. And as she continued to speak he silently observed her and noticed her nail polish color matched the color of the shirt she wore below the soft white cashmere sweater she bought during her shopping trip with his sister last week, he noticed her lipstick shade was softer than the ones she usually wore but shinier, he noticed her hair was in a low ponytail and curly at the ends, he noticed she wore the necklace he gave her.

He noticed she never took it off.

"Hm?" he mumbled upon realizing she called his name, and then sat up straighter when it became obvious she caught him not listening to her. If it were Thea he would be bracing himself for a lecture right about now, but Felicity only watched him with an amused expression. Oliver blinked a few times and admitted, "I'm sorry, I wasn't really paying attention."

"Oh, I could tell. You were staring at my chest instead. And I didn't even wear that dress you like... you know, the one with the triangle cutout." the fact she was teasing him, and reminding him of the few times she caught him staring at the small amount of skin, told him Felicity wasn't angry at him for not paying attention.
"The necklace." he corrected her, "I noticed you are wearing it. You are always wearing it."

"I said I would." Felicity replied with a shrug.

Oliver opened his mouth to comment on the fact she wore it every day for over a year now, but the server arrived at that moment and interrupted him with a sincere apology for the wait. They were full that evening, and couldn't get to take their orders sooner. The young man looked worried, like he expected Oliver would make a big deal out of the fact they weren't given priority over the other diners, but he got a kind smile and a request for a red wine and the bistro's special.

Once the server left to relay their order to the kitchen staff Oliver turned his complete attention to his soulmate, "I missed you today."

"I missed you too. And Diggle. And my own chair. But the surprise inspection was needed. I didn't find any discrepancies, no need to worry. I just wanted to check on everyone, see if the security measures are being respected, and that no one's trying to build anything dangerous."

"And you asked me out to dinner cause you missed me." Oliver said as a conclusion, although he was actually trying to steer the conversation towards the reason for the spontaneous date. Yes, he told his mother it was just cause they felt like going out on a date and learn a bit more about each other, but that was more his style than Felicity's.

Her eyes revealed he was up to something, as did her hands. She was strangling the poor napkin and looking anywhere but at him.

The server once more interrupted, this time with a bottle of wine in his hand, and he poured them both a glass before retreating into the kitchen to pick up the next finished order. Instantly Felicity reached for her glass and took a big gulp, an action that got Oliver to look at her curiously.

Realizing that now was a good time as any to get to the point Felicity took a deep breath and started to explain, "You know how yesterday you said my apartment was a bit chilly? Well today it was downright freezing. It turns out the boiler is busted, which left the whole building without heating for the unforeseen future. And-"

"You need a place to stay." Oliver interrupted, "You know you are always welcome in the mansion, Felicity. You can stay in room of your own, I won't make presumptions and have you stay with me. If that what you were so worried about asking me?"

"No." she answered briefly, leaving Oliver stunned. He was so certain he got it right, but it seemed something more was going on.

"Whatever it is-"

"You said I was different, that things between us were different than with... Laurel." Felicity was hesitant about getting to the point. She knew she was being foolish, she was talking to the guy who informed her before their first date that he planned to marry her someday. And while this wasn't such a big thing, it was also a pretty big thing. A commitment.

"Hon, what is going on?"

Felicity took another deep breath and concluded it was better to just tell it to him straight, like ripping off a band-aid and all that, "The landlord decided not to have the boiler fixed. Instead he decided to give a whole building a facelift, apartments and all. Those who still have months in their leases are priority in getting housing in other buildings he owns all across the city. Others can wait to see if there are any places left, or look for housing themselves."
"And in which category are you in?" Oliver asked curiously.

"The second one. And I'm not interested in waiting and moving in an apartment that would be far from work and... work. I want to find a new place. And... I was wondering if you would want to find the new place with me?"

Oliver hoped he wasn't misunderstanding her. She didn't mean that he just helps her pick a new place, because she was aware he would be concerned for her safety as well as privacy, she actually asked for him to...

