Our love will never fade away (I'll bear your mark on my skin for eternity)
by CharlieLeau

Summary

Felicity Smoak started taking the Med that cut the emotional connection between her soulmate and herself when his family sent a mediator to her. The man told her that they did not think she was worthy of their son and she therefore needed to give up on her soulmate's rights.

Now, four years later, Felicity just moved in Star City and is desperately trying to run away for her past. There, she meets Oliver Queen, heir to the Queen's legacy and soon to be married to the cold and mysterious Isabel Rochev, who quickly becomes both her boss and friend.

Lines quickly start to blur between Felicity and Oliver as they found themselves drawn to each other for no apparent reasons...

Notes

Heys guys!!
Here's the prologue of my new fanfiction! I've been meaning to write a Soulmate AU for quite a long time and... Here it is and I really hope that you'll like it :) (I'm a bit nervous to post this since it's going to be very different from my other fics).
Friendly reminder that I am French and therefore English is my native language. If I make mistakes, and I probably will, indulge me, please!
I'll try to post at least once a week. I am not going to be more precise because I suck at respecting schedules and deadlines... Oopsie!

Happy reading! :)

See the end of the work for more notes
Prologue - It's not easy to tell you goodbye

Prologue:

“I’ll spread my wings
And I’ll learn how to fly
Though it’s not easy to tell you goodbye”

– Kelly Clarkson, Breakaway.

Felicity winced as she heard the sharp sound of her high-school’s bell. Sighing, she slammed her locker’s door, checking that her padlock was in place before heading toward her advanced math class. She blended in with the crowd of loudly speaking students, walking close to the wall in an unconscious attempt to go unnoticed. Her first days at Las Vegas High-School, she had had to force herself to do so. Now, it had become something that she needn’t think about, a habit that was anchored deep inside her.

She reached Mrs Duncan classroom without crossing anyone’s path. Sighing in relief, she sat down on a chair in the far corner of the room. Grabbing her things and arranging them on her desk, she put her backpack on the floor and pushed it under her seat. Looking forward the beginning of the class, she waited for the class to start, doing her best to ignore the voices of her classmates, who either were talking about their plans for the weekend or the last game of the basketball team, the Wildcats.

A heavily pregnant Mrs Duncan walked in, carrying a worn out brown bag and sheets of paper in her hand. Felicity’s heart jumped in her chest when she saw them as excitement filled her veins. It was the test they had taken the previous week, the last grade of the trimester. She cared a lot about her average but she had reached a point in her life where she didn’t want to get good grades because it was what every student needed to get into college. No. She wanted good grades because she needed to have one thing in her life that didn’t suck. She needed one thing in her life to go well and getting good grades would do the trick since she couldn’t rely on anything else.

Mrs Duncan started giving papers back. Felicity got hers and pushed her glasses up her nose. B-

Letting out a shaky breath, she bit on her lip. She had never gotten anything under A. Never ever. But then, she shouldn’t be surprised that it had finally happened. She hadn’t gotten enough time to study, between her shifts at work and her other assignments. Her hands shaking slightly, she grabbed a pen and listened carefully to Mrs Duncan’s explanations. She talked about a few important things that hadn’t been quite understood before the test. Felicity took down a lot of notes, willing her mind to learn all the things it hadn’t had the time to learn before the test. When she was done with the correction, Mrs Duncan went back to the lesson they were currently studying. When the bell rang, Felicity jumped on her feet and rushed toward her next class without looking back.

Her morning went smoothly after that. She didn’t run into any of the people who loved to turn high-school into a hellish experience for her. It didn’t happen often, most of the days she got at least two or three snarky comments before lunchtime. Apparently, that day was one of her good day and she was left in peace for four hours straight. It was so rare, it deserved to be highlighted.
Going back to her locker, she emptied her backpack and put the books and copybooks she’d need for the afternoon. She was almost done when she heard a grating coming from behind her.

“So I heard that someone got a bad grade today,” the owner of the voice said.

Clenching her fingers around the handle of her bag, Felicity turned around, her shoulders stiff. “Mandy,” she let out through gritted teeth.

Mandy Miller was the high-school’s queen, quite literally considering that she had been elected Queen at all the school balls she had intended since she was six years old, and Felicity’s persecutor-in-chief. She had taken a dislike to her, because she was two years younger than her and yet attending all her classes. Felicity had learnt the hard way that bullying the youngest was a rule set in stone that didn’t only stick to the movies and that the bullies were very often considered the bravest person by their pairs.

Mandy reached for the sheet of paper stuck in Felicity’s advanced math book, the last one that she was holding and held it out for her friends to see. “See? Our little genius got a bad grade. What happened Ugly Smoaky? Was it too hard for you? Maybe you should consider going back with the sophomores?”

Sighing, Felicity tried to get her paper back. “Mandy, give it back!” She demanded when she held it up higher so that Felicity, who was small and not wearing heels couldn’t reach it.

“Oh no! I need to take a picture of this! I’ll hang it in my room and watch it when I have a bad day.”

Standing on her tiptoes, Felicity grabbed her paper and yanked it from Mandy’s hold. The sheet tore and Felicity fell back against the lockers. She felt pain start from where her back hit her padlock and huffed back a whimper.

“Look what you did!” She yelled at Mandy, rising the half she had managed to get back.

Mandy frowned before nodding toward one of her friends. “I think that you need to cool down Smoaky,” she told her, her tone so cold Felicity had to repress a shiver. Then, her friends slightly bumped into her and Mandy pretended to trip and fall toward Felicity. Half of her smoothie ended up on the latter.

Felicity shivered when the coldness of the frozen drink reached her skin, the thin fabric of her dress doing nothing to protect her.

“Oops I’m sorry, she pushed me,” Mandy said as the bell rang, signalling the ending of their lunch break. She threw one last scornful glare at Felicity before walking away, her group of friends behind her, already congratulating her.

Throwing her book in her locker, Felicity slammed the door so hard, the whole locker tremble. Then, she turned around, her blonde curls moving as she did, and rushed toward the girls’ bathroom, cursing all the while because she was going to be late for her first class of the afternoon. Letting her backpack slide from her shoulder and fell on the floor, she grabbed toilet paper and started wiping the smoothie that was still on her dress. Tossing the now dirty paper away, she grabbed more, moistened it and tried to clean her dress as best as she could. Her hands now trembling, she reached for the edges of the sink in front of her, holding onto it so tight, her fingers turned white. She let out a shaky breath and shut her eyes, swallowing back a sob.

She didn’t know why she was reacting that way. It wasn’t as if it was the first time that Mandy had been mean to her or that she had emptied her smoothie on her. Actually, she had wasted so much
food on her. Felicity now believed that throwing food at someone should be considered a felony, especially when there were people who were dying of starvation on the planet. She tried to imagine Mandy in an orange prison uniform, doing community work and the thought made her chuckle. Wiping at her eyes, she chuckled slightly. She felt the waves of emotions flowed back and she took a breath, anchoring herself into the present.

Bending forward, she splashed water on her face not caring that she was going to be late anymore. Her grandmother’s necklace escaped from under her dress and she put it back, sighing. She usually didn’t wear precious jewel at school but her mother was going through a rough time again and Felicity didn’t want her to sell any more family jewels to get more money to pay their bills. She had already sold most of the jewels her grandmother had left them, Felicity wasn’t going to let her sell that last necklace, the last thing that she had left from her bubbe. She’d keep it, even if it meant that she’d have to work more at Daisy’s.

Shaking her head, Felicity righted her now damp dress. She put on her sleeveless denim jacket and hid the wet stain as best as she could. She combed her curls with her fingers and when she was satisfied with her appearance, she walked out of the bathroom.

Felicity’s lungs were burning, begging for mercy as her feet kept hitting the pavement, never slowing down, never offering her muscles the rest they were craving. She turned right at a corner and finally saw Daisy’s, the diner she worked at every day. Pushing the door open, she walked in, her breathing erratic, every single nerve endings in her body burning.

“Felicity, there you are!” Her boss yelled. “I don’t pay you to be late, where the hell were you?”

“I am sorry Daisy, my bus…”

The older woman raised up a hand to stop her. “I don’t have time to listen to the little problems of an insignificant teenager!” She threw Felicity’s black apron to her face, and put a notepad and a pen in her hands. “Go take some orders!” She barked.

Swallowing back the insults on the tip of her tongue, Felicity slid her backpack behind the diner’s counter and went to take orders, as she had been told.

She worked at Daisy’s every night. Her shift usually started an hour and a half after her classes ended, giving her some time to go back to her place and trade her school clothes for the black jeans and white tee that Daisy forced her to wear at work. During the weekends, she worked all day on Saturdays, and had her Sundays’ afternoons and evenings free. There were two other employees, James, the cook and Georgia, another waitress. Daisy did nothing aside from barking orders and coaxing the customers. It had indeed been proven that it was how a boss was going to be respected by his employees.

“I swear she almost had an aneurism waiting for you,” Georgia told her from behind the counter. “What happened to you?” She asked, concern in her eyes.

Felicity smiled reassuringly. She liked Georgia, she was the closest thing she had to a friend in that damn city. “Nothing, it’s just my bus… It was late.”

“I am sorry to hear that sweetie. Don’t listen to whatever Daisy says. I handled things well in your absence.”
Felicity nodded. “Thanks G, you’re the best!”

The brunette winked at her before getting back to her orders.

Almost three hours later, Daisy called her.

“Someone for you on the phone,” she said harshly. “Don’t take too long,” she added as she gave her the phone.

“Felicity Smoak,” she said.

“Felicity, this is Gina.”

Her mother’s co-worker.

“Hey Gina!” Felicity greeted her, faking a cheerful tone. “How are you?”

“Felicity, your mother didn’t show up.”

Felicity bit on her lip. Of course she hadn’t. Why else would Gina call her?

“Felicity this is serious. If she misses another shift, she’ll be fired.”

“She promised me she’d come!” Felicity assured, recalling her brief meeting with her mother from earlier.

“She’s already twenty minutes late.”

Felicity let out a frustrated breath. “My shift ends in half an hour,” she said, glancing at her watch. “We’ll be here in less than an hour, I swear.”

“Unless you break all the traffic laws, you know you won’t. Felicity, I’m sorry but…”

Felicity snorted. “We’ll be too late?”

“I am so sorry Felicity, but the boss has given her many warnings…”

“It’s okay Gina I get it,” Felicity said as Daisy was starting to motion for her to hang up. “Listen, I have to go. Thanks for calling me.”

“Again, I am so sorry…”

“It’s okay,” Felicity cut her off dryly. “Goodbye Gina!”

She hung up before Gina could reply. Daisy walked toward her, a tray in hands. “This is for table 6. Hurry up!”

Swallowing the lump in her throat, Felicity walked toward table six. The rest of her shift passed in a blur. She welcomed customers, took their orders, brought them their food, the bill and then cleared the table. Her movements were mechanic though and her voice lacked any warmth, any life. Her conversation with Gina had sucked up all her energy.
She found herself standing in the storage room of Daisy’s after her shift ended. The room was dark and dusty but she couldn’t have cared less. She just needed a moment, to centre her emotions, to get everything under control again. She was about to go home to a heartbroken, depressed and jobless mom. It wasn’t the first time it happened to her, it was certainly not the last either. It didn’t mean that it was getting any less hard with time.

Rising her tee, she exposed her hipbone and brushed the black arrow shaped into the infinite sign that lay there, a dark spot on the otherwise smooth and creamy skin. Immediately, the emotions of her soulmate, of that boy whose heart and soul were destined to be hers, exploded inside her. Her heart burst in her chest as his feelings meddled with hers, tangling their souls in a soothing embrace. They weren’t bonded yet, only a physical connection could seal an emotional one, making it unbreakable, but they still were connected to one another.

It wasn’t an invasive presence. Most of the times, it felt like a buzzing, a soft vibration coming from the depth of her soul that reminded her of his existence. She could always feel him, she knew he was there, somewhere, waiting to meet her. But some other times, the buzzing turned into a throbbing, so loud and powerful she couldn’t ignore it no matter how hard she tried. Then, she was overwhelmed by his emotions, his life and she could see things through his eyes, hear things through his ears and actually sense and feel everything through him. It was always brief, but intense. And some other times, when things were too hard for her, she could go to him and seek comfort in him. All she had to do was stroke her mark, the concrete evidence of their current connection, the promise of their future bond.

Electricity tingled at the tips of her fingers as she traced the shape of the arrow branding her skin and she closed her eyes, letting his presence comfort her. She gasped when his conscience crushed the psychic barriers of her mind and flooded her head. A kaleidoscope of colours exploded behind her eyelids and for a second, time froze around her. She wasn’t in a dusty storage anymore, in a sketchy diner located in an even sketchier area of Vegas. No. She was outside, under a sky so bright and so blue she had to blink several times to get used to it. Sounds of waves crashing against the shore reached her ears and she lowered her gaze, to see a crystal-clear sea and a pristine, white sand beach going for miles around. She gulped the salty air of the sea, letting it fill her lungs.

It was over all too soon. The barriers of her mind snapped back into place, throwing his conscience out of her. She took a step back and caught herself up on a swaying metallic shelf. Breathing in and out, slowly, she chased the remnants of his presence in her. His soul was bright and vibrant and always left a lasting print on her. She found it and closed her eyes to savour it, holding it close to her heart. She didn’t know if he felt it when she did that, when she drew comfort from him even though they weren’t bonded yet. She didn’t think he did because never in her life had she felt him draw peace and comfort from her.

But maybe, that was because he had never needed to. Maybe he didn’t need anything from her.

She shook her head to get that thought out of her head. Not everyone was like her father.

Feeling better, stronger, she walked out of the storage room and headed toward her place.

Scientists didn’t know where soulmates come from. They didn’t know why two people were born with the exact same mark on their skin or why these two people were intimately connected on the three planes of existence: physical, emotional and psychical. They didn’t know a lot about soulmates
actually, but they knew the most important things.

Back in time, soulmates didn’t get together very often. Mainly because people generally did not leave the area they were born in, meaning that they never got the chance to meet their soulmates. And for the people who did get to meet their soulmates, they did not end up together as well, because of political alliances and arranged marriages. Distance, different beliefs, politics and wars kept soulmates apart for centuries, leaving people with a void in their heart and soul, a void they were desperate to fill but didn’t know how to. It was no wonder why they had spent their lives fighting. The loneliness of their soul had driven them crazy, slowly gnawing on the remaining pieces of their sanity.

Things started changing at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Technological development made it possible to travel further away, faster and at a cheaper cost, making it possible for more and more people to meet their soulmates. One of those lucky souls was a scientist. His name was Howard Krast and he met his soulmate in New-York, in 1911. She was an Irish immigrant and after they were bonded, he started studying soulmates and tried to understand how things worked. His researches were the firsts ever done in that area and still inspires people in 2012. Krast discovered a molecule that was released during the bonding. According to him, it was that molecule who tied people together. He tried to create it, in his lab. He used his soulmate and himself as test subjects but failed. He realised that the molecule was something that could only be made by nature. Krast created his own company and its main purpose was to keep studying soulmates and improve their knowledge of the bonding process and the abilities it unleashed. With the development of computer science, he opened a database, the Soulmarks’ International Database, collecting data about soulmarks, to help people find their soulmates. Teenagers could sign in at the age of sixteen.

In the nineties, a scientist working for Krast researches and development department discovered a way to cancel the effect of the soulmates’ molecule. The discovery came in handy because the soulmark was as much a curse as it was a blessing. When people lost their soulmates, they lost a part of themselves. The bond was broken, cut in half. The half of the remaining mate was left hanging and desperate to find the loss connection again, to get it back. Soulmates were so deeply and intimately intertwined together, they could no longer exist on their own, not after the bonding. Their souls were the two parts of a whole and a world where they were alone and separate was just unfathomable and that’s why they kept looking for their lost half. Only there never was anything to find in the cold darkness of a shattered bond.

Those who lost their soulmates were hurting, going through a pain that was not only psychical or emotional but also physical. Things were just too much for the heart and soul to take, and it was up to the body to relieve them from their burden. And as if an excruciating everlasting pain wasn’t enough, some of those broken people could lose their mind because of the void in their psyche. The Med could prevent that from happening. The Med shut down the link. It cut the connection, stopped the pain. It was salvation for those whose lives had become a living hell.

The Med was a blue pill and it had to be taken every day. It cut the link, erased the soulmark. Nowadays, not only those who had lost their soulmates took it but also those who didn’t want to have anything to do with their soulmates or those who wanted to be able to choose. It was indeed possible to fall in love with someone who wasn’t your soulmate. Krast had discovered that there were several levels of connection between two soulmates. Meaning that some connections were stronger than others before the bonding. He had created a scale, from one to ten, that measured the pre-bonding’s level of entanglement. For instance, people who got a grade from one to four were more likely to fall for someone who wasn’t their soulmate. And in response to that, some groups of people, who claimed that the soulmarks were taking away people’s ability to choose for themselves, were formed at the beginning of the twentieth century. Those groups saw the Med as a way to get
Felicity was thinking about all of this as her bus drove through Las Vegas, bringing her back to her apartment’s block. Her parents were soulmates but it hadn’t stopped her father from leaving them when she was seven. He had started taking the Med, so that her mother couldn’t use the bond to find him and had never come back.

Sighing, Felicity walked toward the staircase, knowing that their building’s elevator hadn’t been fixed yet. They were living on the fifth floor and after the day she had just had Felicity most definitely didn’t feel like climbing up the ninety steps that separated her from her home but she had no other choice. When she reached the door to her apartment, she only wanted to do one thing: collapse on her bed. But unfortunately, she had a mother to take care of.

She dropped her backpack in the hallway, put her key in a bowl near the door and went looking for her mom. She found her, passed out on the couch, still wearing her pajamas.

After her soulmate had left her and taken the Med to shut his side of the bond, Donna Smoak had been left with a silent void in her soul. She had refused to take the Med, arguing that if she did, then she’d lose her husband forever. Everything went from bad to worse after that. Donna became depressed and unable to keep a job for more than a few months. It was always the same thing, she always followed the same pattern. At the beginning, she came back from a low point and found a new job. Then, when Felicity started thinking that it was it, that she was finally getting better, that things were going to go well, her mother fell back down, harder and lower than before. Felicity’s bubbe had helped them, working in spite of her advanced age to provide for them since Donna couldn’t keep a job. But she had passed away the previous year, leaving Felicity alone to take care of both her mother and herself.

Krast’s company, which now belonged to his granddaughter had opened clinics to take care of these people who had lost themselves. Felicity and her bubbe had thought about sending Donna to one but they were unaffordable.

Kneeling in front of her mother, Felicity shook her shoulder. “Mom,” she said, her tone firm. No response. She shook harder. “Mom!”

Donna mumbled something unintelligible and turned around.

“Mom, wake up!” Felicity insisted.

“Leave me alone!” She muttered. “Go away!”

“Mom,” Felicity went on. “You didn’t go to work. You didn’t even shower. You promised me you would!”

“I can’t do it,” Donna said, her voice muffled by the pillow she had buried her face in.

“Yes you can,” Felicity assured her.

Donna turned around again, this time to face her daughter. Her blue eyes were moistened. “I tried, Felicity, I swear I tried. But then I thought, “what if he comes looking for me while I am at work, what if I miss him because I am at work” and I couldn’t go.” Her voice broke and a few tears rolled
down her cheeks.

Biting on her lip, this wasn’t the first time they were having this conversation, Felicity said. “It’s okay mom, I understand. I am not asking you to go to work. I just want you to take a shower. Can you do that for me? You don’t have to leave the apartment to do that and you know it.”

“You won’t make me go to work?” Donna asked, her eyebrow rising as her hopes went up again.

Felicity closed her eyes, fighting back her own tears. “No I won’t.” She then reached out for her mother’s hand and helped her up. She led them to the small bathroom and let her shower, leaving the door open on her way out, just in case.

Walking back to the living room, she heard her mother shrieked. Her heart skipped a beat in her chest and she ran back toward the bathroom.

“What? What’s going on?” She asked, panicked.

“Water’s cold,” Donna explained.

Felicity put her hand under the spray. It was freezing. Repressing a shiver, she turned toward her mother.

“You said you had paid the water bill,” she told her.

“Maybe I forgot…” Donna said, looking down toward her feet.

Felicity groaned before going back to the living room. No shower for them tonight. She grabbed her laptop and paid the bill online.

“Everything should be good by tomorrow,” she informed her mother.

Donna, who was now sitting on the couch, holding her knees close to her chest, nodded.

“Are you hungry?” Felicity asked.

Donna shook her head.

“Are you sure?” She insisted. You didn’t have lunch.”

“I am not hungry,” Donna repeated.

“Alright then, let’s put you to bed,” Felicity decided. There were cereal bars in her mother’s room because chances that she’d wake up hungry in the middle of the night were high.

She walked Donna to her room and helped her get under comforter. She tucked her in her bed, kissed her forehead and bid her goodnight.

When she was alone again, Felicity served herself a bowl of cornflakes. She was too tired to cook a proper meal, especially if she was the only one who was going to eat it. Sitting down on the couch in the living room, she turned on the TV and reached for the mail. She hadn’t had a chance to look at it earlier.

There were a few bills and their sight tied a knot in Felicity’s stomach. How were they going to pay them, now that Donna has lost her job again? Felicity couldn’t work more at Daisy’s, she still had to go to school. Not knowing what to do, she put the bills away. They would still be here to mock her in the morning.
Her heart froze when she saw the envelope.

Opening it up with shaking hands, she unfolded the letter.

“Dear Felicity,

On behalf of the Admission Committee, it is my pleasure to offer you admission to the MIT class of 2016. You stood out as one of the most talented and promising students in one of MIT’s most competitive applicant pools ever. Your commitment to personal excellence and principled goals has convinced us that you will both contribute to our diverse community and thrive within our academic environment. We think you and MIT are a good match…”

Letting out a relieved breath, she felt tears prickled at the corner of her eyes. She wiped them away.

MIT.

She had gotten in and they were offering her a full scholarship.

She knew she’d still have to find a job but she didn’t care. Nothing could be worse than working for Daisy.

But what about her mother though? She couldn’t leave her alone in Vegas and she knew she’d refuse to move away, just in case Felicity’s dad ever came back. When she had applied, Felicity hadn’t honestly thought that she’d get in. She hadn’t thought about any of this, she hadn’t felt like she’d need to.

But now she did and she was lost.

A week later, Felicity still hadn’t talked to her mother about the acceptance letter she had gotten. She couldn’t come up with a suitable solution for her mother and herself. She was considering turning college down and started working immediately after she was done with high-school. The thought depressed her but her mother needed her more than she needed to go to college.

When the bell rang, signalling the end of another day at school, Felicity packed her stuff back slowly, her heart heavy in her chest. Getting up, she walked out of the room and headed toward the exit.

She immediately noticed the man. He was actually kind of hard to miss with his black suit, black tie and white shirt. He looked like a bodyguard. She walked past him, wondering who he was and what he was doing here when she felt him move and follow her. She stopped dead in her tracks.

“Felicity Smoak?” He asked, his tone polite. His shoulders were large and broad but nothing in his demeanour felt threatening.

“Who’s asking?” She replied suspiciously, crossing her arms over her chest.

“James Wilde, private detective. Here’s my card.”

He handed her a small folded cardboard piece of paper. “You know it proves nothing, right?”

He nodded. “As it is written on my card, I work for the Soulmarks’ International Database,” he
explained her. “Your soulmate’s family hired me.”

She blinked several times. She had turned sixteen in February but hadn’t created a profile for herself in the SID’s database yet.

“How do they know about me? I haven’t signed up yet.”

The man took a folder out of his small briefcase. “You didn’t, but your mother, Donna Smoak, did.”

She reached for the folder and opened it. He had printed the file created and administrated by her mother as a proof. Her heart clenched when she saw that her mother had filled her profile with a lot of things that weren’t accurate. No, she was not a cheerleader, she was a tutor. No, she was not a fan of Keeping Up with the Kardashians, she loved watching Doctor Who and Sherlock. And no, she didn’t dream to attend the Fashion Week, she wanted to leave for a road trip someday. As usual, her mother had skipped the “boring” parts of her life. Clenching her fists, she crumpled the file.

“I am guessing that she didn’t tell you about any of this,” James said, his eyes glued to her hands torturing the folder.

Felicity pursed her lips, anger and frustration making her heart swell in her chest. Her mother had created her account three weeks ago, right after her birthday and lied about many things. She had created a file for her, but hadn’t thought that saying true things about her would be a good idea. “No, I didn’t,” her voice taut.

“Would you mind walking?” James suggested. “I know there is a nice park down the street. It’ll be better to talk sitting down on a bench than here, standing.”

She nodded following him to the Lewis Family Park. They found a bench under a shade tree and sat down.

“Why did my family’s soulmate hire you?”

The detective took a deep breath. “They got a notification telling them that a match had been found for their son’s mark a few days after your mom created your account. They deleted his data right after that.”

Felicity tilted her head. “That still doesn’t tell me why they hired you,” she noticed, her frustration bubbling up in her chest.

“They asked me to investigate on you. And when I was done, they asked me to become a mediator between you and them.”

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“They asked me to investigate on you. And when I was done, they asked me to become a mediator between you and them.”

Felicity blinked several times, astonished. What kind of family was her soulmate living in? Who do they think they were? “A mediator? For what?”

The detective blue eyes met hers. “They want you to give up on your soulmate’s rights,” he told her, his tone colder than before.

Felicity felt like she had been slapped. Except this time, the pain was ten times worse than everything she had ever felt, because the slap had ended on her heart and not on her cheek. The quiet buzzing of her soulmate’s emotions roared to life, and she knew it was a reaction to the abrupt twist in her emotions.

“Why?” She managed to say, in spite of the lump in her throat that was making it hard for her to speak and breathe.
“It’s not in their family’s best interests to have their only son bonded to someone like you.”

Felicity felt like she had been slapped for the second time in a row. Tears prickled at the corner of her eyes, the insult leaving a stinging cut on her heart. Her soulmate’s emotions grew stronger within her and she identified concern. Digging her nails into the skin of her palms to anchor herself in the present, she shut them down.

“They are willing to pay the necessary price,” James Wilde went on.

“They can keep their money, I don’t want it,” she spit out, her tone ferocious. She still had some pride left inside her after all.

“You should reconsider your words Miss Smoak. They are willing to offer you a huge amount of money. And they also happen to be friends with Amanda Krast and they can get your mother a place in one of the best soulmate’s clinics of the country. You wouldn’t have to worry about anything, her medical care and everything else would be taken care of,” Felicity started shaking her head and he leaned toward her, his tone more insistent. “Think about it Felicity, your mom would get better, you could go to MIT, all your debts would be paid off…”

“What does my soulmate think of all this?” She asked, her voice shaking.

A shadow crossed the man’s face. It disappeared quickly though and Felicity didn’t linger on it.

“He wants what’s best for his family.”

“And I am not it?” She asked and she hated herself for sounding so piqued and bitter.

“No you’re not.”

She closed her eyes to keep her tears at bay. “If that’s true then why doesn’t he cut the link himself?”

Instead of answering her question, James got up. “Take a few days to think about it,” he told her. “Give me a call when you’re ready.”

He left her then and Felicity watched him leave, feeling more alone than ever. Her pain was strong enough to protect her from her soulmate’s emotions. For the first time in her life, she didn’t feel his presence with her.

She was utterly and completely alone.

She didn’t know what to think of what she had just been told, she didn’t know what to do. On the one hand, the promise of a place in a soulmate’s clinic for her mother was very tempting. She was doing so bad and Felicity didn’t know how to help her anymore. She needed doctors and psychologists, not a sixteen-year-old daughter who didn’t know what she was doing. But to get a place in the clinic, she had to accept the offer. What she had gathered about her soulmate’s family told her that she didn’t want to have anything to do with them. Who do they think they were? Some kind of royals? What kind of twisted people asked a private detective to investigate on a teenager and concluded that she wasn’t a good enough soulmate for their son? Felicity didn’t want to be connected to that particular kind of cold, cruel and calculating people. But on the other hand, she had been connected to her soulmate for so long, it felt like he was already an integral part of herself. How could she just cut everything? How could she close that door? How could she refuse them to ever be completely whole?

She hadn’t signed up in the SID’s database because after what her father had done to her mother, how he had walked out on her without looking back, she had realised that having a soulmate didn’t
mean living together happily ever after. She knew better, she knew the ugly truth that was hiding behind the beautiful tale. She knew that a soulmate could either be the other half of your heart or the only one able to shatter it into pieces so small there was no way to ever bring them back together. She had needed time to think about whether or not she wanted to expose herself to that kind of pain and that was why she hadn’t signed in the SID right after her birthday. That and the fact that her life was a mess and that she didn’t want to drag her soulmate into it.

Now, she was realising that, maybe, *she* didn’t want to be the one dragged into the mess that was his life.

The ringtone of her cell-phone pulled her out of her thoughts. Her heart skipped a beat when she saw the caller’s ID. It was Mrs Mill, her neighbour across the hall. She knew about Felicity’s mother condition and had offered to keep an eye on her when Felicity was at school or at work.

“Mrs Mill, what can I do for you?”

“*Felicity, I am so sorry, your mother left! I tried to stop her but you know how she can be…*”

Felicity let out a deep breath. Yeah, she knew exactly how her mother could be. “Did she say anything before leaving?”

“She mumbled things about an engagement. She kept saying that she was going to be late.”

“I see, thanks for calling me Mrs Mill, I’ll call you back when I find her.”

“Are you going to be okay? Do you know where she went?”

“Yes I do, thanks again Mrs Mill, but I really need to go.”

Hanging up, she got on her feet. She knew exactly where her mom was, it wasn’t the first time that something like that was happening. One of her mother’s only way to cope with the loss of her soulmate was to lock herself in their past memories. Judging from what Donna had said to Mrs Mill, she was living her engagement all over again. Thankfully, Paris Las Vegas was only fourteen miles away from her high-school and since her mother had lost her job, she was the one using their car.

Driving skilfully through the city where she was born, she reached the Paris Las Vegas hotel complex in record time. Parking herself, she started looking for her mother, her heart beating wildly in her chest. When she was locked up in a memory, Donna was so lost in herself, she could put herself in harm’s way just because her mind was focusing one the past and completely obliterating the present.

Felicity ran toward the replica of the Eiffel Tower, making her way through the crows. Her parents’ dream had always been to go to Paris but they had never had enough money, especially with a baby on the way, to travel there. Despite that, her father had found a way to make part of their dream come true by proposing to her mother under the Eiffel Tower in Vegas.

She breathed in relief when she saw her mother, wearing a quilted yellow dress and bright red heels. She was standing next to one of the tower’s foot, oblivious to the people passing by her, pacing as she waited for a man that would never come.
Biting her lower lip, Felicity headed toward her, slowly. Patience and gentleness were the only tools that she could use to coax her.

“Mom,” she called her, her voice soft.

Donna’s eyes fell on her but Felicity knew that even if she saw her, her mother didn’t recognize her. At least not completely.

“I am waiting for my boyfriend,” she said cheerfully. “He asked me to meet him here after the end of my shift! He asked me to look pretty, do I look pretty enough to you?” She swirled, her blonde curls following her movement.

Felicity put a hand on her shoulder to stop her. “Yes mom, you look very pretty.”

Donna shook her head chuckling. “I am a bit young to be your mother sweetheart!”

Felicity swallowed tightly, tears threatening to roll down her cheeks and she forced her mom to look at her. Visual contact could bring her back faster. “Mom, we need to go home,” she told her, her tone firmer.

Donna’s smile faded slightly. “Felicity?” She asked.

“Yes mom, it’s me. We need to go home,” she repeated, carefully pulling her away from the Tower’s foot.

“No!” Donna protested, yanking her arm away from her grasp. “My boyfriend, he called me! He told me to meet him here, I can’t leave!”

Felicity looked around and saw that a few people were watching them. Not caring about what they might be thinking, she straightened her spine. “He’s not going to come,” she stated calmly.

Donna frowned in confusion. “He’s not.” It was half a question, half a statement.

“No,” Felicity went on. “He couldn’t make it. But he’ll be here tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow?” Donna’s voice sounded more hopeful, more cheerful.

“Yes,” Felicity confirmed. Donna would have snapped out of the memory by then. Felicity knew from experience that she wouldn’t leave if she felt like he was going to come.

“And he’ll ask me to marry him?”

Felicity nodded, a tear rolling down her cheek. She caught it quickly and brushed it aside. “Yes, he will,” she promised.

“Are you okay, sweetheart? You look sad!”

“I am perfect,” she lied, cocking her head so that her mother could not see her eyes, “now let’s go.”

She offered her mother her arm and drove them back to their place. She called in sick at Daisy’s and helped her mother remove her make-up and get into her pajamas. She then tucked her in bed and left her, coming back a while later with a tray of food. She made sure that her mother ate properly before telling her to sleep.
She was working on her homework when she heard someone knocking at their door. Getting up, she opened the door to see Mrs Mill standing on the threshold.

“Mrs Mill!” She said, slapping her forehead. “I am so sorry, I forgot to call you.”

“It’s okay Felicity. I brought you some pizza,” she added, holding out a plate covered by aluminium. “Figured you’d need some comfort food after what happened.”

Felicity’s heart clenched in her chest at the thoughtful gesture. It wasn’t much but it was more than what anyone else was willing to do for her. “Thank you so much Mrs Mill,” she hugged her then.

Mrs Mill hugged her back, rubbing her back tenderly. She pulled away after a minute. “Is she okay?” She asked then.

Felicity shrugged. “She is sleeping.”

“It’s getting worse Felicity,” she stated. “Less and less time passes between two rough patches.”

“I am well aware, but what can I do?” Felicity tried not to sound too desperate but truth was, she was desperate.

“Have you considered making her take the Med?” Mrs Mill wondered.

“Unless I force it down her throat, I don’t see how I can have her take it.”

Mrs Mill sighed. She squeezed Felicity’s shoulder. “Take care.”

Felicity nodded. “Thank you Mrs Mill, for everything.”


A girl’s laughter. Brown curls, beautiful eyes, a pretty smile.

A stolen kiss.

Forbidden heat and lust rushed through her veins, burning everything on its way toward her lower body…

NO!

Not her lower body.

His.

Felicity woke up with a gasp from her dream, her heart beating wildly in her chest. She sat down on her bed and took her head between her hands, a sob wracking her body as she felt her soulmate’s desire for the gorgeous brunette flood her veins.

Getting up, she walked toward the bathroom and splashed cold water on her face. She gripped the
edge of the sink tightly when another wave of a lust that wasn’t hers wreck her insides. She had figured that her soulmate was older than her and it wasn’t the first time that he was enjoying the company of someone from the opposite sex. It didn’t happen often but it had happened a few times already.

She breathed in and out slowly, pushing his emotions in the back of heart, letting her own rule again. Then she went back to bed, but couldn’t fall asleep, in spite of her exhaustion. She felt like she had been slapped again and she didn’t know why.

Because it was not the first time that something like that happened.

But now things were different. She knew she wasn’t good enough for him now, she knew he didn’t want her.

And she wondered if the reason why she had never felt him seek comfort in her was because he actually had never tried to.

Because he hadn’t wanted to.

Because he hadn’t wanted her.

She called James Wilde three days later. He told her that a place could be found in Boston’s clinic for her mother, and that money would be transferred on her bank account as soon as the connection would be cut.

So there she was, standing in a drugstore, staring at the different boxes of the Med.

“Can I help you with something?” A voice asked her.

She turned around and her eyes met dark ones. A young slender boy, Andy his name tag supplied, was staring at her, his head cocked.

“Yes please,” she replied. “I’d like to…” She gestured toward the shelf.

“You want to buy the Med?” Andy guessed. “Aren’t you a little too young for that?”

“There is no age limit,” she shot back, crossing her arms over her chest in a defensive gesture.

“I know, I was just kidding,” he told her, a small on his lips. “You okay?”

She nodded. “Yeah, I just want to get one of… These!”

“That’s something I can help you with. They are so many boxes because the dosage is different, depending on the strength of the connection pre-bonding.”

Felicity nodded, she knew that.

“What’s your number?” Andy asked then, a hand already reaching toward the boxes.

“Nine,” she blurted out, her nervousness coming back and hitting her, hard.
His hand stopped mid-air. He arched an eyebrow. “Are you sure that you want to do this? Nine is... high.”

“I know. Just, give me the box please?”

Andy swallowed tightly, she saw his Adam’s apple go up and down in his throat.

“Here,” he said, handing her a white box. “Take the pill every day, around the same time. It will work instantly, and erase your soulmark. If one day you want to have it back, just stop taking the pill. The effect should take a few days to wear off but soon enough the connection will be back.”

“Thank you very much,” Felicity said before walking toward the cashier.

The pill was small, its colour a weird transparent blue.

It was funny when she thought about it, how the simplest and smallest thing could change her life forever.

Her soulmate’s emotions were pounding on the doors of her mind, heart and soul. She had successfully kept them at bay for the past few days, finding it less hard to ignore them every time a new day started. She wondered if he could feel her new resolution. If he could feel that she was about to separate them forever. She wondered if he’d miss her.

She shook her head at that stupid thought.

Why would he miss her when he had willing and available gorgeous brunettes around him?

Bringing the pill to her lips, she lowered her barriers one last time and let her conscience seek his. They brushed each other, a ghost touch on their soul, one last emotional caress before the end.

*Goodbye.*

Then, she swallowed the pill.

She pushed her jeans down, exposing her hipbone to her hungry gaze one last time. She watched her arrow fade away, felt silence wrapping his cold arms around her.

Their arrow had been shaped to look like the sign of the infinite. She chuckled bitterly, fully appreciating the irony of the situation.

They had ended before they could truly begin.
Hey guys!!!!

You guys blew me away with the responses to the last chapter! I really hadn't expected it! So thank you very much, you guys rock!! :D

Here's the next chapter! I hope that you'll like it. Someone's having a nightmare at the beginning of the chapter, it's PTSD. So BE CAREFUL if that's something you're not comfortable with.

Happy reading :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 1:

“People help the people
And if you’re homesick
Give me your hand and I hold it”

- Birdy, People help the people.

Everything was dark around her.

Heavy, opaque, threatening darkness was surrounding her.

She called for help, screamed until her throat hurt, her lungs burnt but only the echo of her cries and sobs answered her.

She struggled against the binds that tied her to the cold and metallic bed, pulling and twisting until she felt hot blood dripping between her fingers.

Then she heard the voice, so cold, so low, and a shiver ran down her spine. The icy cold laugh and the whispered words of possession followed.

Bright white light pierced through the darkness, immediately reflected on the sharp blade of a knife, blinding her.

She felt the pain. She felt the burn. She felt the scorching trail of fire that her blood left as it flew from the cuts he had carved up in her body.

She felt it all.
And she wished that she would just stop feeling.

That she would stop hearing his voice and his mad words.

That she would stop feeling the excruciating pain he was inflicting her.

She prayed for salvation.

But when it came, it was too late.

Felicity woke up from her nightmare with a gasp. Her heart was beating wildly in her chest, pounding so hard against her ribs she feared it would crack them. Her breathing was uneven, crazy, her lungs rising and falling in her chest at a pace that would have worried most doctors. She felt like she was suffocating, like there was no air anymore. Groaning, she rolled in her sheets, which were damp with sweat. She tried to lift herself up on her elbows but failed and fell back on her back. Her whole body was shivering, and her arms and hands shaking badly. She clenched and unclenched her fists as she breathed in and out, slowly, trying to calm herself down.

Air filled her lungs and her heart settled in her chest. Her limbs stopped shaking and finally, she was able to sit down. She raised up her knees, her head falling between them, her hands grasping a few strands of her golden blonde curls. She kept from pulling at them, knowing that it would hurt more than it would anchor her. She got chills when the cool air of the room caressed her skin, which was covered by a thin layer of perspiration. Turning around, she reached for her knitted cardigan and put it on. She then gathered up her wet hair and tied it up in a messy bun on the top of her head. She stood up and wobbly legs and reached for her slippers. She put them on, collected her bedsheets and throwing them in a basket. She walked out of her room, carrying the basket with her and got out of her apartment on tip-toe. She didn’t want to wake her mother, she was still sleeping soundly.

Felicity closed her eyes for a second when a light breeze stroked her cheek, a ghostly caress that helped her pull herself out of her nightmare even more. Straightening her spine, she walked down the street and to the laundry opened twenty-four hours. The street lights were casting a low glow on the pavement, preventing her from being left to her own devices in the dark night. She jumped in surprise when she heard glass shattering on the asphalt. Her heart picking up in her chest, she turned around all her senses on her alert. She heard two cats meow and willed herself to calm down. It was nothing to worry about, just two stray cats. She resumed her walk, still feeling slightly on edge.

She walked in the laundry and found it empty. The lights lightening the place were buzzing, flickering. Felicity shook her head, wondering when the owner would do something about it. She put her bedsheets in one of the washing machine, inserted a coin and changed the settings before pressing “start”. The machine rumbled to life and the familiar sound made Felicity smile. Sitting down on a swaying bench, whose colour had faded away a while ago, she leaned her back against the wall and waited, savouring the sound of the wildly shaking machine. It was not pleasant, nor melodious but it was normal and Felicity craved normality.

When the cleaning part was done, she put her bedsheets in one of the dryers and let the machine work its magic. By the time it was over, the black sky had turned dark blue and a bright mix of pink and orange was appearing where the sun was rising. The beautiful mix of colours was a sight for eyes and Felicity stood at the door of her apartment’s building for a few more seconds, just to enjoy it for a little while longer.
She came back home to her mother waiting for her, wrapped in her pink bathrobe, her arms crossed over her chest. Donna Smoak didn’t look pleased.

“Where were you?” She asked. “You left without leaving me a note, I was worried.”

Felicity bit on her lip. “I’m sorry mom, I thought I’d be back before you woke up.” She put the basket with her cleaned sheets next to the couch of the small apartment they shared in Boston.

“I was worried, Felicity,” Donna repeated. “I woke up and you were gone…”

“I’m here now mom,” she told her, squeezing her hand reassuringly. “I am really sorry, I didn’t mean to worry you.”

Donna brushed a fallen strand of her hair aside from her forehead. “I know you didn’t mean to.” Her eyes fell on the basket and on Felicity’s bedsheets. “What happened?” She asked, her eyebrows arched in confusion.

Felicity sighed, her eyes avoiding her mother’s inquisitive gaze. “I just had a nightmare,” she said, keeping her tone light, as if it was no big deal.

Except it was.

Concern flooded Donna’s face. “I thought they had stopped,” she whispered, her hands coming up to cup her daughter’s cheeks.

“Not completely,” Felicity explained her. “But the last one I had was three months ago so I think it’s safe to assume that I’m getting better.”

“Oh baby,” Donna let out, pulling her daughter into her embrace. Felicity’s arms wrapped around her waist as she let her mother hug her and whisper soft words of comfort against her hair.

When they parted ways, Felicity gave her a mother a small smile. “Why don’t you go shower?” Donna suggested. “I’ll brew us some coffee.”

Felicity nodded. “That sounds like a good idea!”

She made her way to the bathroom then as she tried to ease the knots in her neck with her fingers. She let out a grunt when she didn’t even loosen up one. Stripping of her clothes, she turned the water on. She stepped in the shower, drops of hot water splashing her legs. Getting closer, she put herself under the hot spray, letting out a relieved breath when some of the tensions in her body were released. Untying her hair, she let her curls cascade down her shoulders. Closing her eyes, she rested her mind as she let the hot water do its magic.

Four years had passed ever since Felicity had started taking the Med that had shut down the connection between her soulmate and herself. She hadn’t seen or spoken to James Wilde, the mediator hired by her soulmate’s family ever since they had sealed their deal. Just like he had promised, her mother got admitted into one of the soulmate’s clinics. When she had told her the news, it had been one of Felicity’s life most heart-breaking moments. Even her father leaving hadn’t hurt as much as her mother’s screams and sobs. Donna had cried, begged Felicity not to do it. She had promised that she’d get better, she had promised that she’d change. But Felicity had known better. She had known that Donna had been too far gone to bring herself back together alone. She had needed help and the doctors the clinic had given her just.

The first few months had been awful. Donna had shut down completely, not talking to the doctors or the psychologists and therapists that were following her progresses and refusing to see her daughter.
Felicity, who had been studying at MIT and living on the campus had been hurt by her attitude but had never once lost hope. She had written her letters, at least once a week, so that she’d know that she was still there, that she hadn’t completely forgotten about her. Finally, after months of hospitalisation, Donna had started opening up. She had started eating more, showering herself alone, putting one some make-up. Those were simple things but among the most important ones. Slowly, she had come back to life. She had accepted to see Felicity and as a part of her therapy, had replied to each of her letters. It had been a slow process, but nobody had said that healing was supposed to be quick and easy.