"I-"

"It's a big thing, I know." she interrupted him before he got the chance to respond, "That why I was so hesitant about asking. I mean last time your girlfriend suggested you get a place together you took her sister on a sex cruise from hell. And while I don't have a sister I do have a rather young-looking mother, and... ugh... why did I just that picture in my head? Three... two... one..."

"Buying or renting?" Oliver asked.

"What?" Felicity asked, momentarily confused. And still a bit freaked out by what came out of her mouth previously.

A plate was placed in front of her, startling her for a moment, before she remembered they were actually in a public setting, and maybe it wasn't a good idea having this discussion where anyone could overhear them and sell the story to the tabloids. But Oliver obviously didn't think that way.

The moment the server turned his back he placed both hands on the table between them, a move that Felicity instantly mirrored. And once he had her hands in his larger ones Oliver asked again, "Do you want to rent a new place? Or do you want for us to buy, and not having to bother with month-to-month lease?"

Felicity's eyes widened as his words registered, and then she smiled. And it was blinding.

"I haven't thought that far ahead, although I probably should have. I mean my current place has no heating so finding a new one should be a priority, no matter what you decided on. But I wanted to see what you wanted first, and I was so nervous-"

"There is absolutely no reason for you to be nervous. Felicity, we are in a relationship, have been for a year and a day. Not that the length matters." when Felicity snorted at his words Oliver playfully glared at her. Instantly she sat up straighter and acted all serious. The twinkle in her eyes gave her away, though.

"So..." Felicity was first to speak after a few minutes of them enjoying their meals in silence, "Buying or renting?"

Oliver watched her carefully, looking for any signs of uncertainty. He couldn't help it. Even though Felicity was the one who brought up a subject of them living together he was still paranoid. And also in utter disbelief that the woman he was certain was forever lost to him gave him a chance to earn her love. Cause honestly there was only one answer to that question.

"Buying. I want something permanent, and I want it with you. I want forever."

One year and one day later
He was dancing.

He usually swaying with the music in the past, during those rare moments when he was dragged to the dance floor, until the song was over and then he went back to drinking and flirting. And now here he was; moving his feet, and counting the steps under his breath, and making sure he didn’t stepped on his partner's toes.

He was dancing because he was dancing with her. The beauty in a white wedding dress, who took his breath away when he saw her walking towards him down the aisle.

They were husband and wife. Mr. Smoak and Mrs. Queen, according to the custom embroidered decorative pillows Thea got for them. They were happy, smiling, enjoying their wedding reception, and looking forward to spending the rest of their lives together.

Somewhere from the side his sister was watching, Roy by her side, with a wide smile on her face. His mother was also there, with Donna Smoak next to her, both women wiping their tears before they managed to fall, and silently agreeing they looked so perfect together. Diggle was there too, fulfilling his important duty on this special day, watching them with knowing eyes when he wasn't exchanging loving looks with Lyla. Walter Steele made sure to tell them how honored he was to attend, and how happy he was for them. Quentin Lance was present, only member of his family who came. Ray Palmer was invited as well, being their friend and business partner, and he gladly accepted if.

Tommy's presence was missed; Oliver always believed his best friend would be there for him if this day ever happened. His father didn't live long enough to witness it either, neither did Felicity's father. And while they felt the loss, not even that could stop them from feeling immense happiness.

The burning heart will never come again, not to them.

But in the darkness of that night a sudden pain will wake up countless girls, each and every single one of them reaching out for her mark, wondering what caused the sensation. Only a few will know. Only a few will understand.

The couple will never learn about that effect, caused by the very first time they made love. Because none of Oliver's former lovers will have enough courage to face them and admit she felt even the little part of the pain she once caused.

Felicity laughed when Oliver twirled her on the dance floor, her eyes glistering as they watched his, watched his love for her reflect in them. This way their day, the first day of the rest of their lives.

The good and the bad, all that can come their way, and they would persevere. Together.

Always together.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for reading!

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