Felicity was in the middle of her third year in MIT when her mother finally accepted to take the Med and by doing so, to cut loose from her husband’s hold for good. Felicity had been very proud of her, of all the things she had achieved. She had offered her a ring to wear instead of her wedding band. It had never left her mother’s finger since that day. The doctors had allowed her out of the hospital after that day, but they were still watching her carefully. She had to come see her therapist once a week and someone had to make sure that she took the Med every day. That someone, of course, had been Felicity. She had left MIT’s campus to move in a small apartment with her mother. Donna had taken a job in a coffee-shop and they had lived a simple yet happy life together. Mostly happy. They had had one huge argument when Donna had wanted, actually she had demanded to know, how Felicity had been able to get her a place in Boston’s clinic. Felicity swearing that she hadn’t digitally stolen anyone’s money or hacked into any database to make it happen hadn’t been enough to make her stop asking questions. So Felicity had told her the truth.

Never in their lives had they argued the way they did that day. Donna, who had an unwavering faith in soulmates and true love – and that was quite beautiful that, despite everything that had happened to her, she hadn’t turned into a bitter and resentful person – had been really mad at her daughter for doing what she had done. Felicity had argued that she had done it to help her and that she’d do it again if she had to. She didn’t regret helping her mother, saving her life. She could never ever regret that, her mother was too important.

“Felicity, are you okay in there?” Her mother asked.

Her voice teared her from her memories, bringing her back in the present time.

“Yes mom, I am fine,” she yelled to cover the noise of the water hitting the white floor of the shower.

Her usually very white skin was now an angry red, because of the water’s heat. She turned the button left, to cool it down and washed her hair before conditioning it. When she was done, she washed her body, scrubbing her skin until it was even redder, in a desperate attempt to wash off the remnants of her nightmare. Finally satisfied and feeling slightly better, she shut the water down and walked out of the shower. She got dressed and met her mother in the living-room, taking her comb and her hair products with her. She set them down on the table, knowing that her mother would probably take care of her curls after she was done with her coffee.

“Here’s your cup,” Donna informed her. Her back was to the kitchen’s counter, and she was holding a cup of coffee between her hands. “Are you hungry? I can make us some pancakes if you want to.”

Felicity glanced down at her watch for the first time that day. It was barely six and a half. “I am not hungry yet,” she confessed. “Maybe we can have a second coffee and a proper breakfast later, at a decent hour?” She suggested.

Donna chuckled, taking a sip of her coffee. Felicity did the same. The hot liquid burnt the tip of her tongue then her throat but it wasn’t enough to stop her. She loved coffee too much and she needed at least a cup or two before being fully operational. Plus, the familiar taste was really comforting.
They set their cups in the kitchen sink when they were done and walked across the room. Donna sat down on the couch, Felicity on the fluffy rug on the floor, between her mother’s legs. Once they comfortable, she let her do her hair. Her curls were beautiful but needed to be taken care of thoroughly. Felicity didn’t mind doing it herself but she had little patience and her mother had plenty. She also loved taking care of it for her. When she was in the clinic, doctors had told Donna to favour physical contact with her loved ones, to compensate the loss of physical proximity with her soulmate. Moreover, Donna had never really done Felicity’s hair when she had been little, leaving the task to her bubbe. By taking care of it for her now, she was catching up on all the little things that her breakdown had deprived them of.

“What have you planned for the day?” Donna asked her daughter.

Felicity shrugged. “I wanted to go to the library and maybe to the gym, tonight. Why?”

“Well, since it’s my day off, I thought that maybe we could talk about your plans for the future.”

Felicity tensed up immediately. She had graduated from MIT with a degree in both computer science and cyber security a month ago, in June but she had yet to find a job. She had gotten offers, from several companies but hadn’t picked one yet. She knew she was running out of time, she knew she had to make a choice but she couldn’t bring herself to. She didn’t want to work with computers anymore, not after what had happened. It would remind her of him and she wanted to put him behind her, burry his memory so deep in her mind, she’d never find it ever again.

She wish she could tell her mother that, she wish she could tell her that after four years spent studying computers she didn’t want to work on them anymore. She wish she could tell her that everything had been for nothing. She really wish she could but she couldn’t. Her mother was so proud of her, of what she had achieved despite what had happened, Felicity didn’t want to disappoint her nor did she want to worry her. Because her mother would worry, if she told her she had no idea of what she wanted to do with her life anymore.

“I don’t know which company to pick,” Felicity eventually said, wincing when the comb got caught in a knot.

They remained silent for a while, watching the sunlight enlighten their small apartment. “Maybe you should look at this with a different perspective,” Donna eventually said, letting go of her daughter’s hair. She was done.

Felicity turned her head. “What do you mean?”

“Why can’t you pick a company?” Donna asked instead of explaining herself.

Felicity’s eyes widen slightly before she came up with a quick lie. “Because they’re almost all offering the same thing, a place in the IT department.”

“Then, instead of looking for a company, why don’t you look for a place to live instead? If the job offer is the same, then pick one in a city that you love and would like to live in.”

“I guess I could do that,” Felicity agreed, weighing the pros and the cons in her head.

“Why don’t you go pick your laptop and the offers then?” Donna asked, a bright smile on her lips. “We can look for details about the cities.”

Felicity nodded. She wasn’t entirely convinced that this was a good idea but it was basically impossible to resist her mother’s smile and pointless to try to get her to change her mind. Walking back to her room, she grabbed her laptop and came back to sit down next to her mother. She handed
the job offers that she had printed to her mother.

“Well,” Donna started. “What about Gotham City?”

Felicity shook her head, her hold tightening on her laptop. “I don’t want to stay on the east coast.” She didn’t need to precise why.

“Okay then I guess we can forget about Metropolis, New-York and Washington.” Donna said as she tossed three sheets of paper away. “Chicago?” She suggested.

Again, Felicity shook her head. “Not on the east coast mom,” she repeated.

“Chicago’s not on the east coast,” Donna argued.

“It’s close enough,” Felicity maintained.

“Okay, okay! What about Central City?”

Felicity googled the city. It looked nice and Star Labs really sounded great. The only problem was that it was far from Las Vegas, where her mother had decided to go back. Now that she was better, Donna had started to miss her old life as a cocktail waitress. She used to love that job and be really good at it, before her soulmate broke her heart. She was bright, funny, delightful and still rocked heels and short dresses. She was made to live and work in Vegas. She had hesitated for a while before applying to work in a four-star hotel. She hadn’t wanted to leave Felicity alone but her daughter had encouraged her to do so. She had already lost so many years of her life because of what her soulmate had done to her, Felicity wasn’t going to make her lose more.

“Maybe,” Felicity told her. “What else do you have?”

“San Francisco?”

She googled the city. It looked beautiful on pictures but Felicity didn’t feel any pull toward it. “Nope, next one?”

“Coast City,” Donna told her. “The company’s small, it’s nothing compared to Palmer Technologies or Kord Industries but I am sure that you’ll be a nice addition to their team.”

Coast City was a sunny city near Los Angeles. The average temperature was eighty-three in summer, and the ocean was very blue, the waves amazing according to the surfers. “It looks really beautiful,” she told her mom, showing her a picture on her computer’s screen.

“It really does baby girl,” Donna agreed.

“I think we might have a winner,” Felicity whispered as she looked at more and more pictures. She’d probably have no problem finding a job in a restaurant or a coffee shop. “There’s only one city left though, it’s Star City.”

Felicity felt electricity tingled at the tips of her fingers as she typed the name. Star City. She frowned when the first pictures appeared on her screen. The skyline of the city looked oddly familiar. Actually, everything looked familiar, from the buildings to the beach, she felt like she had seen it all before but she couldn’t remember when or where or how. She scrolled down the pictures, a pang of longing tugging at her heart. She thought she recognised a street in particular, a coffee-shop and bookstore, and that was really weird because she had never set a foot down in Star City before. Still, she felt drawn to the city, her heart beating faster in her chest every time she saw something new pop up on her screen.
“Felicity are you okay?” Donna asked, concern filling her voice. Felicity realised then that she had been silent for a while.

She shook her head, trying to chase the lump of emotions that had moved in her throat. “Mom, I want to go to Star City,” was all she could manage to say.

The first day of Felicity’s new life didn’t go very well.

She forgot to plug her phone in when she went to bed. Her alarm didn’t ring and she woke up later than she had intended. She had had to get ready very quickly, plugging her phone to get at least twenty percent of battery to call her mother. She had taken a cab to go the airport but an accident slowed them down and she had had to run the last two miles, carrying both her suit and computer cases and while wearing heels. She had arrived at the airport of Boston just in time for the boarding. Then, she had thought that she’d be able to rest during the flight but she was scared of heights, even in a plane, and the journey had been a never-ending area of turbulence. She had feared to bring back up her breakfast more times than she could count. They had landed in Star City, safely and she had thought that maybe, just maybe her day would start to get better. It hadn’t.

The woman who was renting her her small apartment - her mother had called it a rabbit hutch and Felicity had argued that she’d find something better after she started working – had called her to tell her that she had had to leave the city earlier than she had planned and couldn’t come and pick her up from the airport, as they had agreed. She had left the key to the apartment to the janitor. He’d would be waiting for her in his apartment. Felicity had found herself alone, in a city that she didn’t know with a dead phone and new heels that had killed her feet, courtesy of her unexpected run. She was tired, exhausted even, and only wanted one thing: to curl up under a fluffy blanket for the rest of her life.

She had had a light lunch before she had hailed a cab. She had given him her address and had tried to relax and enjoy the sight of the city through the window. The same feeling of longing that had taken over her heart when she had seen the pictures of Star City for the first time had hit her, hard. Despite the awful conditions of her arrival in the city, she had felt like she belonged there. She had been meant to walk down the busy streets, among the people of Star City. And that feeling had been just weird because it made no sense at all.

They had gotten stuck in traffic and after half an hour of doing nothing, Felicity had asked if her apartment’s block was still very far. The cab driver, who had very nice to her, had told her that it not that far. He had explained her how to find it and she had thanked him with a generous tip. Felicity had never had a great sense of direction but his explanations had been very clear and precise. Unfortunately for her, it had started raining before she had arrived. Because yes, apparently, her day hadn’t sucked enough. She had run to find shelter and had eventually found a bus stop. She sat down on the bench that was protected from the rain by a small roof. By the time she had reached it, she had been soaked to the bone. When the weather had cleared up, she had started walking again but had quickly realised that she had gotten lost.

So really, her first day in Star City didn’t go very well.

Felicity groaned as she stared at the dark screen of her phone. She couldn’t use the GPS’ system of her phone because she had no battery left. Sighing, she decided to retrace her steps but quickly admitted her defeat. She was lost. After a few more minutes of wandering in the city, looking like a
drowned cat and shivering because of the rain, she spotted a small coffee-shop, Star City’s sweet coffee. It provided caffeine and wi-fi, two of Felicity’s favourite things. Still carrying her suitcase behind her, she walked toward the entrance and pushed the door open. The light tinkling of wind chimes followed her entrance.

Her blonde young woman wearing ripped jeans and with half of her fingernails painted in red and the other half painted in black walked toward her, her eyes wide open.

“Dear god, what happened to you?” She asked, genuine concern shining in her blue eyes.

“Got caught in the rain,” Felicity explained, feeling better now that she was somewhere warm.

“Well, that sucks,” the girl commented. “Take your coat off, you must be freezing. You can go upstairs and hang it above a heater.”

“Thank you,” Felicity said, touched by the girl’s kindness.

“I’ll bring you towels and a coffee to warm you up. How do you like it?”

“With a lot of cream and sugar,” Felicity told her.

A smile tugged at the girl’s lips. “That’s how I like my coffee too,” she explained.

That made Felicity smile back at her. “I am Felicity,” she introduced herself.

“Sara,” the girl replied, shaking her hand. “It’s very nice to meet you.”

“Likewise,” Felicity nodded, already undoing the buttons of her coat. She reached for the handle of her suitcase but Sara stopped her.

“You can’t walk upstairs with that. Leave it to me, I’ll put it behind the counter.”

“Thank you,” Felicity repeated. Sara’s smile just grew wider.

Felicity made her way upstairs. It was less crowded than the room downstairs. There was only a couple and a man alone, working behind a computer. Felicity spotted the heater Sara had mentioned by the window. She hung her coat on the handle and hoped that it’d be dry soon.

“Nice bra,” the man who was working behind his computer said.

She looked down to her chest and saw that her white crop top was wet and very much transparent now.

“You might want to cross your arms over your chest,” he added wittily.

She looked up and her eyes met bright blue eyes, a square-faced jaw covered with a light stubble and a wide teasing smile.

Blushing furiously, she crossed her arms over her chest, to hide her now very obvious red bra.

“Sorry,” she mumbled, heat pickling at her cheeks.

He shook his head, chuckling. “Don’t apologise, it’s not your fault.”

She nodded before sitting down on a table near the heater, right in front of the man with beautiful eyes, dropping her laptop’s case next to her chair. Sara arrived two minutes later with her coffee and
the promised towels. They were both fluffy and warm and Felicity felt a pang of gratitude burst in her chest. She dried her hair with one and dried her clothes with the other one.

She sighed as she leaned back in her seat, sipping her coffee as she stared at the coffee-shop. More customers came upstairs and soon enough, it was as crowded as the room downstairs. She smiled, enjoying the happy buzzing of people talking and laughing. This felt just as familiar as everything else in the city. That’s when she realised that this was it. She had moved out of Boston, alone. For the first time in her twenty years on earth, she was going to be all by herself, without her mom to come home to. The thought made her feel suddenly very emotional. She looked down toward her half-empty cup of coffee, trying very hard not to think that her mother wasn’t going to be there to brew her one in the morning. Wiping at a small tear, she took a deep breath. She wasn’t going to start crying in the middle of a crowded place.

The other waitress of the place, a beautiful girl with a dark chocolate skin, set a plate with a huge slice of chocolate cake in front of her, startling Felicity in the process.

“I didn’t order that,” she told the waitress, Iris, she read on her name tag.

“Sara said that you looked like you needed it and I agreed. Don’t worry, it’s on the house!”

Felicity bit on her lips. She hadn’t thought that her bad mood was that obvious. “Thank you.”

Iris smiled at her once again before walking away. Felicity stared at the chocolate cake, it looked absolutely delicious.

“You’d be a fool not to eat it,” the man in front of her told her from behind his computer’s screen. He was so tall, he couldn’t have hidden behind it, even if he had tried his best to do so. “It’s the best chocolate cake of the city.”

“And you know that how?”

“It’s my home,” he said, shrugging. “I’ve been everywhere, I’ve tried every chocolate cake I could find.”

Considering that the guy seemed to be made of muscles, she had a hard time believing him. “You don’t seem to be the kind of guy who eats chocolate cake every day.”

He smiled at her, a smile so large it showed his dimples. “Just trust me on this, okay?”

She nodded and tried the chocolate cake. He watched her, gauging her reactions. She swallowed the bite she had taken, the cake was tasted as good as it looked, and she raised her thumb up to the guy. He smiled warmly at her once again before focusing back on her work.

She ate a bit more and turned her computer on. She plugged her phone in, to charge it. Sighing, she moved closer to the heater, seeking its warmth. She watched the people in the coffee-shop, the weird of belonging, coming back to hit her again.

After a while, she heard the guy who had spoken to her twice complain.

“Sara, please help me, this machine is killing me.”

“I don’t know if you’ve noticed Ollie but I am working,” she replied, putting empty cups of coffee on tray.

“She, please,” he begged her. “This virus is slowing everything down and I don’t know how to get
rid of it! You know I am not good with technology, I can barely send an email!”

“Ollie, do I look like an IT specialist to you?” She told him.

He smirked. “You don’t, but Iris…”

“Has a lot of work to do as well,” she completed. “Because we have an actual job you know?”

“That’s not fair!” Ollie told her.

She shot him a bright smile before going back to work. Felicity stared at him and his frustration was plain as day. She didn’t want to work with computers anymore and that included cleaning people’s mess but the more she looked at his face, the more she found herself feeling pulled toward him. She didn’t ache to play with a computer. No. She wanted to help him. So, she got on her feet, her arms still crossed over her chest because of her transparent top.

“Let me help you with your… virus,” she told him, her heart beating wildly in her chest.

He looked up to meet her eyes and she took a step back stunned by the beauty of his face, by the depth she could see in his clear blue orbs.

“Are you sure that you want to uncross your arms?” He teased her.

She sat down in front of him, shaking her head. “Just don’t look,” she told him and he pushed his computer toward her. She blinked, surprised. She hadn’t expected him to actually trust her with his computer.

It was the kind of viruses that she typically got rid of for breakfast but that was because she was good with computers. She could easily see why he hadn’t been able to do it himself.

“How often do you download stuff?” She asked him, because that’s where the virus had come from.

He furrowed his brows. “Do you work for the FBI?” He asked suspiciously.

She shook her head, smiling.

“Not that often,” he assured her. “I was just in a hurry yesterday, and I’d promised my sister that we’d watch that movie and it wasn’t at the video store so… I downloaded it. I thought my antivirus software would protect me, you know?”

“You haven’t updated your system in a while, that’s why it didn’t,” Felicity explained, starting a quick update.

“Did I mention that I wasn’t good with computers?”

She laughed, because the look on his face was just priceless. She then proceeded to explain to him exactly what had happened to his computer, how the virus had corrupted some of his files and how exactly it had done to slow done his processors. She went on and on, about wires, processors and viruses and computers and software. She waved her hands a lot, using them to help him understand things better. He listened carefully, and chuckled when she got too excited. When she was done talking, she blushed, mortified. She had just wanted to explain to him what had happened to his computer, not going on a tangent about computers.

“I am sorry,” she said, her cheeks burning now.

“I am not,” he shot back, a bright smile on his lips. “I’m Oliver by the way,” he told her, holding out
his hand, still smiling and she thought that he needed to stop doing it because he was going to blind her. His face was beautiful. His smiling face was simply gorgeous.

Surprised, she blinked several times. She had almost given him an aneurism – he had listened carefully, yes, but she still had noticed that his eyes had almost popped out of his head – and now he was introducing himself. Who was this guy?

“Felicity,” she answered, taking his hand shyly. It was huge and warm and his hold was strong. She felt a shiver ran down her spine when they pulled away. Shaking her head to chase the feeling away, she stared at the screen. The update was almost done. The wi-fi was really great in the coffee-shop. The computer beeped when it was ready and she pushed it back toward him.

“There you go,” she told him.

“Thank you so much, you’re a life saver!” He said, his tone genuine.

“Ollie, stop bothering the poor girl!” Sara chastised him from behind.

“She fixed my computer!” He informed her.

“Really?” She asked. “You’re good with computers Felicity?”

She shrugged, wanting to brush the topic away. “I know a few stuff.”

“She knows more than a few stuff,” Oliver corrected immediately.

Sara arched an eyebrow. “You think that you could teach that idiot a few things about technology?”

Felicity shook her head, smiling. “No need, I think he has learnt his lesson.”

He nodded firmly. “Always calling the video store early so that they can hold the movie that I want by,” he said, his face serious, but his eyes betraying his amusement.

Sara huffed back a laugh before leaving. “So, Felicity,” Oliver started, leaning down toward her. “Tell me how I can pay you back.”

She opened her mouth to tell him that he was nothing but then she said. “Do you happen to know where this block is?” She asked him, taking her wallet out of her laptop case and showing him the paper she had written her new address on.

“Yep, it’s not far away from here actually. I can walk you, if you want to.”

She started to protest. “Oh no, that’s okay, I don’t want to disturb you.”

“Hey, I don’t mind at all! And if you’re worried that I am an axe murderer, then you should know that no one has ever been able to prove anything.”

She froze at his words, her hands clenching automatically around the handle of her case. He frowned at the sudden tension he could feel radiating from her.

“Felicity, I was just kidding,” he told her softly.

She shook her head. “Yeah, of course.”

“So… Shall we go?” He asked, looking almost shy.
“Are you sure you don’t mind?”

“I really don’t,” he assured.

She got up then and reached for her coat. He grabbed her arm to stop her from putting it on. She tilted her head in confusion.

“You can’t wear that,” he told her.

“But it’s my coat,” she protested.

“And it’s still wet. You’re going to get sick.”

She arched an eyebrow. “And who are you? My keeper?”

“You saved my life when you fixed my computer. It’s only fair I save yours by stopping you from wearing this.” And as he finished speaking, he handed her his jacket wordlessly.

“I can’t…” She started to process.

He gave her a look and she just gave in. She put his jacket on and her senses were immediately assaulted by his warmth and scent that both felt just as welcoming as he was. They made their way back, Felicity paid for her coffee – she didn’t know how she managed to give the right amount of money because his scent was making her head spin – and Sara handed her her suitcase back.

“I hope I’ll get to see you again soon Felicity,” she told her.

“I think you will,” Felicity promised.

She walked out with Oliver then. As soon as they were out, he said.

“So, are you here on a vacation?”

She frowned.

“The suitcase,” he told her.

“Oh that? No, I am moving in actually.”

“Really?” He told her, another bright smile tugging at his lips. “Then welcome to Star City,” he moved his arm around, as if he was introducing her to someone and not to a city.

She laughed, his joie de vivre contagious. She realised then that she hadn’t smiled that much in a very long time. It comforted her somehow. Maybe coming to Star City had really been the right choice, maybe she really belonged there. “Thank you,” she told him, truly meaning the words, “and not just for welcoming me but also for being so nice and kind.”

He motioned to stop her. “You should have seen yourself when you walked in earlier. You looked like you had just lived the worst day of your life.”

“Well, it was a shitty day,” she admitted. “Until now.”

“So, have you found a job yet?”

His question made her want to tease him a little bit. “Do you work for the FBI?” She repeated.
He shook his head. “No, I am just asking this because I know a guy who’s desperately in need of someone with your particular set of skills,” he explained, pointing at his chest.

“That’s really nice of you but I am not looking for a job that involves my particular set of skills,” she told him as he made them cross a street.

“I don’t believe that! You were pretty passionate earlier.”

“It hadn’t happened in a while,” she admitted, blushing slightly.

“Well, I am glad that my poor skills could bring out that side of you.”

She frowned – was he flirting with her? She shook her head to dismiss the idea. It was ridiculous. They walked in silence for a while and it wasn’t awkward at all. On the contrary, she felt very comfortable around him.

“We’re almost there,” he told her, pointing at a corner. “We need to turn left there and voila!”

She nodded. “Thank you so much, again…”

“Don’t mention it!” He paused before adding. “Can I tell you something without freaking you out?”

She nodded.

“I feel like I’ve seen you somewhere before.” She just blinked trying to see if he was kidding or not. His blue eyes were sparkling but it seemed to be something that they did on a daily basis. And his tone had been serious. Very much serious. “Do you think that we’ve met before?”

She shook her head. “I’d remember you,” she told him. How could she have forgotten him? He had a killer body made of hard lines and strong muscles, his sandy blonde hair looked silky soft and his eyes were clearer than the ocean.

“Then why do I feel like I’ve seen you somewhere before?”

They had both stopped walking and were now standing face to face. She looked at him, like really looked at him, focusing on him and not letting his beauty unsettle her. There was something about him, something that looked slightly familiar. But then, everything felt familiar in Star City.

“I don’t know,” she told him, tearing her eyes away from his.

He nodded and they resumed walking. They stopped at the door of her building. She opened her mouth to thank him again but he stopped her before the words could get out.

“It was my pleasure,” he assured her.

She went to take off his jacket but he stopped her, again. “Keep it,” he told her. “Something tells me that you’ll have plenty opportunities to give it back to me in the future.”

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly
happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)
Chapter 2:

“It’s a new dawn, it’s a new day, it’s a new life for me
And I am feeling good.”

- Feeling good, Nina Simone.

Felicity was feeling a mix of conflicted emotions stirring inside of her as she walked near the entrance of the building that was going to be her home for the next few weeks. She turned around once again on the threshold, waving at Oliver one last time. He waved back happily, drawing a finale smile from her. He turned around, walking away from her and she watched him for a second, taking in his toned body, his broad shoulders. Shaking her head, she pushed the door open and walked in, heading toward the janitor’s apartment. It was the first door on her left right after she walked in, at least that’s what the owner of her apartment had told her.

Taking a deep breath, she knocked at the door. She hadn’t had time to lower her fist that the door was already opening. A small man, bald and pot-bellied opened the door, holding himself up thanks to two black crutches.

“Felicity Smoak?” He guessed, his blue eyes scanning her. She shifted on her feet, feeling slightly uncomfortable.

“That’s her – I mean, it’s me – I am Felicity Smoak.”

He stepped aside to let her in and she took a shy step forward, immediately entering the living room.

“What were you doing with Oliver Queen?” The man asked suspiciously, his eyes screwed up.

She blinked, surprised. “Oliver who?”

“Queen. I saw the two of you talking through the window.”

Okay, that didn’t sound creepy nor stalkerish at all. “Well, I don’t know. I met him at a coffee-shop
after I got lost and he offered to show me the way to the building.”

It was the man’s turn to blink. He did it, repeatedly, as if he couldn’t believe what she had just told him. “Well, that’s not that bad for someone who literally just arrived in the city. First day here and one meeting with Oliver Queen and before you ask it, yes, it’s Queen as in Queen Consolidated.”

Felicity opened her mouth to say something but she found out that she couldn’t get any words out.

“Albie darling,” a feminine voice said from another room, “stop bothering the poor girl, you’re scaring her with your questions.”

A woman just as small and pot-bellied as “Albie” walked in. She was all bright colours and wild printed garments. Her curly red hair was being held back by a green, yellow and orange headband. Her jewels were all big and flashy but somehow. She actually really pulled it off, she had managed to combine the vivid colours and different shapes on her clothes well.

“Hello Miss Smoak, it’s a pleasure to meet you. I am Fran Williams, and this is my husband Albert. Please, forgive him for his rude behaviour. My poor Albie is under house rest because of his crutches and he is bored to death. I am afraid my pastries and gossips are what’s keeping him alive.”

Albert shrugged, making a face that made Felicity laugh. He may look a bit invasive but she had no doubt that he was actually a really nice man.

“It’s really no problem at all Mrs Williams,” she assured her.

“God please, call me Fran darling!” She scolded her, but her tone and eyes betrayed her gentleness. “Mrs Williams was my mother-in-law, God bless her soul.”

Felicity chuckled. “Okay,” she said.

“I am guessing that you must be tired, my poor darling,” Fran told her, cupping her cheeks affectionately. “Here, your keys. The smallest opens the storage room you’re renting, warehouse is behind the parking lot, you can’t miss it. The biggest key opens the door to the washers’ room, it’s downstairs, first door on your left. The other key is the key that opens the door to your new home. There is a small grocery store down the street, you can go there if you need anything. As for tonight, if you don’t have time to cook yourself dinner, you should know that we always eat at exactly seven pm.”

“Thank you very much Mrs… Fran,” Felicity corrected herself automatically.

“Don’t mention it dear. A young girl like you, all alone in this big city, deserves all the help she can get.”

They talked some more before Felicity took her leave. Her apartment was on the third floor but thankfully, the elevator wasn’t out of order. Walking toward her door, carrying her suitcase behind her, she introduced her key in the door, turned it and pushed the door. It grated and she thought that she’d have to oil the hinges. Stepping in, she turned the light on.

A small smile tugged at her lips. Her mother had been right to call that place a rabbit hutch. Her apartment was really, really small. The kitchen, small and functional, was right on her left after she walked in. A small door on her right led to the bathroom. She stepped forward and ended in what would be both her living-room and office. An immense bookshelf covered the entirety of the right wall, a small desk was leaning right under it. The window was in the wall in front of the door. A small couch was leaning right under it, a small coffee table lying next to it. Her “bedroom” was actually a mezzanine above the kitchen. There was a bed, a bedside table and a shelf for her clothes.
Dropping her laptop case on the desk, Felicity reached for her phone and plugged it in. It immediately started charging. She walked up the stairs that lead to the mezzanine then and emptied her suitcase, tidying her clothes in the shelf. The rest of her clothes was in the storage room she was renting. She would come and get some of them, as well as some of her books and DVD’s and her coffee maker and her stereo system. She could not possible bring all of her belongings in the apartment, it was too small and she needed to be able to breath.

When she had accepted to give up on her soulmate’s rights, her soulmate’s family had not only given her mother a place in Boston’s clinic but they had also given them a huge amount of money – a sum of money with more zeroes than Felicity had been comfortable with actually. She had used part of it to pay off their debts and had kept the rest on a bank account, saving it for major emergencies. The beginning of her new life was a major emergency and until she found a job, she’d use that money to live. It didn’t mean that she wasn’t in a hurry to find a job, she had already a job interview planned for the next day. She was applying for an executive assistant position in a small tech company. She knew she’d have to work with computers as an EA but she didn’t mind taking down notes and sending mails. What she didn’t want to do was coding and programming. She’d never do either of those things ever, she wasn’t that person anymore. The company she had picked was small but extremely secured and private, the people she had interacted with telling her that she’d know more the day of the interview.

Taking off her heels and rubbing the soles of her feet carefully with one hand, Felicity reached for clean and comfy clothes aka leggings, a tee and a hoodie. If she was going to go back and forth to the storage room, she’d need comfortable clothes. She showered for a longer while than she had intended, desperately needing to feel hot water burn her skin. When she was done, she walked out and got dressed promptly.

The storage room looked as nice and clean as Felicity had expected to be. She wouldn’t have been comfortable leaving her things in some damp and dusty place. She had gotten boxes with the things that she’d want to have with her in her apartment ready, meaning that she didn’t have to spend a lot of time looking for the things she needed. In less than an hour, she had found and brought back to her apartment – rabbit hutch her mind supplied, sounding suspiciously like her mom – all the boxes she had previously selected.

She started unpacking them, turning the small apartment into a home. It instantly felt like one when she unpacked her Harry Potter books Doctor Who’s DVDs. Smiling, she brewed some coffee – she had packed some in her suitcase for survival reasons – and placed a few pictures on the coffee table and her bedside table. There was one of her with her mother in Boston, another one of her and her bubbe, one of her and Georgia, her friend back in Vegas. Seeing her smiling face reminded her that she had to text her, to tell her that she had made it safely. And that she needed to call her mother as well.

Reaching for her phone, she turned it on, and saw that she had several missed calls.

--

5:27 pm

I am alive mom, don’t worry!

Exhausted, call you tomorrow!

Love you!

FS
Then she typed one for Georgia, who had tried to call her as well.

5:28

Made it safely to Star City.

People are nice & hot!

XO

FS”

The answer came as she was starting to set up the internet.

5:34

Get some girl, you deserve it!

Call me during the week?

Love,

G”

Grabbing the handle of her backpack, the same one she had carried through her senior year of high-school and her four years of college, she walked out of her apartment, deciding that filling the fridge would actually be great.

She ran into Fran as she came back from the grocery store. She had temporary parked her car in front of the building’s entrance, and was carrying bags of groceries inside.

“Felicity!” She said, looking slightly more tired than she had earlier. “Everything okay?” She asked, concerned.

She nodded. “Everything’s perfect, thank you.”

“You do look better darling.”

“The magic of hot water,” she replied and Fran gave her a knowing smile. “You need any help with that?” She added, pointing at the bags she was carrying.

“Yes please darling. Albie’s body is not the only which is aging,” she told Felicity as she took the handle of her bags from her.

“That’s a lot of sweets that you have here,” Felicity told her when she looked down toward her feet, so that she wouldn’t trip.
“My grandchildren are coming to visit tomorrow,” she explained.

They got all the groceries inside. Then Felicity excused herself but promised to come back in time for dinner.

True to her word, she came back to have dinner with them and had a really nice time. They were both lovely and charming people. They had been bonded for forty-two years now, they had met when they had been eighteen. They had always lived in Star City had three children, all bonded and had ten grandchildren. Six of them would be there the next day and somehow Fran got her to promise to come by to eat a snack with them around four in the afternoon.

After dinner, Felicity walked back to her apartment, feeling better than she had in days. There was something Star City and its citizens, something strong and warm that made her feel like she belonged there. All the people that she had met had been kind to her, it was like they had all gotten the same memo asking them to be nice to Felicity Smoak.

Walking in her apartment, Felicity sat down on the couch, relaxing completely. Over, the day was one finally over. The feeling of peace that rushed through her last for about two seconds before she shifted on the couch. The fabric was worn-out and the springs were digging in her butt. Her eyes fell on Oliver’s jacket and the memory of their meeting came back to her. Sea blue eyes and warm smiles danced behind her closed eyelids. There was something with him, with the way he spoke, the way he moved that was familiar. She would have brushed that feeling away, hadn’t he felt the same way around her and hadn’t he been able to make her feel so good around him, something that strangers couldn’t do to her anymore. It was the first time that she experienced something that intense and she wanted to know why.

Reaching for her computer, she turned it on. Felicity had always hated mysteries, they had always bugged her. As a child, puzzles had always been her favourite game. She had always taken a great pride in solving them, putting their pieces back together. She used to do puzzle solving contests against her dad, where they tried to see who the fastest puzzle’s solver was. Felicity had won more times than she had lost. Now Oliver Queen and the familiarity that radiated from him were a mystery now and she was going to solve it.

Opening a new tab, she typed his name. Pictures and links toward articles flooded her screen. Oliver Jonas Queen born in 1989 was the heir of the Queen family and of his parents’ company. Robert and Moira Queen had created Queen Consolidated thirty years ago. Their love story looked like it had been picked from a fairy tale. Their families, both wealthy and influent, had been looking to invest in new technologies and had been talking about creating a company together when their children turned out to be soulmates. Together, they had created the company theirs parents had been dreaming of, had made it thrive and now it was at the forefront of technology. It was the kind of company Felicity could have worked for her after her degree, if she had still been into computers. Robert and Moira had had two children together, Oliver and his little sister Thea, who was almost eleven years younger than her brother but it was clear that their dearest child was their company. Which was kind of sad for their actual children.

Shaking her head, Felicity focused back on Oliver Queen. His teenage years had been wild, filled with parties and exuberant entertainment, the kind of entertainments only bored and rich spoiled-brats could afford. He, his wingman Tommy Merlyn, a fellow billionaire and most of their friends had been very active members of Star City’s anti-soulmates group, which was mainly composed of members of the city’s social elite. They were many pictures of them surrounded by women and Felicity highly doubted that they had joined the group because they actually believed in love and free choice. No. They had just wanted to have fun and had realised that having a soulmate would have prevented them from having their way with the opposite sex. They had dropped out of four colleges,
apparently frat boys’ parties were not compatible with studying.

Things had changed when he had had a car accident four years ago. He had been severely injured and it had taken him months to recover. He had almost lost the ability to walk and had had to work hard to heal completely. And when he had come out of the hospital, he had been a changed man. Both physically and mentally. He had cut his hair, let his scruff grow. He had stopped partying and had started studying seriously. He had gotten a business degree and Felicity started to see the man that she had met earlier that day. After he had gotten his degree, his parents had wanted him to prove himself worthy of their company, they were nice and forgiving that way, and had had him start his own business, Q. Inc, which was still tied to Queen Consolidated, but running independent projects.

As for his personal life, Oliver had stopped partying. He was rarely on the cover of scandalous magazines. He was actually engaged to his soulmate, a woman called Isabel Rochev. She was a tall brunette, born in Russia and partly raised there and in America. She was now vice-president of a Russian company, with whom Queen Consolidated had a strong partnership, having outsourced most of their productions there. She seemed to be a crazy smart woman and a bold businesswoman, her achievements were quite impressive. But she also looked really cold, really haughty and Felicity had a hard time picturing someone as light and smiling as Oliver with someone like her. Seriously, she was scaring even when she was smiling, which did not happen often.

Turning her computer off, Felicity checked the time. It was almost ten pm and she had to wake up early in the morning, for her job interview.

Getting up, she went to the bathroom and got ready for the night. Then, she climb up the stairs to the mezzanine and got in bed. She left the lamp on her bedside table turned on, she couldn’t sleep in the dark if there was no one else with her and she finally lied down, her body aching and reminding her that she really had pushed herself during the day.

Exhaling slowly, she closed her eyes and fell asleep quickly.

Her second day in Star City started way better than her first one.

Felicity got up in time for a quick morning run that helped her settle her thoughts down and stop worrying about her future interview. Then, she had a long hot relaxing shower and got ready, putting on the very new and very expensive shoes her mother had offered her as a good luck present. Two cups of coffee later, she was on her way for Star City’s business district.

She was twenty minutes early for the first meeting of the day, which was supposed to start at 11am and last a whole hour. When she arrived, the people organising the whole thing made her and the other applicants sign a confidentiality agreement, because the company which was offering the position was going to reveal itself and a few of its projects to them. All this secrecy made Felicity doubt the company was as small as the offer had made it out to be and Felicity realised she had applied to become Oliver Queen’s executive assistant when two people, a man and a woman who worked for Queen Consolidated’s recruiting department walked into the room and introduced themselves. The “small” tech company was actually Q. Inc, Oliver Queen’s very own business! He had started it himself but it was still tightly tied to Queen Consolidated, which could be seen as the parent company and Q. Inc as a subsidiary branch, running different and independent projects. They were keeping things in the dark to protect the new business from industrial spying.
After that first meeting, Felicity’s mind was buzzing with information. Q. Inc was indeed a small tech company, the offer hadn’t technically lied on that point but it was a part of something so much bigger and Felicity was only twenty years old. She didn’t know if she was strong enough to be part of something that big. That wasn’t what she had been interested in, that wasn’t what had attracted her. The other people present, there were seven other applicants, didn’t look bother at all and for a second, Felicity wondered if they had been told the truth beforehand. But despite being afraid, Felicity felt drawn to the place. The same way the offer had caught her eyes, the meeting had caught her heart. Working for Q. Inc would be one hell of a challenge, she was well aware of that but still she wanted to give it a try. No. She needed to give it a try. And the strength of her desire scared the hell out of her. She had never felt like that about something, not even about MIT. She had never felt that strangely overwhelming feeling of possessiveness. It was her job to take and she was going to take it, come what may!

After the first meeting, they went out to eat lunch, the personal interviews only starting at two pm. They were all back at one forty-five.

“The interviews will start in fifteen minutes,” the woman from the morning told them. “You haven’t been given a specific time because Mr Queen will interview you in alphabetical order, starting with Mr Davis and ending with Miss Smoak.”

Of course, she was going to be last. Of course, she was going to have plenty of time to freak out about meeting the man who had walked her to her home and lent his jacket to her just the day before. The man had seen her bra for God’s sake! Things were going to be super awkward. But she wasn’t going to let that stop her. She was going to walk into the room and blow his mind with her capabilities and determination. In the end, Oliver Queen will be left with no choice but to hire her.

“Miss Smoak!” The woman from earlier called her. “Mr Queen will see you now,” she added, showing her the way.

Felicity grabbed her purse and computer’s case – she had brought it with her because she had suspected that she’d spend quite some time waiting during that day and got on her feet. She staggered because she had gotten up to quickly and steadied herself. She wasn’t going to trip in Oliver Queen’s office like some clot did in some questionably good books.

She saw him before he did, through the glass wall of his office. He was busy taking down notes, probably about the previous person he had interviewed. For a brief second, she took him in. His lips were slightly pursed, his brow furrowed as he was solely focusing on the paper in front of him. She was stricken by how different he looked, not different from the day before but different from his college years. She had spent quite some time watching pictures of him the previous day – and now that she put it that way she realised it sounded a bit stalkerish and creepy – and it really was incredible how much he had changed ever since his accident. He seemed taller, was most definitely broader. He now wore French suits and Italian shoes. Of course, there was still some parts of the young man he had been, that beautiful smile of his had probably charmed a lot of young women. But, he really was different and she was glad that she had been given the chance to meet that version of his, not only once but twice.

The moment he saw her and more importantly, recognised her, a familiar smile tugged at his lips. Getting up, he circled his desk.

“That will be all Gretchen,” he said, his voice lower than she remembered. His all demeanour was different from the previous day actually. He was more serious, more restraint and she guessed it was because he was at work. The woman nodded before walking out.

“Miss Smoak,” Oliver said, shaking her head, his fingers lingering against her palm before releasing
her. “It’s a small world,” he added, walking them toward his desk. He sat down on his chair, she sat down in front of him, crossing her legs just like her mother had taught her.

“It is indeed Mr Queen,” she agreed, smoothing out her skirt, his eyes following the movements of her hands for a second. Smiling internally, she straightened her spine.

“I have to say, I didn’t recognise you from the picture you sent with your references,” he orientated her file slightly toward her and she bit on her lower lip as she saw her picture again. It had been one she had taken during her senior of college, when she had been on her way out of her Goth phase. She had changed her clothes and lightened up her make-up but she still hadn’t dyed her hair blonde back then, needing to strip it from its dark black colour first.

“You’ve changed a lot,” he went on, staring back and forth between her and the picture. She bit back a comment, she had been doing the exact same thing with him. He finally looked up from the file and the attention of his blue eyes solely focused on her. He watched her intently, his eyes intense.

“What are you watching me like that?” She asked after a while, feeling slightly uncomfortable. Things weren’t going the way she had planned. She was supposed to woo him, not feel like a damn ten-year-old being tested by her teacher.

“Like what?”

“Like you’re an X-ray machine and you’re looking for broken bones.”

He winced and she had to admit that it wasn’t the best comparison she could have come up with.

“Do you have broken bones?”

Suddenly, she was itching to hold her ribs. Fighting that irrational desire back, she said. “No, I don’t.” Her voice was a bit too tight, but he didn’t seem to notice.

He relaxed suddenly, letting out a long breath and his shoulders going limp. “I am sorry, I am just trying to understand you. You got into MIT at the age of sixteen with a full scholarship. You got a degree in Computer Science and Cybersecurity four years later, you ranked second in the National Information Technology competition, you even studied the basics of economy! Everything tells me that you’ve been preparing yourself to create your own company and there you are, applying for an executive assistant position.” He paused, at a loss for words. “I don’t understand you Miss Smoak.”

“With all due respect,” she said, “you don’t need to understand me. You just need to know that I am a very professional and dedicated person and that I will always give everything I have to my job.”

“Then why not apply for a position in the IT department?”

“I don’t want to work with computers,” she stated.

“And it took you four years to realise that?” He asked an annoying eyebrow raised as if he wasn’t buying it and there was still one of these ridiculously bright smiles that forced smiles out of her on his lips.

To say that Oliver Queen was persistent would be a huge understatement. “I can be a bit slow,” she admitted.

“What a way to woo him Smoak,” she thought.

“Well, I hope that you’ll be a bit faster as my executive assistant,” he told her, leaning down toward her, his hands joined and his elbows resting on his desk.
Her heart skipped a beat at his words. What was that supposed to mean? “What are you saying?”

“I am saying that I think that we can help each other out.”

She leaned toward him as well, a curious look on her face. “Really?”

“Yes,” he repeated. “My parents expect a lot of me. They want me to make this company thrive, to prove myself worthy of them.”

She nodded. “Yeah, I was under the impression that they’re…” The rest of her sentence died on her lips.

“That they are?” He insisted a teasing smile on his lips.

“I probably shouldn’t finish that sentence right before you make me a proposition,” she deadpanned. “A job proposition,” she quickly added, mortified. “Please, ignore me and go on.”

He shook his head, his amusement very obvious and went on, as she had asked. “I can’t fail Felicity. Q. Inc is already running a few important projects, the team is really working hard and I think I am doing a fine job at finding us investors other than my parents but… We still need new people, new minds with new ideas. I am not just looking for an executive assistant, I am also looking for someone who understands techy things and can translate tech language in English for me. I’ve seen you do it, Felicity I know you can and I know I get you. I also know that someone with your background won’t be happy with just setting down appointments and typing down notes during conferences. I know that you won’t be happy doing just that.”

“But I’ll be happy teaching you that updating your system is important?”

“And that I should not illegally download movies, viruses really are a bitch.”

She blinked, several times. She was pretty sure she had babble those very same words to him the day before.

“So do we have a deal Miss Smoak?”

She bit on her lower lip. He was offering her a good compromise. “Why me?”

He shrugged. “I have a good feeling about this.”

She tilted her head, trying to decrypt the look on his face. It wasn’t easy, she didn’t know him at all. But yet, she could see his point. And she could feel what he was feeling. She could even say that she had been feeling it for longer than he had, ever since she had walked in the meeting room the same morning. There was something there, they could actually help each other out.

“I think we do Mr Queen,” she nodded, holding out her hand for him to shake.

“I am glad,” he concluded, shaking her hand.

Later that night, after she had spent some time with the Williams and their grandchildren, she found herself congratulating herself with a well-deserved glass of wine.
She reached for her phone as she was applying the last layer of blue nail polish on her toes and dialled her mother.

“Hey baby girl! My new best friend nurse Annie just left the apartment.”

Nurse Annie was not really Donna’s best friends. She was just a nurse, who worked for a soulmate’s clinic. Her job was to make sure that the patients that weren’t staying at the clinic and had no one staying, living with them took the Med. Loneliness was one of the reasons people stopped taking the Med. Once the effect wore off, their side of the bond with their mate was back and it was a painful reminded that hadn’t been always lonely or that maybe they wouldn’t always be.

“Did she say more than two words this time?” Felicity teased.

According to Donna, nurse Annie wasn’t exactly a talkative woman.

“No, but I am sure she’ll crack after a while!” Donna chuckled. “But what about you baby girl, how was your job interview?”

Felicity smiled. “I got the job!”

Donna yelled through the phone and Felicity had to put it away from her hear.

“This is so awesome! And how’s Star City? Tell me everything, I want to know every detail!” She demanded.

“Star City is awesome mom,” Felicity confessed. “I am feeling really good there…”

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)
Chapter 3 - Waiting for a change to come

Chapter Notes

Hey guys!!!!

THANK YOU for the amazing response the last chapter got. It made me really happy! You guys ROCK!!!

Here's the new chapter! I hope that you'll all like it, stuff happens, we learn things about soulmates. :)

Happy reading!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 3:

“You’ve felt this way for far too long,

Waiting for a change to come

You know you’re not the only one.”

- Kodaline, One day.

Felicity had to wait four days before starting to work at Q. Inc. Her job interview took place on a Wednesday and Oliver decided that she’d start the next Monday, giving her time to settle down in Star City. She really appreciated the gesture, it was really nice of him. But then, Oliver Queen, she was starting to realise, was actually a nice person.

She took advantage of these four free days to visit Star City, to acquaint herself with her new environment, and her new neighbourhood more specifically. The closest coffee-shop to her place was the one Sara owned. She went there every morning after her morning run and had already gotten friendly with both her and Iris. There also was a park, near her building. It was always filled with running and laughing children, and that was completely normal, given that she had picked a family neighbourhood to live in – she passed two elementary schools during her morning run every morning. When she moved out of her rabbit hutch, she’d probably try to look for something in the same area.

Felicity didn’t stick to her apartment’s block and its surroundings though. She got out and went to enjoy Star City in all its glory as soon as she had rented a car, a bright red mini-cooper. She visited the business district, familiarizing herself with it. She was going to work there soon, she needed to know the place. She spotted a few places, that’d be perfect to have lunch and although she had no idea where these thoughts came from, she already knew the turkey sandwich from the small restaurant at the corner of 9th street was too greasy and Luigi’s pizzas were among the best of the city.
She drove down to the beach on Saturday afternoon. When she arrived, she parked her car, intending to stay for a little while. She made her way to the beach and took off her shoes, enjoying the coolness of the sand scratching against the soles of her feet, of its small grains slipping between her painted toes. She quickly decided that Emerald Coast was her favourite spot in the whole city. The beach was small, the waves furiously beautiful as they crashed against the dark rocks. It was actually named after some special moss, a surfer explained to Felicity, a moss that only grew on the rocks and was a deep emerald green.

Felicity had grown up in Vegas, a city lost in the desert and traveling to Boston had opened up her eyes. She wasn’t meant to live somewhere lost inland. She needed wide opened space and immensity, blue horizons stretching as far as her eyes could see. She needed to know that the world was big and that she was free to go wherever she wanted to. Sitting down on her jacket, she watched the sunset, the dark blue of the ocean seeming to swallow the bright orange and warm red of the sun. She blinked, the view inspiring that same odd feeling of familiarity she had learnt to live with during the past few days. It also inspired a wave of contentment to wash through her in gentle laps. She felt at peace and just where she was supposed to be. And yeah, she knew it made no sense, but she didn’t care. She had been through so much during her last year at MIT, she needed that. She needed to feel good, even in the strangest place. She snapped a couple of pictures for her mother and Georgia, before making her way back to her place.

The next day, after going over her closet, she decided that if she was going to be Oliver Queen’s executive assistant, she needed to slightly upgrade her clothes. She still was a twenty-year-old girl and owned a lot of flannel shirts, large blouses and comfy jeans, not really the kind of clothes an executive assistant wore. It was time that she got more skirts and high-heels, things that would help her look a bit older than twenty years old. She decided that she could do that while drinking a cup of good coffee from Sara’s coffee shop – eating a slice of chocolate cake wouldn’t hurt either, Oliver was right, it was very, very good.

Reaching for her computer, she left her apartment and headed toward Star City’s sweet coffee. It was a lovely and full of life place, where time seemed to stand still, where people met and had a good time together. It was a place where they could relax and forget for a brief moment about their troubles. It was a place of contacts and intimacy, two things Felicity craved immensely. Pushing the door open, she closed her eyes for a second, letting her senses take in the atmosphere of the place. The low buzzing of conversations, the light whirring of coffee brewing, its smell, rich and hot. Heading toward the counter, she smiled at Iris.

“Hey Felicity!” She greeted her. “You look good!”

“You’re not looking so bad yourself,” she replied, a smile tugging at her lips. “I’ll have my usual,” she ordered. “And a slice of chocolate cake,” she added.

Iris nodded before starting to get her order ready. She handed it to Felicity, who paid for it before going upstairs. Sitting down at the same place where Oliver had been sitting when they had met, not that she was thinking about it or anything, she turned her laptop on and started doing her shopping. She didn’t do that much of online shopping anymore. She had used to, after leaving Vegas and Georgia, who had been her shopping buddy back there. But she had stopped when her mother had gotten out of the clinic and had taken her with her instead. Donna loved clothes and make-up and girly stuff in general. It had been part of her therapy to reconnect with that kind of things, the kind she used to love.

Felicity groaned when she saw the total of her cart.

“I should have my boss reimburse me,” she sighed, reaching for her credit card and typing down her
“Why are you drinking coffee in a mug with a teabag on it?” A small and reedy voice asked.

Choking on her drink, Felicity set her mug down on the table – it was one of her favourite things about the coffee shop, all their mugs were different. She looked down to her right and saw a small little boy, wearing sneakers and jeans with a Quicksilver polo shirt. His skin was light chocolate, his eyes big and curious reminding her immediately of Iris’.

“Because I don’t like doing things normally,” she replied, a small smile tugging at her lips.

The little boy’s eyes widened. “Does it mean that you drink tea in a mug with coffee beans on it?”

She pursed her lips, holding back a laugh. “Occasionally, yes. Now, what are you doing here?”

“My nanny is sick so momma took me with her to work.”

Felicity nodded. “Your mom’s name is Iris, right?” She guessed.

A small smile tugged at the boy’s lips when he recognised his mother’s name.

“And where’s your dad?”

“Daddy is working on a case,” the little boy told her very seriously. “My daddy is a cop.”

Felicity frowned. “He is?”

The little boy nodded. “Momma doesn’t like it when I say that. She says he carries plastic bags, not guns. Momma doesn’t like guns, she says it hurts people.”

“Forensic science,” Felicity’s mind supplied. “Your momma’s right kiddo,” she told him. “Bad people can use guns to hurt others.”

“When I grow up, I want to be a superhero,” the boy proudly claimed, sticking out his little chest and his non-existent muscles.

“Oh really? And what kind of superhero would like to be?” She asked, smiling at the smiling face of Quicksilver printed on his polo shirt.

“I want to be like Quicksilver. I’ll run so fast, nobody will be able to catch me! You won’t be able to see me!” And as he said that, he ran to hide behind a chair, making Felicity laugh when she met his bright brown eyes, which were sparkling with gentle mischief.

“Do you like superheroes?” He asked from between her legs. He’d slipped under the table and had crawled back to her. When he’d reached her, he had gotten up, letting his head poke out from his hiding place.

“Yes, I do,” she confessed.

“Who’s your favourite?” He asked curiously.

“I like Hawkeye,” she told him.

He frowned and the confused look made his cute little face look even cuter. “But he doesn’t have any superpowers! And he uses a bow! It’s lame.”
She shrugged. “I like arrows,” she explained, a flash of her missing soulmark crossing her mind.

“As just like you like drinking coffee in a mug meant for tea?” He asked.

She nodded and he smiled. “You’re weird!”

“JJ Allen what do you think you’re doing?” Iris called, her hands on her waist, her eyebrows frowned severely.

“I made a new friend momma,” the boy told her and Felicity moved aside to let him crawl back from under the table.

“But you left without telling me where you were going,” Iris lectured him, kneeling down in front of him to check up on him. “I was worried.”

“I didn’t leave momma,” the little boy explained, his little voice sounding so cute to Felicity’s ears, she didn’t know how Iris managed to keep a straight face. “I know I am not allowed to go outside alone.”

“Don’t leave without warning me again,” she asked him before standing up, holding his little hand tightly. “I am so sorry,” she told Felicity. “I hope he didn’t bother you too much!”

“No, he is a really nice little man,” Felicity assured her, smiling.

“You see momma, I am a nice little man. Can I stay with my friend now please?”

Iris frowned. “Felicity can’t watch you baby, she has things of her own to do.”

“I don’t mind watching him for a little while,”” Felicity assured her.

“Are you sure?” Iris insisted. “He can be a bit lively.”

“Go back to work in peace, I’ll handle him,” Felicity promised. She knew just how Iris was feeling. She had had to work once while having someone to watch as well. Of course, her mother had had nothing to do with a small child back then but she had been just as reckless and not cautious.

“Come here, JJ,” she invited him, bringing a chair next to hers. “I’ll show you a superhero game that you will be unable not to like.”

He squealed and raced toward her, jumping on the chair. “Thank you F’l’city,” he said and she laughed at how he mispronounced her name.

She let JJ finish her slice of chocolate cake and they played video games for a short while until Felicity switched to something more instructive. They ended up solving puzzles and JJ turned out being really smart and focused.

Iris came back almost an hour and a half later. JJ’s father had come up to pick him, having been freed from work earlier than he had expected. The little boy thanked Felicity and made her promise to come visit him sometimes and bring him some of her comics.

“You okay?” Felicity asked Iris as she was cleaning up a table.

She nodded, but still, she really looked exhausted. “Yes. I am taking a break in five minutes, do you mind if I sit with you?”

Felicity shook her head. It was Sunday and she had nowhere else to go.
Iris came back a few minutes later, a sandwich and an apple in hand.

“Enjoy your lunch,” Felicity told her, sipping at her coffee, she had asked for a refill when she had been playing with JJ.

“Thanks,” Iris said, smiling. “And thank you again, for watching JJ. You really didn’t have to…”

“It was my pleasure,” Felicity stated. “But I had no idea you had a child,” she admitted. She knew Iris was working for Sara as a part time job and that she was studying at Star Uni to become a journalist.

“Yeah,” Iris nodded, “I know what you’re thinking, I am too young.”

Felicity shook her head. “I am in no place to judge you. But do you think that you’re too young?”

Iris chuckled. “My soulmate and I, we met when we were seven. We lived in the same town, went to the same school and our fathers were good friends. We never left each other ever since that day. We bonded when we were in high-school and… I got pregnant when I was nineteen, during a mate’s haze.”

Felicity bit on her lips. Mate’s haze really were a bitch. She had never had one, and would probably never have one since she was taking the Med but she knew what it was. When two soulmates bonded, they strengthened their already existent connection. Their emotional and psychical connections were stronger, as well as their physical bond and desire for one another. A mate’s haze was a short period of time where two mates were overwhelmed by their lust and love for one another and desperate to turn it into something more, to create a new life out of their connection. It was a purely biological reaction to the bonding and their length and frequency depended on the strength of the connection. Felicity, whose number had been nine, would probably have had several mate’s hazes a year and they probably would have lasted for more than a day or two.

“We hadn’t really planned for it,” Iris went on, “but you know what a mate’s haze is. It’s so strong, it can screw with contraception.”

Felicity nodded. Hormonal contraception could not resist a mate’s haze meaning that condoms were most definitely needed during one.

“Anyway, JJ was born nine months later. We named him after my father, Joe. He was a cop but…” She bit on her lips, her eyes suddenly looking misted. “He died in service before JJ was born.”

“I am sorry Iris,” Felicity said, reaching for her hand and squeezing it tightly to comfort her.

“It’s okay, I am okay. I just… Wanted you to know that your help meant a lot to me. We’re still young and raising a child is not that easy.”

“Especially when the nanny calls in sick,” Felicity agreed, trying to cheer her up a little bit.

“Exactly,” Iris said, chuckling lightly.

“You can be proud of your boy,” Felicity added. “He is really nice.”

“Thank you Felicity,” Iris replied, smiling. “But enough talking about me,” she went on, wiping at her eyes, “what about you? Have you met your soulmate?”

Felicity’s smile disappeared immediately and her shoulders dropped lightly. “No, I haven’t met him yet.”
“You registered in the SID?” Iris asked.

Felicity shook her head. Iris frowned.

“You don’t want to meet your soulmate?”

Felicity swallowed tightly the lump of emotions that was quickly forming in her throat. She focused on the tea bag on her mug but the lines got blurry anyway. It happened every time she thought about her soulmate, every time she spoke of him, of them, although they would never be.

“It’s a bit more complicated than that,” she said, feeling eager to change the topic and Iris must have sensed it because she quickly said.

“But this is obviously none of my business. How about we talk about something else?”

Felicity agreed, relieved, and they orientated the conversation toward a safer topic, which ended up being Felicity’s new job at Q. Inc. She still felt that lump of emotions that the talk about soulmates had brought into her throat though and she knew that she’d have to face the storm that was raging inside her, the sooner the better. Half an hour later, Iris’ break ended and she went back to work. Felicity decided that it was time for her to go and she made her way back home.

Her legs shaking, she slammed the door that led to her apartment shut. She slid along the door until she was sitting down on the floor, bringing her knees to her chest and holding herself together tightly.

Speaking of her soulmate was extremely hard for her. Felicity didn’t regret the choice that she had made four years ago. She had done it to help her mother, she had done it because it had been clear back then that her soulmate didn’t want her. She had both protected herself and saved her mother and she could never regret that. But it didn’t mean that it was easy for her.

Voluntarily taken the Med, cutting a viable connection or a formed bond, no matter what the reasons were, was not natural. Anti-soulmates’ groups claimed that men and women needed to be able to choose, to make their own choices and that the Med was the solution to achieve that. Well, Felicity knew now they were full of crap. Cutting a connection between two soulmates which were both alive was not natural, and certainly not pleasant. It was painful, Felicity felt a dull ache in her heart every day, some more than others. She felt a void where her soulmate’s emotions used to be, a void she knew would never be filled. Now of course, her reactions were related to the fact that her number, nine, had been one of the highest possible. The higher the number, the worst the pain.

Maybe it was why the salesman in the drugstore had wanted to know if she had been absolutely sure when she’d first bought the Med. And maybe, had she known about the pain and the emptiness, she wouldn’t have taken it. But now she had and she was going to keep taking it.

The Med had tamed Felicity’s side of the bond, it had shut it down, locked it behind bars, preventing it from connecting with her soulmate’s side during the pre-bonding stage of their life. And the pain came from the strength of her imprisoned connection, which was fighting to be freed from its prison. There were days where she had to take two pills instead of one because she could feel the spot on her hip where her mark used to be burn, a sign that signalled a reforming connection. It was exhausting, fighting her nature, fighting what was hers every day. Most of the time, she tried not to think about it and just took the Med, trusting it to do its job. But whenever, she started thinking about her soulmate, whenever she opened the box she had locked him in, whenever she started thinking about what could have been… She started hurting even more.

She was hurting now, as she sat down with her back to her door, curled up around herself. She was hurting because she’d never experienced a mate’s haze like Iris had. She’d never fall in love with
anyone, curtesy of the strength of her connection. She could care about other people but not fall in love. She’d probably never have a child of her own, not that she wanted one but… It was something she could have considered, with her soulmate.

Her soulmate was the only person she could have had a life with.

He was also the only person she could never have.

And it hurt.

It hurt so damn much.

Felicity got up early the next morning. She had made sure to set an alarm earlier than necessary, because she had wanted to arrive a bit early. It was going to be her first day at Q. Inc and she’d rather be really early than slightly late.

She woke up to a text from Georgia, who answered her question about which pair of shoes to wear for her first day as an executive assistant. Picking out the heels her friend had recommended, she went to shower. She got dressed, did her hair, applied make-up in record time. Then she ate a quick breakfast, brushed her teeth and left, ready to conquer the day.

Star City was awakening as she drove through the dark streets. Lights were being turned on in buildings, buses and the tram were starting to run in town. She took in the sight of her city, contentment washing through her in calm and steady waves.

Parking her car in Q. Inc’s lot, she made her way up to Oliver’s level, where she knew her office was as well. She was welcomed by a very tall black man, with shoulders so wide, Felicity was pretty sure he could carry two Felicys on each of them. He was wearing a suit and there was an emotionless mask on his face. She called it a mask because his eyes betrayed a warm personality.

“Good morning,” he greeted her, his voice low and gentle, just like she had thought it would be. She had no doubt that he could turn it into something more threatening, but Felicity was not someone that needed to be threatened. “You must be Felicity Smoak, Mr Queen has told me a lot about you.”

She chuckled. “He better has only said nice things,” she joked.

A smile tugged at the man’s lips and she frowned. He held out a hand for her to shake and she took it. His grip was firm and solid and she realised that he would only need to squeeze a bit harder to break her hand.

“I am John Diggle,” he introduced himself. “Mr Queen’s driver and his bodyguard.”

She huffed back a laugh. “And what are you protecting him from? Sticking his tie in the printer?”

He shook his head amused. “Mr Queen is the heir of one of the country’s biggest companies. Many people wish him harm and it is my duty to protect him from those who do more than just wishing it. You don’t have to worry about anything though, I’ll protect you too.”

“Last time I checked, I wasn’t the heir of one of the country’s biggest companies,” she pointed out.

“They don’t care about who’s standing beside Mr Queen when they set up bombs and explosives.”
She burst out laughing, which was kind of funny considering what he had just said. Then she met his very serious eyes and immediately stopped laughing. “You’re kidding right?”

He gave her an enigmatic look and she started panicking slightly.

“Please John, don’t scare her away already,” she heard Oliver said as he was walking toward them. “I don’t want to have to beg her to come back – not that I wouldn’t do it if it was necessary, because I totally would,” he added just for Felicity.

“Mr Queen,” she greeted him, blushing slightly.

“Miss Smoak,” he replied, smiling and tilting his head slightly. “I can assure you that no one has ever tried to take me down. People don’t see me as a threat in the business world, I’m afraid. It’s hard for me to get rid of my old… reputation,” he said, sighing. He didn’t have to precise which reputation he was talking about. Flashes of articles about parties and arrests by the police danced behind her eyes. “Thankfully, we’re going to change that.”

“So that they can start setting up bombs under your car?” She teased.

He huffed back a laugh and John Diggle said. “I like her.”

Oliver gave him a look before leading Felicity toward her office which was right in front of his. They were only separated by a hallway and glass walls.

“So,” Oliver started, “I have a meeting with a few people from R&D department, I should be busy all morning. I thought that you could stay here and get comfortable around the office, look at my computer and yours and see how you can get our interfaces in perfect synch.”

She blinked. He frowned. “What? Surprised that I know the word “interfaces”?”

She chuckled. “No, I am just… The reality of this all is just hitting me.”

It was his turn to chuckle. “You weren’t kidding when you said that you were a bit slow,” he joked.

She stiffened, cut to the quick. “Wait until the end of this morning Mr Queen and you’ll see just how slow I am exactly.”

“I look forward to it Miss Smoak,” he told her, gathering his things for his meeting and leaving his computer open for her to do as she pleased.

Getting to work, her heart started hurting when she saw the system he was using, and that had been installed on her computer as well. She was pretty sure that he hadn’t gotten anyone from QC’s IT department to check on his computer in a while. The people there would probably have had a cardiac arrest at the sight of it. Sighing, she updated it to a faster and easier version to use. She then checked the security around his data. It was good, a hacker like her could crack it but that was because she was really good. She added another encrypted password just to be safe. Her hands were trembling by the time she was done with these minor improvements. She hadn’t done worked that much with a computer in a while and it didn’t sit very well with her. Flashes of her last year at MIT crosses her mind, flashes of him, of his voice and she clenched both her fists and eyes shut, trying to get a grip on the turmoil of emotions that was being stirred up by all those painful memories.

Once her hands had stopped shaking, she did the same changings to her own computer, customizing them so that they’d fit the use she’d have of them. She then worked on their agendas and electronic addresses, synchronizing his everything to her everything. She created a private secured cloud for them, so that they could exchange files more easily and added a new channel to the intern messaging
system, one made just for them.

It was past noon when she finished and she ordered lunch for them both before walking to the bathroom, needed to freshen up. She locked herself up, her hands shaking even more badly than before, the right side of her ribcage burning. Resisting the urge to scratch the skin there, she opened up the tap and splashed cold water on her face. Her heart was beating wildly in her chest as memories she was doing her best to bury pressed at the edge of her mind. Instinctively, her hand came to stroke her hipbone, although there was no soulmark there anymore and no comfort to find. The familiar gesture helped calming her though and she sighed in relief when the pressure of her past released her mind. It was just a one-time thing, she wouldn’t have to do that kind of work with computers again.

When she came back, lunch had arrived but Oliver was still gone. She paid for them both and waited for him. He had texted her while she had been the bathroom, telling her that he’d be back soon.

She heard the elevator’s doors rang and then his voice, loud and angry.

“No mother, I won’t do it!” He yelled through the phone. “Not unless you give me a valid reason and don’t start telling me that she’s too young, because she’s not!”

He turned around the corner and she arched an eyebrow. He had changed a lot from this morning. His tie was set loose, his sleeves rolled up his arms and his suit jacket thrown over his shoulder.

“This is ridiculous mother, you don’t know what you’re talking about.” He paused next to her office, listening to whatever it was that Moira Queen was telling him. “With all due respect mom, Q. Inc is my company and I’ll do as I please with it. Now, I am going to wish you to have a nice meal with father and a nice day.”

He hung up angrily then, before looking up toward her.

“Something’s wrong?” She asked.

He sighed pinching his nose. “You could say that. My mother does not approve of you as my executive assistant.”

She opened her mouth to say something but he cut her off immediately.

“Before you say anything, you should know that my mother does not approve of a lot of things. You just happen to be the one she doesn’t approve of today. She says that you’re too young and not qualified…”

“And maybe she’s right,” Felicity argued, feeling her shoulders starting to fall.

Oliver shook his head. “I don’t believe that,” he assured, his hands coming up to press her shoulder in an attempt at comforting her.

“I don’t want to cause you any trouble,” she added and he shook his head at her words, his hand squeezing her shoulder more tightly.

“Don’t be ridiculous, everything’s okay,” he assured her. “Now, why don’t you show me what you’ve been up to while I was gone?”

“I ordered lunch, maybe we should eat it while I show you. I don’t want the food to get cold, it doesn’t taste…”
“… well when it’s been reheated,” Oliver completed. “I so agree with that. What did you get us?”

“I was in the mood for Chinese and I got you Chow Mein and a few Dumplings. I hope that’s okay, I didn’t know what you liked and Chow Mein was a safe choice, I mean who doesn’t like Chow Mein? It would be so stupid if you didn’t, and please can you stop staring at me like that and just tell me if I ordered right already?”

He blinked, his intense blue eyes now filled with amusement. “It’s my favourite,” he said, staring at her in disbelief. “You even asked for the right sauce. How did you know?”

She shrugged. “Let’s call this a lucky guess,” she suggested and he nodded.

They ate lunch while she showed him all the things she had changed, all the improvements she had made to the system. He looked really satisfied. That afternoon, he took her with him to meet the team that worked in the R&D department. She made the scientists who thought and designed the technologies the company was creating and then handing over to QC, the parent company.

After that, they get back to the office and talked about the work they would have to do for the upcoming weeks. The R&D department had three important projects currently running, and the three of them had been approved by QC. It wasn’t that bad considering that Oliver’s company was still really young. But the thing was, QC was a really big company, with a certain reputation. Oliver wanted to live up to his parents expectations, that much was clear, but he also had his own ideas for his company. His parents’ plan was to have him take over QC and merge the two companies together when he would. But the more she listened to him talk, the more Felicity realised that maybe Oliver didn’t want to take over QC. He wanted to take Q. Inc down a certain path, a path QC was staying away from. He was really interested in green energies and environmentally-friendly and cleaner technologies. He wanted a new team, a secondary one that would take his company right where he wanted it to go.

They spent their first week reviewing all the files and folders introducing projects he had gotten from various inventors, scientists and engineers. They made three piles: YES – NO – MAYBE. Unfortunately, the “NO” pile was the highest. Felicity also got more familiar with the company and its employees. They all welcomed her warmly, even more so when they found out that she understood tech and was slightly nerdy and started affectionately calling her “rookie”. Aside from that, she also experienced what it meant to be an EA as she found herself handling Oliver’s electronic mail box and his agenda. She also typed down notes during conferences with investors mostly, but sometimes with fellow businessmen.

Their main problem came from the fact that they both had a different definition of the words “organisation”. Oliver called her “messy”, she called him “fussy”. Seriously, the man couldn’t stand to see anything out of place. His folders were perfectly aligned, his desk perfectly clean, the files lying on it all classed in alphabetical order. They bickered about each other’s annoying habits quite a few times, under the amused gaze of Diggle. But aside from that, they worked very well together. The best thing about Oliver was that he didn’t think less of her because she was his EA. He listened to her suggestions. The decision was always his in the end but still, he let her talk and speak her mind. They complemented each other quite well, Oliver knew things Felicity didn’t and vice-versa. Where he was quiet, she was bright and talkative and where she was shy and reserved, he was confident and unwavering. They were also very good at communicating with each other, understanding one another through words and looks.

When Friday night and the weekend came, they left the office together.

“So, what did you think of your first week here?” Oliver asked.
“What did you think of my first week here Mr Queen?” She shot back, smiling.

He tilted his head. “It was quite good Miss Smoak. I think I’ll keep you around for a little while longer.”

She shook her head, amused. They both knew their first week together had been amazing. Felicity knew that wishing for things to stay that way was foolish, there would be a moment where they wouldn’t understand each other, where they would clash because they were very different, and had different opinions about things but still, she wished. She wished for her second week to be just as amazing.

“What are your plans for the weekend?” She asked when they stepped out of the elevator.

“My little sister is spending the weekend with me. I don’t get to see her much now that I’ve moved out of the mansion.”

She nodded. “I hope you’ll have a nice time,” she told him.

He smiled. “Thank you. What about you though? I heard that you have gotten close to Iris.”

“Yes, she and Sara are very nice. I think they’ve adopted me,” she confessed.

He huffed back a laugh. “So, any plans?” He insisted and she frowned, surprised by his insistence.

“Is “Netflix and chill” an appropriate answer?”

“A very appropriate one indeed,” Oliver approved.

They had reached their cars, and Diggle was waiting for Oliver near his.

“I guess I’ll see you on Monday,” Oliver said and she thought she heard something more in his voice but he didn’t give her time to linger on it as he opened his door.

“See you on Monday,” she told him.

On Saturday night, Felicity couldn’t focus on the TV-show she was watching. She was craving two things: a latte from Sara’s coffee-shop, which wasn’t that odd when she thought about it although it wasn’t her usual order and watching Fast and Furious, which was very odd. She had never seen the movies, had never wanted too. She didn’t even like cars!

But there she was, craving Paul Walker’s blue eyes, Vin Diesel’s abs and latte.

Starting another episode of her TV-show she tried to tame her desire but it only became stronger and stronger until she couldn’t take it anymore.

Sighing, she reached for her hoodie and her keys and got out. She stopped by Star City sweet coffee first and got her latter, earning a weird look from Sara. It was the first time that Felicity had ordered one. She then looked for the closest video store on her phone and made her way to it.

The blue frame of the shop looked really familiar but then, what didn’t look familiar to her in Star City? Shaking her head, she pushed the door open and walked in. The Imperial March started
playing and she chuckled, amused. The cashier winked at her as she raised her thumb up toward him. It really was funny. And nerdy. But that was beside the point.

She started walking between the alleys, looking for that damn movie she wanted to watch for no apparent reasons. She watched the movies available carefully, hoping to find one that would take her mind away from cars and races. That’s when bumped into a small brunette, because she wasn’t paying attention to her surroundings.

“Oh I am so sorry,” she said, kneeling down to get the girl’s movie, which was, ironically enough, *Fast and Furious*.

“Thea are you okay?” She heard a voice asked. “Felicity?” She froze.

“Oliver?” She called, her eyebrows frowned.

“Wait, this is Felicity?” The brunette, Thea, said.

“Wait, you know who I am?”

“What are you doing here?” Oliver asked, ignoring both her and his little sister. He was holding two coffees that came from Sara’s coffee shop and wearing blue jeans and a dark Henley with a leather jacket. He looked more relaxed than he did in the office, more handsome too. Shaking her head, Felicity forced herself to stop ogling and looked up to meet his eyes.

“I came here to rent a movie, that movie,” she added, pointing at the DVD Thea was holding. “Although that’s really weird because I’m not really into cars and races or people driving cars and winning races.”

Oliver chuckled.

“That’s actually why I was staring at the movies,” she went on, feeling her cheeks burn. She was standing in a video store’s alley wearing a hoodie and really comfy clothes in front of her boss, who, of course had to look like he had just gotten out of a photo shoot. “I was trying to get this one out of my mind. I am sorry I bump into you Miss Queen.”

“It’s okay, I am happy to finally meet you, Ollie has been talking a lot about you. Although, you shouldn’t say anything about that movie, it’s one of his favourites. He’s very much into cars and races or people driving cars and winning races.”

Felicity chuckled, shifting on her feet nervously. “You don’t?” She asked Thea.

She shrugged. “You could say that. We played Rock – Paper – Scissors game. I got to pick the food, he picked the movie.”

Felicity nodded. “Okay, I’ll let the two of you go back to your movie night then,” she told them. “I’ll see you on Monday Oliver.”

“Yeah, have a nice evening Felicity.”

She nodded again, reaching for her ponytail with her hand before turning around clumsily. She heard a soft hit and an “Ouch” before Oliver called her back.

“Felicity!”

She turned around again, and saw Thea watch her brother expectantly.
“Would you like to join us?” He offered.

She took a step back, shaking her head. “No, thank you really, but that would be unprofessional.”

Thea rolled her eyes. “You’re not at the office.”

“But we will be on Monday,” Felicity argued. “Besides, I don’t want to ruin your weekend with your sister,” she added.

“Come on,” the youngest Queen said. “I’ll be very happy to have someone with me. My brother can be a bit broody!” She paused, for a second and then she went on. “You’re new in town, you need to make friends not watch a movie alone in your apartment. That’s sad.”

“She’s right,” Oliver added. “Besides, it really is a shame that you’ve never seen that movie before!”

He grabbed the DVD and brought it up to his heart, his blue eyes finding hers and encouraging her to say yes.

She sighed and finally gave in.

Oliver drove them to his penthouse. It was a twenty-minute ride and when she objected that there probably was a coffee-shop and a video store closer to his penthouse, he said that Sara’s was the best and she couldn’t really argue with that. They fought about what to listen to but Oliver backed down when Felicity chose to side with Thea.

“Girls,” he mumbled as they shared a knowing look.

Oliver’s penthouse was amazing. Felicity had never thought that she’d ever see the inside of her house’s boss and yet, there she was, standing in his living-room, which was both warm and welcoming. She walked to the window as the Queens got the movie ready and stared down at the city. Star City wasn’t sleeping, not at this hour of the day on a Saturday night. It was full of life, its lights flickering and looked gorgeous from up here, next to the dark and mysterious waters of the ocean.

“Felicity, are you coming?” Thea called her, patting a spot next to her on the gigantic couch.

She nodded. They started the movie right after that and for an hour and half, Oliver and she bickered playfully, teasing and joking, Thea throwing a comment from time to time.

“Felicity come on! How cool is that car?”

“This is not a car Oliver, this is a mini spaceship!”

“And that! Did you see that?”

“Of course I saw that Oliver, I am right next to you.”

“How cool is that!”?

“You can do that in real life. If you do that Oliver, you die.”

“Are you two always like this?”
But in the end, she really liked the movie. It was really hard to resist to a very enthusiastic Oliver.

He drove her back, after the movie and after she had thanked Thea for the millionth time and after she insisted that she was fine taking a cab.

“I had a really nice time,” he told her as he turned the engine off.

“I am sensing a “but” coming.” she said, trying to hide her nervousness. She had had a nice time too but maybe it had been a mistake, maybe she shouldn’t have accepted, maybe they should have kept things professional.

He chuckled and turned around to look at her better. “It’s just something you said about us being professional.”

She frowned. “What about it?”

“Well, we can be professional at the office and friends outside of it. I mean, I’d be pretty pissed if I had to fire you to have you as my friend because I really want to keep working with you. But I’ll do it, if you really think that this, and by this I mean friendly movie nights, is unprofessional.”

She blinked, several times. “What are you saying exactly?”

“I am saying that I’d like to give us a try as both colleagues and friends.”

“But why?”

He shrugged. “I have a feeling that we’ll make good friends.”

“Just like you had a feelings that we had already met before?” She teased him.

But he wasn’t smiling anymore, he wasn’t teasing nor joking. He was serious, very serious. “I still feel like it you know. It’s only been a week, I know, but it honestly feels like ten year.”

“So this is how boring I am?” She said, offended.

He shook his head. “No, no, it’s just that… This week has been pretty amazing, I really enjoyed working with you and it felt like it wasn’t the first time we were doing it.”

“And yet it was,” she whispered softly, hearing him reciprocate her feelings about their first week together was making her very happy.

“Exactly,” he agreed. “And that’s why I don’t want to lose you as my colleague.”

She stared at him for a whole minute astonished by the honesty she could see shining in his eyes. She smiled at him them. It was a small smile, a shy one. One that conveyed her unsureness but also her will to try. She opened the door.

“Next Saturday Mr Queen, I’ll make you watch a decent cool action movie.”

He chuckled at her words. “Looking forward to it.”

Chapter End Notes
So, what did you guys think?  
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M  
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/  
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)}
Chapter 4 - They got drinks in their hands and the room’s a bust

Chapter Notes

Hey guys!!!!!!!

Here's the new chapter and it's a monster!!! Honestly, I don't know what happened. Things just got out of hand, especially at the end, but I am not even sorry! This chapter is really light, things will start to get darker in the next chapter. You've been warned :) And THANK YOU THANK YOU for the huge response this story got! It's so amazing, my mind has a hard time processing everything! THANK YOU, really :) Happy reading!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 4:

“Glad that you made it, look around
You don’t see one person sitting down
They got drinks in their hands and the room’s a bust
At the end of the night, maybe you’ll find love.”

- Fergie ft. GoonRock & Q-Tip, A little party never killed nobody (all we got).

When the printer made THE sound Felicity groaned.

The sound was a loud throbbing, followed by a few cackling sounds that made Felicity cringed and held her pen tight enough to break it – metaphorically speaking of course, she wasn’t nearly as strong as Dig, who could probably break ten pens in one squeeze of one of his big hands.

Sighing, and fighting the urge to just bang her head against her desk, Felicity pushed her chair away from her desk and bent under it, to check on the wire. She had told Oliver three days ago already that they really needed to change the damn printer and he had dismissed the idea, saying they had more important things to do and that as long as her “magical mumbo jumbo” worked and kept the printer going. Her “magical mumbo jumbo” being her playing with the wires until a faulty contact jolted the machine awake.

Crawling back under her desk, she reached for the back of the printer and opened it, for what seemed to be the umpteenth time, exposing cables and wires to her tired eyes. She was an executive assistant for God’s sake, not a printer technician – although she highly doubted that printer technician existed. Reaching for the two capricious wires, she brought them together, trying to get a sparkle.

“Come on,” she whispered. She felt like one of these people in the movies who stole cars by
hotwiring them. Except what she was doing was not nearly as cool as stealing a Porsche or a Ferrari. Not that she knew anything about cars worth stealing, it was Oliver who kept ranting about them and she had just assumed that someone as rich as him knew what he was talking about.

“Woah! I knew good old Ollie hadn’t hired you for your brains,” a man voice said from behind her.

Startled, she jumped slightly, but forgot about her desk above her head and hit the top of it. She cried out in a pain and got out from under her desk, massaging her scalp with one hand. Getting on her feet, she glared at the man who had dared insulting her.

The man was tall and slender. His hair was raven dark, his eyes icy blue and his smile was probably the reason why he had gotten so many girls in his bed when he had been younger. Because yes, she was facing none other than Tommy Merlyn, her boss’ best friend.

“Jerk,” she said, crossing her arms over her chest.

“You can’t call me that before having at least one drink with me,” he told, grinning widely, and slightly stupidly at her.

Reaching for her bottle of water, Felicity took a gulp of it. “There you go, jerk,” she repeated, setting her bottle back on her desk.

He shook his head, his grin widening. “It doesn’t work like that,” he told her.

“I got a drink, you were here, I’d say it does,” she went around her desk, reaching for the flash drive with the files she had wanted to print. Then, she walked toward Tommy Merlyn, “And for your information, Mr Queen did hire me for my brains,” she added.

He shook his head, chuckling. Then, they both heard the elevator’s doors open and Oliver walked out. He was coming back from a meeting with his parents at QC. He had asked Felicity to come with him but then had cancelled at the last minute, pretending that he needed her to go over some reports.

“What’s going on here?” He asked when he saw his best friend grinning and Felicity’s annoyed expression.

“You need to buy me a new printer,” she told him, “and find another best friend. Yours sucks.”

That said, she got in the elevator and headed down toward the labs’ level. She could have printed the notes she had taken after going over Oliver’s reports in his office, but since she was supposed to give them to the head of the team working on one of their projects, she may as well print it downstairs.

She did just that and then lingered in the lab, listening to one of the engineers talk about his progress. He was really optimistic about the breakthrough of his activities. Felicity gave him a few words of encouragement before going back upstairs. She ordered lunch for herself on her way back, she knew Oliver was going out with his best friend, adding frozen yoghurt and fruits to her usual order. She had been craving that ever since she had woken up, courtesy of the exceptionally warm day.

Her order arrived twenty minutes later and she sat down at her desk with it, grabbing a new file that needed to be reviewed. She knew Oliver didn’t like it when she didn’t take a real break from work but she didn’t mind reading while eating. The first file’s idea wasn’t that bad but financially unrealistic so she threw it on the “NO” pile. Taking another, she immediately got hooked by the presentation and the guy’s calculations. She was so lost in her reading, she didn’t hear it when Oliver sat down next to her, having brought a chair from his office to do so.

It’s only when he dived a spoon in her desert that she looked up from the file.
“What do you think you’re doing?” She asked him, her eyebrow arched.

“What?”

“My desert,” she pointed out, grabbing the cup and taking it away from him.

“Oh come on Felicity! You always order the biggest cup they have, although you know you won’t finish it. I’m merely trying to prevent good frozen yoghurt from being wasted.”

“You could at least wait until I’m done!” She protested. “Besides, I thought that you didn’t like frozen yoghurt.”

He shrugged. “It’s not that I don’t like it. There is just too much sugar in it. And I don’t know why, but I’ve been wanting to eat some ever since I came to work this morning and I am blaming you for it.”

She froze. “Why?”

“You’re rubbing off on me!” He said, stretching his arm, which was insanely big, and diving his spoon in her cup again. “By the way, what were you reading? You looked pretty into it.”

She nodded. “It’s one of the projects you received. The guy has designed a new battery. It’s a hundred percent recyclable battery which uses the heat produced by the piece of tech it’s supplying to recharge itself. It’s amazing.”

Oliver tilted his head. “It does sound amazing. Who’s the inventor?”

Felicity rummaged through the sheets of paper on her deck to find the guy’s resume.

“Messy,” Oliver coughed and she glared at him. He just smiled at her and she shook her head, holding back a smile.

“Here I got it!” She said triumphantly. “Our winner is Curtis Holt, a fellow MIT graduate,” she added. “He used to work for Palmer Tech but he quit a few months ago.”

“Well, Palmer’s loss is our win, set up an appointment with Mr Holt for next week please.”

She nodded but then frowned as he got up. “Why not this week?”

“Because we have more important things to do this week.”

He got a sheet of paper out of his pocket and handed it to Felicity. She unfolded it and saw that it was a list of names.

She frowned. “Please tell me it’s not a dead pool.”

He chuckled, shaking his head. “My parents are organising a little party next week, and this is the guests’ list.”

“I still have no idea why you’re giving it to me.”

“Well, all the people on that list are either rich, important, influent or a little bit of the three. These people could be potential investors for Q. Inc.”

Felicity nodded, going over the list. There really was a lot of names on that list, how was it possible to know that many people? The Queen family just wasn’t normal.
Oliver chuckled. “Don’t tell me about it,” he said and she clenched her eyes shut. She had spoken her thoughts out loud, again. She tended to do that more often than not.

“Sorry, go on, I have a feeling that you were about to say something important.”

“Obviously, I can’t talk to all these people in one night and I don’t want to waste my time doing small-talk with people I know won’t work with me in the future.”

“Let me guess, you want me to pick out potential investors from the guests’ list?”

He nodded. “Exactly. And try to find out what they like, try to find me a way to break through their walls and get to them. If I make a good impression on them, they’ll remember it in the future, when it’s time to put some money up.”

Felicity got to work immediately after that. It took her two days to go over each name on the list, she stopped counting after sixty-five guests. She picked out ten potential investors for Oliver, but three of them were really standing out.

“Our first target is William Fitzpatrick. His grandparents were Irish immigrants and he is very proud of his legacy. They built their fortune on the metal working industry but ironically enough, William Fitzpatrick the third is an environmentalist. He cares about the planet and supports causes such as Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund. He is very close to Leonardo DiCaprio.”

Oliver tilted his head, staring at the picture of Fitzpatrick she had printed with her brand new printer, a gift from Tommy Merlyn himself. “Okay, so what do I do to get him to like me?”

“You could start by telling him how much you love pandas,” Felicity suggested.

He gave her a look.

“Sorry, not helping. Well, Mr Fitzpatrick is a fine connoisseur of Irish’s whiskey. He’s known for collecting bottles of very rare and expensive malt whiskey,” she added, faking an Irish accent that only earned a wince from Oliver.

“So I only have to get him a good bottle?”

She smiled. “You could say that. Next on our list, Tamara Anderson,” she showed a picture of her. “She’s a woman in a man’s world, she built her own company from scratch and her new company just designed a whole new windmill, more efficient, increasing the production of electricity of thirty-five percent per hour.”

Oliver whistled, impressed. “Sounds great,” he commented.

“Because it is great,” Felicity assured him. “Seriously, that woman is my hero. I mean, look at her, strong, confident, independent. Her only problem is the broom stick up her…”

“Okay, Felicity stop, I got the idea! How do I get her to like me?”

“Well, Mr Queen, I hope that you still know how to charm a woman.”

He blinked. “You want me to flirt with her? I am engaged,” he reminded her.

Still, Oliver didn’t look convinced.
“Come on Oliver, this isn’t that hard. All you have to do is pay her a few compliments, make her laugh and maybe dance a couple of times with her.” She paused, looking for the right words. “Just be your charming and usual self, she’ll like you.”

The same way she liked him. They had had that second movie night she had promised him at his place. She had brought the movie, *Star Trek*, and pop-corn, he had gotten them food from a sushi restaurant whose food he had deemed to be so good Felicity had had no other choice but to give it a try. And it had indeed been really good. They’d had a nice time that night, bantering and talking about almost everything and anything. Oliver was witty and funny, having a conversation with him was as easy as breathing. Plus, he had a way to make her feel like more than herself. He laughed at her nerdy jokes, let her whispered the lines of the movie while the actors delivered them and chuckled when she jumped in surprise at something she yet knew was going to happen. Her point being that if he was half the person he was around her with Tamara Anderson, then, he’d win her over in five minutes.

“Finally, last but not least, Martin Walker. His fortune comes from his family’s stock investments. He is a philanthropist, involved in more than just one cause. He has created a foundation which hires doctors and send them in Africa, to vaccinate children.”

“He sounds like a decent man,” Oliver stated.

“He is,” Felicity agreed. “He has been married with his soulmate for almost twenty-years, they have three children. He believes in family and I think that’s what you’ll need to stress when you speak with him. Show him how concerned you are with the world’s problems and show him that you’re like him: a man devoted to his soulmate and family and to the world.”

Oliver nodded although she couldn’t help but notice the flash of sadness that crossed his eyes. Before she could ask him about it, he moved on toward another topic.

“Thank you Felicity for your hard work, I am really impressed with what you did.”

She gave him a small smile. “It was nothing.”

“Have you picked your dress already?” He asked her.

She blinked. “My dress?” She repeated, confused.

“Yes, the dress you’re going to wear at the party.”

“I wasn’t aware that I was invited,” she told him, biting on her lower lip nervously.

“It was implied,” he told her.

She blinked again.

“I can’t go there without my girl Wednesday,” he insisted.

“It’s Friday,” she corrected automatically.

“Never heard of a girl Friday who could hotwire a printer. Besides, your job interview took place on a Wednesday, making you my very own girl Wednesday.”

She chuckled, shaking her head.

“Tommy will be there too, since he works with his father at Merlyn’s Global. He’s looking forward
to seeing you again. He says he likes you.”

Felicity sighed. “I still haven’t forgiven him yet.”

Oliver chuckled, getting up from behind his office. “Well, he’ll be there without his soulmate, so you better get yourself ready to have him around you. A lot.”

She winced and Oliver’s smile widened, revealing his dimple. “I’ll pick you up at seven thirty on Saturday. Don’t be late.”

She nodded.

“And wear something fancy.”

When Felicity got the text on Saturday morning, she was just getting out of the shower.

--

“9:27 am

Meet me at Star City’s library on 5th street at 11.

And bring a picture of your dress for tonight!!

TQ”

--

Frowning, she tried to guess how Thea Queen had gotten her number. And why she was requesting something that specific. Sighing, she reached for her phone, mechanically typing Oliver’s number.

--

“9:30 am

Did you give my number to your sister?

FS”

--

His reply came quickly.

--

“9:31 am

What if I did?

OQ”

--
“9:32 am
You could have asked for my permission!
FS”
--
She even added a few angry emojis.
--
“9:35 am
It’s my sister, not the devil.
Still on for tonight?
OQ”
--
She sighed deeply. That night, they were invited to the party organised by his family. Felicity really had a bad feeling about it, she really didn’t want to go but had no other choice but to go. She was Oliver Queen’s EA there was no way on earth for her to cancel.
--
“9:37 am
Yes. See you tonight!
FS”
--
“9:38 am
See you tonight!
OQ”
--
Felicity walked in Star City’s library. She had had no trouble finding it, she had already been there once ever since she had moved in. After the beach, Sara’s coffee-shop and Q. Inc, it was her favourite spot in the city. The building was beautiful, its architecture classical and stately. But as the city’s population had grown, they’d needed to extend the library, adding a whole new wing, which was much more modern. It had been entirely funded by the Queen family. Knowing that freaked the hell out of Felicity. It was insane to have so much money, she didn’t belong in this world. It was partly why she didn’t want to attend the party with Oliver. She was pretty sure that she was going to do something wrong, to say something inappropriate and that she’d embarrass him just as much as she’d embarrass herself. She could handle it but she didn’t want to put him in trouble.
She noticed Thea, sitting down at a table, her books and copybooks opened in front of her.
“Hey Thea,” she greeted her.

The small Queen looked up from her homework and smiled at her.

“Felicity, hi! I am glad you came. Please, have a seat,” she added, pointing at a chair.

Felicity sat down in front of her. “You’re far away from your home,” she stated.

The Queen mansion was indeed located outside of the city. It had probably taken Thea a thirty-minute drive to get to the library.

“And yet, I am not far enough to escape the Queen’s name,” Thea joked, gesturing toward a plate stating that the library had been funded by Thea’s family.

Felicity tilted her head at the young girl’s words. It sounded as if she was joking but there was something in her eyes, a depth that told Felicity that maybe she meant every word.

“Are you okay?” She asked her politely. She didn’t to push or meddle in her business but she figured that there was nothing wrong with asking her such a simple question.

Thea nodded. “I am perfect, what about you? Ready for your first party with Star City’s social elite?”

Felicity froze, her shoulders went limp as she felt something weigh on her stomach. “Not really,” she confessed.

Thea patted her shoulder gently. “I wish I could tell you that everything is going to be okay, but I know for a fact that it won’t.”

Felicity’s eyes widened. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“It means that my mother is going to give you a hard time. She and Oliver argued over you during Sunday’s family lunch two weeks ago, it was awful. I’d never heard them fight like this. And they fought again last Sunday, although more cordially. It was worse than when they were openly yelling at each other.”

Felicity felt like she had been slapped. She had heard Oliver and his mom fighting over the phone, but since Oliver hadn’t brought it back, she had thought that things had settled, that his mother had changed her mind on her. Clearly she hadn’t and Oliver hadn’t told her anything about it. Was it why he had refused that she came with him for his business meeting? But then, why not taking her with him to a business meeting, but inviting her to the party? It didn’t make any sense and she felt a bit disappointed that he hadn’t told her about what was going on with his family.

“Why were they fighting over me?” She asked, her voice shaking slightly, her fist clenching tightly around the fabric of her dress.

Thea shrugged. “Mom says that having a young and fresh executive assistant isn’t good for the company’s image, especially considering Oliver’s past.”

Felicity blinked. “But… He is engaged. To his soulmate.”

Thea chuckled bitterly. “Soulmate doesn’t necessarily means faithfulness.”

“Yes, it does,” Felicity argued but then her words died on her lips. Her father had left her mother, his soulmate. They didn’t know why, but maybe it had been to go live his life with another woman.

“Okay, maybe you have a point here but… I am not that kind of girl and your mom shouldn’t judge
me without knowing me, it’s… Mean.”

Thea chuckled more. “You poor naïve thing, you have no idea what you’ve gotten yourself into, do you?”

Felicity frowned, hurt by her harsh tone and words.

“My mother is not the nicest person in town, especially to people she sees as a threat. Or when she’s scared. And you Miss Smoak, I don’t why, but you scare the hell out of her.”

Felicity’s thoughts brushed her MIT memories. No, Moira couldn’t have heard of her supervirus. She had buried its codes with her old-self a long time ago.

“My mother hates your guts Felicity and that makes me like you even more.”

Felicity arched an eyebrow.

“You need to not be afraid tonight,” Thea told her. “Hold your head high, straighten your spine and don’t let anyone make you feel like you’re worth less than them. Because trust me, you’re worth more than any of them.”

“Oh… Thank you, I guess?” Felicity said, the weight on her stomach extending to her heart and lungs. The party was going to be a disaster.

“Did you bring the picture of your dress?”

Felicity nodded and showed it to Thea. It was a cute short purple dress that Felicity had bought with her mom a year ago.

“You’re not going to prom or to a wedding,” the young Queen stated, reaching for a pen and starting to write down an address on it. “Go to this place, say I am the one sending you. The owner is a friend, he’ll find you a dress.”

Felicity started to shake her hand, pushing the paper back toward Thea. “I can’t accept,” she protested.

“Yes, you can and you will,” Thea insisted, opening Felicity’s hand and putting the piece of paper between her fingers. “I’d go with you but I have an essay to write and a few lessons to study. Ollie should have warned me sooner.”

She rolled her eyes and Felicity frowned.

“Before I forget,” Thea went on, getting her phone out of her purse. “Come here, we need to take a picture.”

“Why?” Felicity asked, her head tilted.

“Because my friend will probably not believe you if you tell him I sent you. And because I need another picture for your profile in my phone. The one from your resume really sucks, you look much better as a blonde.”

“Thank you,” she said before coming closer to Thea. She snapped a few pictures of them before sending her favourite to Felicity.

“Now off you go,” Thea chased her away. “Bibbidi-bobbidi-boo go find your dress!”
Felicity chuckled, shaking her head. “This is not a Cinderella story,” she told her.

“It doesn’t hurt to dream it was though, does it?”

Felicity paused, considering her words. “No, it doesn’t,” she admitted before leaving.

The owner of the boutique was a short bald man wearing round glasses on the tip of his nose. He wore ripped jeans, t-shirt with a heavy metal band’s name printed on it and a tailcoat. He was weird with his big boots and excessively big jewels but Felicity liked him immediately. His name was Carl, with a C not a K he reminded her more than once during the short amount of time she spent with him. She felt a bit out of place with her white sneakers and denim dress among the beautiful clothes around herbut he somehow managed to make her feel comfortable.

She had to show him the picture she had taken with Thea in the library to have him actually believe the young Queen had sent her. But as soon as he had seen the picture, he treated her… well… like a queen. He made her try on countless dresses, criticized her bearing and the way she walked while hearing wheels. At some point, Felicity texted Thea, asking her why she hadn’t told her she had sent her to a modern torturer. Thea didn’t reply to that text. Carl made her parade, gave her advice and even complimented her in the end when she reached what he called “the elegance of a ribbon falling in the air”. He told her how to apply her make-up and how to do her hair but she got to pick the dress. Actually, from the moment Felicity saw the blue one hanging from its hanger, she knew it was the one. It was the one she had to wear. She didn’t know where such certainty came from but she wasn’t one to question it. She tried it on and when Carl approved it by raising his thumb up, a wide smile spread on her face.

When she came back to her apartment after spending the biggest part of her afternoon with Carl, she still had some time to get ready. She took another shower, the hot water relaxing her slightly. Thea’s words had been in the back of her mind during her visit at Carl’s, but it had been easy to shut it down back there. Now that she was alone, Felicity found it harder to do. Sighing, she focused on dolling herself up. She hadn’t gotten to do that a lot in her life, she had almost never been to balls back in high-school and had ditched prom as well. It was fun to do it now, although she felt more like a lamb getting ready to meet wolves than a butterfly flying out of his chrysalis for the first time.

At seven twenty-five, she got out of her apartment and went to wait for Oliver outside of her building. Diggle parked the car in front of her at exactly seven thirty. Oliver stepped out of it and she rolled her eyes when she saw the colour of his handkerchief. It was a Caribbean blue, one that matched both his eyes and her dress.

He looked at her up and down and then back up, his eyes widening as he took her embroidered gown in, her light make-up, her curly blonde hair falling down elegantly from her up-do, circling her face which was free of her square glasses. He took her in, really in, making her shift her balance nervously on her feet. She started blushing and he still hadn’t said anything.

“Oliver,” she snapped, because she couldn’t take it anymore.


She chuckled. “Thank you, you don’t look so bad yourself. And it seems that we’ll be making quite the pair tonight,” she added, her hands mechanically coming up to adjust his handkerchief.

“Team Q. Inc?” He asked her, raising his pinkie finger.

She rolled her eyes at him – her boss was a huge dork, but he hid it well, most of the time – but still
crossed her pinkie with his.

“Team Q. Inc,” she nodded.

“Team Q. Inc,” Dig added, opening the window next to him. “Now will the two of you please get in the car? We’re going to be late.”

They quickly got in the car and spent the drive to the Queen Mansion in silence. Felicity was feeling extremely nervous, edgy. Usually, she would have talked and talked until the sound of her own voice made her cringe but not tonight. Tonight, there was a lump in her throat and she was sweating excessively. Which was not a really sexy thing but it wasn’t like she had any control over it. She took a deep breath, her fingers clenching around her clutch tightly.

When Diggle passed the impressive metallic portal, Felicity gulped. But then the house came on sight and she felt like she was going to throw up.

“This… This is not a mansion,” she stated, shaking her head in denial. “This is a castle.”

Oliver chuckled at her words, his hand coming up to squeeze hers gently. “It’s not that big. The house is only 7 are. The whole property, which includes the gardens, is about 2 hectares.”

She blinked at him. “I grew up in an apartment which was about three hundred twenty two square feet,” she blurted out. “I am pretty sure that I’ll need a GPS to walk around your house.”

“You won’t need a GPS,” he assured her. “You have me.”

She shook her head. “You are going to charm investors all evening long,” she reminded him.

“And you’ll be by my side the whole time.”

“What if I need to go to the bathroom?”

He gave her a look and she looked down toward her toes, which she had painted a bright silver colour. “Let’s go,” she eventually said, “before I change my mind and run away from this place.”

Oliver chuckled and got out of the car. He went around it and opened her door for her, offering her his arm.

“What a gentleman,” she teased him.

He smiled. “My mother would be proud of me,” he replied.

The mention of his mother made bile rise up in Felicity’s throat. She wanted to confront him about not telling her about his arguments with her and the fact that she hated her but it was not the time nor the place. Later, she promised herself. They’ll get back to that later.

The ballroom, because yes, the Queens’ castle – there was no way she was calling it a mansion, no matter what Oliver kept telling her – was actually big enough to have his own ballroom, was already full of people talking, cheering and dancing when they arrived.

“Anderson is standing by the piano,” Felicity told Oliver, immediately recognising her platinum blonde hair. “And oh my god, is that an actual quartet?”

“Fitzpatrick is keeping the bar company,” Oliver said, ignoring her questions.

Waiters were making their way between the guests, some carrying petits fours and others flutes of
champagne. The golden liquid was sparkling under the dimmed light coming off of a few lamps. The windows that led to the gardens had been opened, allowing people to walk on the patio and enjoy the quiet evening. A soft breeze was making the white net curtains dance, almost in synch with the music. Silvery rays of light were being reflected on the perfectly waxed wooden floor and Felicity found herself being fascinated by the contrast between the gold light of the lamps and the colder one of the moon. Until Oliver tugged at her arm and reminded her of where they were. Shaking her head to get back in the game, she plastered a bright smile on her lips and followed him around the room. Because there were too many guests at the party, they had both learnt half of the names and were telling each other who was who before they greeted them. Oliver always made sure to introduce her politely before the conversation turned toward more professional topics. Felicity listened quietly, answering questions carefully, weighing her words in her mind and heart when she was being solicited. It was exhausting, to always ponder her words, she didn’t know how Oliver managed to do it. What was more exhausting though, was the eyes of his mother. They hadn’t talked to her properly yet but they had seen her and she had seen them. The moment her eyes had fallen on Felicity, the hair at the back of her neck had ruffled. Moira’s blue eyes were icy cold on her but at the same time also filled with scorching hatred. It made Felicity want to crawl back into her skin. It also made her wonder what she could have possibly done to get under his mother’s skin like that.

They were joined by Tommy at some point. He had come to the party with his father.

“Miss Smoak, it’s a pleasure to see you again,” he told her, smiling.

“Mr Merlyn, I wish I could say the same thing about you.”

He put his hand on his heart and faked a hurt expression. “You’re killing me.”

“You’ll recover,” she replied, unable to hold back a laugh at the very serious look on his face.

Tommy shook Oliver’s hand before getting them all a flute of champagne. She smiled happily. Champagne, liquid courage. Exactly what she needed to remain sane for the rest of the evening. But before she could take a sip from her drink, Oliver took the flute out of her hand and set it back on a tray.

“No alcohol for you,” he explained, “you’re underage.”

She blinked astonished by the audacity of him. “I wasn’t aware you were my chaperone for the night,” she said through gritted teeth, anger starting to build up in her chest.

“I am just looking after you,” he said, shrugging.

“The same way you were looking after me when you didn’t tell me about your arguments with your mother?” She hissed, her arms crossed over her chest.

He frowned, tensing up immediately. “Who told you about that? Thea?”

“Well, it wasn’t you, that’s for sure.”

He pinched his nose, sighing. “Felicity, can we talk about this later?”

“Sure,” she nodded, turning around.

“Where are you going?” He asked her, catching her arm before she could leave.

She rolled her eyes. “Getting myself a coke, I am not allowed to drink alcohol, haven’t you heard?”
He released her and she made her way to the bar. She ran across Thea, who barely stopped to greet her. She looked in a hurry to leave the room but before Felicity could turn around and follow her to ask her if she was okay, she came face to face with Moira Queen.

To say that the Queen’s matriarch was intimidating was an understatement. She was terrifying with her perfectly done hair, there was not a single strand of her hair out of place, her slender silhouette and her smart and calculating blue eyes.

“Miss Smoak,” she said, her voice so cold, it made Felicity shiver.

“Mrs Queen,” she replied, focusing really hard to prevent her voice from wavering.

“Finally we get to meet,” Moira went on, her eyes roaming over her. Felicity remained still, not letting her see how much she was affecting her. It seemed that Moira was analysing her, looking out for flaws, imperfections, anything to use as a weapon against her. And she really didn’t understand why. She had never met her before, and she was pretty sure she hadn’t done anything wrong ever since she had started working for Oliver. At least, the hatred she had seen earlier in her eyes had backed down a bit and was now barely a spark.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you,” Felicity told her, her tone cheerful and her smile sincere. She really wanted to do her best to melt the coldness Moira had surrounded herself with.

“I can’t say that the feeling is mutual, unfortunately,” Moira stated, refusing to shake Felicity’s hand, who took it back slowly, humiliation making her cheeks burn.

Clearing her throat, she asked. “And why is that?”

“I know girls like you Miss Smoak, only daughter of a poor cocktail waitress in Vegas…” Moira shook her head, her tone poisonous. “I’ve seen plenty of Felicity Smoaks in my life. You’re all young and beautiful and you want to become someone in this world. My family’s name and wealth attract you, you want your slice of the cake. And girls like you always think that their looks and charms will get them somewhere, will get them something.” She paused for a second and Felicity realised then that she had stopped breathing and that her heart was beating furiously in her chest. “Let me tell you this, you won’t get anything from my family as long as I’ll be living on this earth so you might as well pack your things again and leave this city.”

Felicity’s blood was pounding furiously against her temples. She tried to take a deep breath, to calm herself down but air got caught in her throat. Her cheeks were burning, the insults and humiliations making her clench her fists in anger. But before she could actually reply anything to Moira, she felt an arm slip around her waist, reaching for her hand. She turned her head and her confused eyes met Tommy’s.

“Moira, what a beautiful party, you’ve really outdone yourself,” he congratulated her, but his tone was fawning.

“Thank you Thomas,” Moira replied, bowing her head.

“Now excuse me but Felicity here promised to dance at least once with me tonight,” he added. “How about we go now?” He suggested, glancing at Felicity.

The blonde nodded and they took their leave. She let Tommy lead her to the dancefloor. There, he placed a hand on her waist and they started swirling around the room, a respectable distance between them.

“Are you okay?” He asked softly, his hand holding hers pressing it gently.
She nodded. She didn’t care about the fact that Moira had judged her without even trying to know her or that she had basically called her a manipulative cold-hearted gold-digger. Someone as vile as that woman didn’t deserve that she lingered on her words or attached any kind of importance to them. Of course, her words had hurt her and she felt slightly humiliated. But Felicity knew who she was and it wasn’t the kind of women Moira had pictured.

“Yes,” she said, “thanks for stepping in though. One more minute and I think that she’d have jumped on me.”

Tommy chuckled. “You looked like you needed help and your knight in shining armour was too busy to notice.”

Felicity tilted her head and Tommy pointed at Oliver, who was currently dancing with Tamara Anderson.

“How about we go get you a drink?” Tommy offered. “You’re still pale.”

“Pale?” She repeated. She felt like her cheeks were on fire, although her heart had settled in her chest as soon as Tommy had walked in. She didn’t know why but, despite his jerky comment from their first meeting, she felt comfortable around him, almost *safe*.

“Yes,” he assured her. “Come on, you’re giving ghosts a run for their money.”

Tommy let her drink half of a flute of champagne.

“I am brave but not suicidal and Ollie will most definitely kill me if he hears about this,” he told her.

And then, he danced some more with her. They parted ways when Oliver came to her, telling her there was someone she needed to meet absolutely. He introduced her to the director of the Applied Sciences department of QC and she soon found herself caught in a conversation revolving around processors and mainboards. After that, they started walking around the party again, going from one guest to the other, staying purposefully away from his parents. At least, Felicity did it purposefully, she didn’t know about Oliver but she was relieved when he made no attempt to go meet them. Thea joined them at some point during the party and that’s when the fun truly started. She kept whispering snarky comments in Felicity’s ear and the blonde had to do her best not to laugh. She cracked a few smiles though and Oliver arched an eyebrow at them more than once, silently reprimanding them.

People started leaving the party around midnight. The three of them decided it was time for them to leave too and they met Tommy on the patio. He had taken off his tie and opened the first buttons of his shirt. Oliver did the same, rolling up the sleeves of his shirt as well, exposing his toned and strong arms to the world’s eyes.

“Felicity, would you like to visit the gardens?” Thea offered. “They’re quite the sight at night.”

Felicity hesitated, turning toward Oliver. “That depends, when is my curfew chaperone?”

Tommy snorted and Oliver just rolled his eyes at her.

“I wouldn’t say no to a walk either,” Tommy said. “I think I’ve had too much champagne,” he added, winking at Felicity behind Oliver’s back.

“Let’s go then,” Thea decided, knotting her arm with Felicity’s.

They followed the path that went through the gardens. It was enlightened by small electric torches which gave a romantic touch to the atmosphere. Not even five seconds after the beginning of their
walk, Felicity had to admit Thea had been right. They were quite the sight at night. The air was cool but not cold at all and surprisingly enough, Felicity found the shadow of the trees not really threatening but tempting, inviting. They walked by a few marble benches and tables, bunches of flowers and cherry trees and Felicity tried to guess what other wonders were being hidden by the darkness.

They stopped by the pool, which was absolutely gorgeous. The water’s colour was a weird mix of white blue and green created by the spotlights underwater. There was a small cascade and the lapping of the water hitting the surface of the pool sounded like a symphony to Felicity’s ears.

“Woah,” Felicity said, out of words.

“Want to come closer?” Thea asked.

She nodded and the two girls walked to the stairs. Felicity kneeled down and dipped a finger in the water. It was surprisingly warm.

“It’s heated,” Thea explained.

Of course it was. Wiping her finger on her dress, Felicity got on her feet again, turning around to where they had left Tommy and Oliver.

“Where is Tommy?” She asked Oliver.

He smiled innocently at them. Too innocently.

She heard Tommy’s footsteps come from behind her before she felt the warm water hit her skin. Yelping, she turned around and saw that he was attacking them with a water gun, whose reservoir was the biggest she had ever seen in her life. Thea bolted right after he started hosing them. Felicity raised her hands to protect her head.

“Tommy stop!” She yelled.

He only stopped when the water gun was empty and she was soaked.

“I’m going to murder you,” she shout, starting to run toward him.

He laughed and ran away from her, circling the pool. He stopped dead in his track when he almost bumped into Thea, who was holding a loaded water gun.

“Okay,” he said, running a hand through his hair. “Maybe we can talk about this.”

“Felicity, do you want to talk about it?” Thea asked, holding the gun.

“Nope,” the blonde replied.

“Ollie, help me out here man,” Tommy begged him.

He shook his head. “You got yourself into this mess buddy,” his friend replied.

Everything happened really fast after that. Thea pulled the trigger and Tommy ran away, to avoid the water. The girls started to chase him, Thea handing the gun to Felicity so that she could get her revenge. The moment she pulled the trigger, Tommy lowered himself and the water jet hit Oliver instead, soaking him to the bone.

Felicity and Thea both stopped running. The blonde dropped the gun on the floor and raised her
hands up. He blinked, astonished, as if his mind couldn’t wrap up around what had just happened.

“Oliver, I am so sorry,” she whispered.

He glanced at his soaked shirt then at her, at his shirt and at her again and she knew exactly when he had made up his mind.

“Run,” he told her.

She took a step back as he stepped toward her.

“Run,” he repeated.

“Oliver, I am sorry,” she begged, half-laughing.

“Last chance to run Smoak,” he warned her, a devious grin on his face.

Her dress was soaked and heavy and she was wearing heels. There was no way on earth she was running. She’d slip and twist her ankle.

“Come on Oliver,” she told him, taking another step back as he stepped toward her.

“Tommy go get Thea,” he said to his friend, his eyes never leaving Felicity’s. They were solely focused on her and she felt her wet skin burn at the intensity of his gaze.

He was one step away from her when she made an attempt at running away from him. He circled her wrists with his hands, his hot skin burning against her much cooler one. Dragging her to him, he lifted her and her wet heavy dress without flinching. She started struggling, half-laughing, half-begging him no to do what he was about to do, but his hold on her was firm and he didn’t let her go. She heard Thea laugh as well as Tommy threw her in the pool. She yelped when Oliver threw her in the water.

Her body hit the warm liquid and for a second, she remained underwater, letting her body getting used to its new environment. Then, she pushed on her heels to get back to the surface. The fabric of her dress was dragging her toward the bottom of the pool, but Oliver had been kind enough not to throw her somewhere too deep. Reaching for her feet, she unbuckled her shoes and threw them on the edge, Thea quick to imitate her.

“So, how is the water?” Tommy asked, his head cocked.

“Why don’t you come and see for yourself Merlyn?” Thea said, swimming toward her Felicity.

The two girls exchange a look before they started splashing the two men stupidly standing on the edge of the pool. They both fought back and that’s how the battle truly started. They all splashed one another, the sound of their laughter piercing the otherwise quiet night. They stopped fighting when they were soaked to the bones and their arms started protesting. Too much was too much. The girls remained in the pool though, while the two men went to get them all towels. Thea kept flashing bright smiles at Felicity and the blonde couldn’t help but smile back just as brightly. She couldn’t remember when she had been last that happy.

Later, Oliver parked his car in the lot in front of her building. Felicity was wrapped up in a bathrobe and towels, her hair was a mess, her make-up was ruined and she was facing her boss but she couldn’t have cared less.

“I am sorry,” Oliver said as she was about to thank him.
She tilted her head. “About what?”

“About not telling you that my mother and I had argued over you.”

She smiled at him. She had already forgiven him, she could see why he hadn’t told her; he just hadn’t wanted to worry her. And that was exactly why she wasn’t going to tell him what his mother had told her exactly. She wasn’t going to be the reason why the mother and the son fought. She didn’t need Oliver’s help to prove Moira that she was wrong about her. She’d do it herself, she’d deal with her problems alone, like she had always had.

“It’s okay Oliver, it’s already forgotten. I had an amazing time tonight and everything went well with the people we wanted to impress.”

“This night is a success,” Oliver agreed.

She nodded and opened the door. “See you on Monday. Good night.”

“Good night,” he replied and she closed the door, a smile lingering on her lips as she walked toward her building’s main entrance.

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)
Chapter 5 - Would you lie with me and just forget the world?

Chapter Notes

Hey guys!!!!

You're killing me with the responses to this story. Truly, it's amazing!! I love you guys for it, really. You rock.

So here's the new chapter. There are monsters and there are Monsters. This is a Monster. And the funniest part is that it was supposed to be a short chapter, meant to introduce darker themes. It does, but it's not short. By the way, this is my TRIGGER WARNING for this chapter. I warned you guys, this is a darker chapter, and though the violence is not graphically described it is implied so if it's something that bothers you / triggers you, do not read the passages in italics.

The chapter is making me nervous because of his very much different tone and length. I hope that you will like it!!

Happy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 5:

“If I lay here
If I just lay here

Would you lie with me and just forget the world?”

- Snow Patrol, *Chasing cars.*

*She was surrounded by silence and darkness again. She couldn’t hear a thing, she couldn’t see anything. The absence of noise was deafening, oppressing. The absence of light was scaring, threatening.*

*The hair at the back of her neck rose suddenly.*

*She could feel his gaze on her.*

*Heavy. Intense. Calculating.*

*She could feel his eyes traveling the curves of her body.*

*Staring. Observing. Scanning.*

*Then his voice.*
“You don’t have to be afraid, Felicity. I am not going to hurt you.”

It was his voice, her brain recognised it. But it wasn’t his voice. The voice she had grown used to, fond of. It was like he was a whole different person.

At his words, fear crashed in her body, weighing on her lungs, altering her breathing. Blood rushed to her ears, hammering against her temple. Her heartbeat sped up as a mix of sharp terror and pure horror kicked in her veins. Soon, her heart was pounding so hard against her ribs she feared for a second that it’d dig its way out of her chest.

She tried to sit down but gasped when she realised both her hands and ankles had been tied to the bed she was currently lying on.

She felt a hand brushed her forehead and she trashed, trying to get away from his cold skin, a single touch enough to make her feel sick, to make her stomach twist and swirl.

“Baby, baby shhh! Everything is going to be alright,” he said, his voice soft meant to be soothing but disgusting her instead. “I just want to give you my mark,” he added.

Beads of sweat rolled down her forehead to her neck as bile rose up in her throat. She started struggling against her bindings again, with renewed vigour. She wanted to scream, to call for help, to cry out, to beg him to let her go but she couldn’t. The bastard had gagged her.

He turned on the light. It was so bright and she had been in the darkness for so long, it blinded her and she clenched her eyes shut.

The pain and the cut came quickly after that.

And she screamed through the gag.

Felicity woke up from her nightmare with a scream. She kicked her sheets and comforter away from her, feeling like they were trying to strangle her. Turning around, she fell from her bed, scared of the mattress, a reminder of that night, and that bed he had tied her to. Crawling away, she only stopped when her back hit the wall of her apartment. The sharp coolness of the painting made her gasp and she opened her eyes, taking her environment in, as it was enlightened by the small lamp she never turned off on her bedside table.

She wasn’t back in that room again. She was safe, in her apartment, in Star City. It wasn’t the same metallic bed she had lied on for twelve hours, it was her wooden bed, the one that had been in the apartment before she even moved in. The room was not dark, it wasn’t silent. There was light, and she could hear the noise of the street from where she sat, the sound of cars driving piercing through the quietness of the night.

She was safe, no one was going to hurt her.

She repeated the words like a mantra, curling up around herself, holding her knees to her chest. Her fingers dug into her skin almost to the point of pain but she revelled in the pain. It was anchoring her in the reality, tearing her away from her nightmare.
Her legs were shaking, her hands trembling. Her hair was damp with sweat, her heartbeat an uneven mess.

But she was safe, no one was going to hurt her.

Getting up on her wobbly legs, she headed towards her bed, with the firm intention to go back to sleep but the mere idea of lying down again was enough to make her feel sick again. She sighed, clenching her eyes shut. She hadn’t had a nightmare that strong in a really long time. She wiped the tears which were threatening to fall from her eyes and decided to go for a shower. She reached for her phone first though and groaned when she saw it was barely three in the morning. It was going to be a really long day.

Sighing, she went to the bathroom and got under the hot spray. She let the scorching water hit her skin for a very long time, letting it clean her and wash her nightmare away. When she got out, her skin was an angry red, and she almost felt sick as the heat got to her head, making the world spin around her. Wrapping herself in a fluffy towel, she got out of the bathroom in a hurry. Goose bumps broke on her skin when she was hit by the cool air of her apartment. Hurrying upstairs, she quickly got dressed, putting on the clothes she had picked for the day before going to sleep.

She made her bed quickly, not tucking the sheets properly. When she was done, she went downstairs again and settled down on her couch. She was exhausted, as she always was after such an intense nightmare but she wasn’t feeling sleepy and she still had a long time to go before work. She considered watching a movie on her computer but she was still dealing with the aftermath of her nightmare, meaning that getting her fingers anywhere near a keyboard was not an option. She turned to her bookshelf then and picked one without looking. It was *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, a book her bubbe used to read to her every night when she was a child. Smiling, Felicity opened it and started reading, out loud, filling the silence with her voice, keeping her demons at bay with the story of Charlie and Willy Wonka.

When her alarm broke off, she jumped in surprise and dropped the book, which fell at her feet. Picking it up, she put it back on her bookshelf and went to do her make-up, her headphones on. She was forcing herself to move to the rhythm of the music and humming the lyrics of the songs. It was a technique she had developed with her therapist. If she forced herself to think positive and be positive, the claws of her nightmare would loosen up from where they were still wrapped up tightly around her mind and heart. Felicity desperately wanted them to, she needed it for her own sanity, hence the dancing and singing although she was tired.

Cracking her neck, she sighed when she saw her reflection in the mirror. There were ugly purple bags under her eyes and she’d have to use a massive dose of concealer to hide them. Tying her hair in a high ponytail, she gave herself a nod, satisfied with her appearance. Wrapping her foulard around her neck, she put her coat on and grabbed her purse, leaving her apartment for the day. She drove to Sara’s coffee shop, which thankfully opened very early in the morning. She opened the door and smiled slightly as the scent of the place hit her, engulfing her in a warm and safe cocoon of familiarity.

“Well, someone look like they had a wild night last night,” Sara greeted her, a bright smile on her lips.

Felicity clenched her fist around the handle of her bag. It was one way to put things, yes. “You have no idea,” she replied, focusing on the menu she already knew by heart to prevent her thoughts from going back to her nightmare. The night was over, the sun was rising, another day was starting and she was safe.

“Wanna talk about it?” Sara offered. “Around a drink maybe?” She added, a small smile on her lips.
Felicity blinked, blushing as she thought she had misheard her.

“I am not asking you out,” Sara clarified then. “I’m not saying I don’t want to though, because you’re a very fine piece of woman but… You’re not into women, at least I don’t think so.”

Felicity chuckled letting out some of her nervousness. “Yeah, right.”

“But you’ve been here for more than a month now, and you don’t go out much. I just thought it’d be nice to go out, have you meet new people!”

Felicity smiled. Sara’s idea was a good one, she really needed to meet people older than three years old and not her boss’ family or acquaintances. “I’d love to go out with you,” she accepted.

“Great!” Sara smiled. “What about tonight?”

Felicity winced. “We’re going to have to take a rain check on that, I’m leaving for the weekend with Oliver tomorrow and I need to pack my things.” It took her two minutes to realise how her sentence sounded. “I mean, I am not leaving with him as in we’re going for a romantic escapade or something… We’re leaving for work. It’s business. Strictly platonic and professional business.”

Sara chuckled. “You’re so cute. I guess we’ll go out when you come back. When do you come back?”

“On Monday morning.”

“I’ll see you on Monday then,” Sara said, handing her her coffee and the slice of chocolate cake she had ordered.

Felicity nodded before leaving. The party at the Queen mansion two weeks ago had been a huge success. Oliver had really charmed Martin Walker, a potential investor for Q. Inc. That was why Walker had invited him to attend a few conferences in Coast City, where he lived. Because she was his EA, Felicity was going to tag along and accompany him. Although even if Oliver hadn’t wanted her to come with him, she’d have anyway because Walked had invited her specifically as well. They had had a nice talk at the party and she had apparently made quite an impression on him.

Aside from that, they had been really busy during the past two weeks. They had met Curtis Holt, the battery guy Felicity had really liked. He had been as brilliant in real life as he had seemed to be on paper, and it turned out he had more ideas in that genius mind of his than just the battery one. He had quit Palmer Technologies to follow his husband, who had gotten job in a very famous private clinic in Star City. Oliver being Oliver, he had told him he was really happy he had had to quit his job and apply at Q. Inc. He had hired him, of course, and Curtis had started working on his project, in a private lab because Oliver wanted to keep his activities secret from his parents. This was his company after all and as he had told Felicity, the more he ran it, the more he felt like it was his to do as he was pleased with and not only a mean to prove his parents he was worthy of his legacy. Felicity, who hadn’t heard from his mother ever since the party, had been relieved when he had told her that. She really didn’t want to have to deal with the Queen’s matriarch. She’d do it if she had to, but she really didn’t want to.

When she arrived at Q. Inc, Oliver wasn’t in his office yet. Checking her watch, she realised she was early. Groaning, she sat down behind her desk and started her computer. Then, she heard the bathroom door open and close. Getting up, she made her way to the bathroom and she saw a tall and skinny beautiful brunette walk out of it, wearing heels that made her legs seem to go on and on. Her hair was long and curly, falling perfectly down her shoulders. Her eyes fell on Felicity from behind her sunglasses. Taking them off, she arched a contemptuous eyebrow at Felicity.
“You must be the executive assistant,” she said, her tone cold, snobbish.

“You must be the Russian fiancée,” she replied, just as coldly, recognising Isabel Rochev from the pictures she had seen in Oliver’s office.

A flash of something crossed Isabel’s eyes. “I am his soulmate,” she corrected.

“Oliver didn’t say you were back from Russia or that you’d be here this morning,” Felicity explained, frowning in confusion.

“It was a last minute decision,” Isabel said, her tone colder than before, so much that Felicity had to shake back a shiver. “I travelled during the night.” Felicity’s eyes were caught by the beautiful engagement ring at her finger and the diamond on top of it. A ray of light got caught in it and was being reflected in Felicity’s eyes, blinding her. She winced, looking away. Isabel smirked proudly.

“I hope you had a good trip,” she said, unsettled by the woman’s attitude.

Felicity held out her hand for her to shake but instead of holding her hand out as well, Isabel Rochev put her thermos bottle in it.

“It was excellent thank you. Now, why don’t you go do your job and fill this?” She asked. “And while we’re at it, you might want to stay near the coffee maker for a while. I haven’t seen my fiancé in a very long time, our reunion will probably be,” she hesitated, looking for the right word, “noisy.” She chuckled, but it lacked any warmth. “But I guess I don’t have to explain that to you, you know what it is to have a soulmate.” She paused. “Or maybe you don’t.”

Felicity took a step back, feeling like she had just been slapped. She opened her mouth to say something, anything, but found herself being too astonished to form a coherent sentence.

“Off you go,” Isabel said then, dismissing her with a wave of her.

Felicity turned around and left her mind on autopilot. It was only when the elevator doors open again and she stepped in the lab’s floor – they had the best coffee mark – that what just happened her.

“Cold bitch,” she yelled throwing Isabel’s thermos on a table angrily.

She closed her eyes, trying to chase the undesired images of Isabel Rochev and Oliver Queen doing wicked things to one another from her mind. It was her workplace for God’s sake! Surely, they could wait until they were back home before jumping each other. A pang of something she didn’t recognize tugged at her heart. Gasping, she brought a hand to her chest as she attempted to catch her breath. She didn’t know why but the mere idea of them being together, of doing things together made both her blood boil and feel sick. She felt both hurt and humiliated and she knew it made her look all flushed. Damn it! Why were all the women in his life acting bitchy around her? And how come someone like Oliver was bonded to someone like Isabel? How was it possible? Oliver was warm and kind and she was just a cold and mean bitch. Baring her teeth to keep from yelling, she hit the button of the coffee maker, instead of gently pressing it. The device roared to life and she got some coffee ready, her hands shaking slightly at the thought of what could be happening a floor above her head.

“You look like someone who’s having a bad day.”

Felicity look up and saw Curtis standing in the doorway.

“I am having a bad day,” she replied, reaching for the thermos and filling it with coffee.
“Come on, it has barely started,” Curtis argued.

“It has not, trust me,” she assured him walking toward the elevator. But then she stopped. She couldn’t go back upstairs, not after what Isabel had said. What if she walked in on them? Her fingers clenching around the thermos, she turned around, meetings Curtis’ concerned eyes.

“You okay?”

“I am gonna throw up,” she said, making her way toward the bathroom.

She locked the door behind her and headed straight for the sink. She opened the tap and splashed water on her face, hoping to cool down her heated cheeks and not caring if it ruined her make up. She didn’t know why she was reacting so badly to Isabel’s behaviour. Even Moira at the party had been meaner to her, more threatening than Isabel. And yet, there was something, something more repulsing, disgusting coming from the Russian woman. Felicity couldn’t explain what it was, but it was getting to her, big time. She felt personally offended by her presence, as if the woman didn’t belong here. It was stupid because it was *her* fiancée’s company. If anything, Felicity *was* the intruder.

She remained in the bathroom for half an hour. When she had calmed down, mostly, she got out and headed back to her floor, praying really hard to not walk on anything she wouldn’t be able to unsee. When she stared at Oliver’s office, she found him working on his computer.

“Felicity, there you are!” He said happily, smiling at her. “I was wondering where you were. Did you get stuck in traffic?”

She shook her head, confused. What was he talking about? “No, I’ve been here for at least forty-five minutes.”

He tilted his head. “Why were you hiding downstairs?”

She stared at him, blinking. His suit was perfectly in place, there was no wrinkles or creases. His hair was perfectly done, as it always was, his eyes clear blue, his cheeks not flushed, his skin not looking particularly heated.

“Felicity, this is me noticing you staring.”

“I ran into Isabel and she asked to go get her coffee,” she waved at the thermos in her hand. “And then she said, well she rather implied that you and she were going to, that you…” Her words died on her lips and Oliver frowned.

“That we were?”

“That… You hadn’t seen each other in a while and you were going to do funny business in the office,” she blurted out really quickly.

“Excuse me, was that supposed to be a sentence?”

“Sex Oliver!” She snapped, suddenly, dropping the thermos on his desk. “She said the two of you were going to have sex! And honestly, I don’t care, you love her, she loves you, it’s beautiful, congratulations on the bonding guys, but I really think that we need to establish rules. No sex in the office. This is my workplace as well and I don’t want to have to fear walking in on my naked boss.”

Oliver blinked several times, repeatedly processing her words vomit. “I don’t have sex with Isabel,” he confessed. “Here,” he added quickly when Felicity gave him a look. “I don’t have sex with
Isabel, here. No, no, no, big NO! No funny business here, just business.”

She stared at him suspiciously. “You promise?”

He gave her a smile. “As long as you do the same,” he said.

She blushed furiously. “What? Oh no worry on that front, I don’t do funny business. Nope! Thanks, but no thanks!”

Oliver chuckled.

“I think that’s too much information Felicity,” Dig informed her.

She jumped in surprise, startled. “You’re here too?”

He nodded. “And I promise that I won’t do funny business here either,” he teased her, winking at Oliver when Felicity’s cheeks became a scarlet red.

“So you met Isabel?” Oliver asked, moving on.

She nodded but didn’t say anything about her bitchy behaviour. She’d handle it herself, the same way she had planned to handle his mother.

“Yes, why was she here? You didn’t tell me she was coming back from Russia.”

“It wasn’t planned,” Oliver confessed. “You know we’re going to meet with Martin Walker this weekend?”

Felicity nodded. How could she have forgotten about that?

“Well, he is very much into soulmates and when I was younger I wasn’t. My parents thought it would be a good idea if I took my soulmate with me for this trip. It’d help me prove me how much I’ve changed.”

That made sense and it would also prove Martin that he and Oliver had more in common than what he thought. “Yours parents suggested it?” She asked. “You said you wanted to keep them away from Q. Inc’s business.”

“I do! But I couldn’t really hide from them I was going to be out of the city for the weekend now, could I?”

“You might have a point here,” she conceded. “So, Isabel’s going to come with us?”

Oliver nodded. “Is that okay?”

She shrugged. “Sure.”

His blue eyes searched for hers but she looked away, walking out of his office as she spoke. “We should go over the weekend’s program.”

And they did go over it. Their plane, QC’s jet, was leaving Star City’s airport at seven and a half am the next morning and they’d arrive at Coast City before eleven. A driver would take them to their hotel, where they’d leave their things and change. They were invited for lunch by Martin Walker in a famous restaurant of the city on Saturday and after that they’d go with him to the main conference of the weekend, which would take place at the university. It was going to be about global warming and renewable resources. Then, there would be a cocktail party and after that they’d have dinner at
Walker’s place, with his family. On Sunday afternoon, they’d attend a conference about new
technologies and Martin would make another speech then. They’d be free after that but they weren’t
going to go back to Star City before the next morning, Oliver had said he wanted to enjoy his time in
Coast City, he hadn’t left Star City in a very long while.

When Felicity came back home that day, she collapsed on her couch, exhausting from her sleepless
night and her long day at work hit her, hard. Closing her eyes for a second, she willed herself to get
up and do what she had to do. She packed her things for the weekend and reheated leftovers for her
dinner. She got a text from Iris as she was eating and debating whether or not to take the cute yellow
dress she had recently bought.

--

“7:58 pm

JJ wants you to bring him a souvenir from Coast City.

IW-A”

--

Felicity smiled at that.

“8:00 pm

What does he want?

FS”

--

“8:05

A postcard will do. He is making a collection of them.

IW-A”

--

“8:07

Got it!

FS”

--

Getting up from her couch, Felicity went to bed, collapsing between her sheets. She turned the lamp
on her bedside table on and lied on her back, staring at the ceiling. She was exhausted, she could feel
the tiredness pull at her muscles, she almost felt sore, as she always felt after a violent nightmare
followed by no time to rest and recover. Her mind felt tired too. She had tried to stay positive all day
long, but knowing that she was going to spend two entire days with Oliver and his lovely soulmate
was killing her. She didn’t know what she’d do if Isabel pulled a stunt like she had in the morning.
She was nervous and anxious and her nightmare from the night before wasn’t helping her feeling any
better. It was still pressing at the edge of her mind, threatening to take her back again and drown her
in the dark depths of her memory. Sighing, she turned on her side and closed her eyes, focusing on
her breathing, letting happy memories fill her. Her hands automatically came to her invisible soulmark, stroking the smooth skin there lightly. She felt her caged bond press and tug at her heart to the point of pain. She bit on her lips. She’d rather face the void in her soul than the demons in her head.

When she woke up, she was feeling numb, her head was spinning. She blinked several times, hoping that the darkness would disappear.

Where was she? How long had she been there? Why was it so dark? Why wasn’t there any sounds? Why had he taken her?

Her cheeks burnt, where her tears had rolled down and dried on her skin. She could feel the cold metal of the bed she was still tied to press against her naked spine. The bastard had taken off her shirt, but not her bra or her jeans.

She tried to move and cried out in pain. She could feel how sore her wrists and ankles were, she could feel the torn flesh and dried blood she had drawn out by dint of struggling against the metallic handcuffs he had used to tie her up. She couldn’t see but she knew the skin there was bruised, raw. She felt a throb coming from her ribs.

And in a second everything came back to her.

The pain. The blood. His knife.

His mad words as he had carved his mark on her body.

“I know it hurts, but it won’t last.”

“Soon you’ll be mine.”

“We are meant for one another.”

“I’m just giving you my mark.”

“We’ll bear it for eternity.”

Felicity woke up from her nightmare with a gasp, all her senses on alert. She looked around her, her heart beating wildly in her chest.

Safe, she was safe.

Heat was coming from her scar on her ribs, she could feel it pulse as her chest went up and down in synch with her erratic breathing. She swallowed back a sob but couldn’t do anything to prevent the tears from falling for her eyes. Stream of salty water went down her cheeks, burning her skin. All her limbs were shaking as his voice echoed in her head.
“Soon, you’ll be mine.”

She clenched her fists, digging her nails in the skin of her hands, knowing she was going to leave crescent shaped marks there.

“I just want to give you my mark.”

Getting up from her bed, she made her way downstairs on wobbly legs. She felt like she couldn’t breathe, like she was suffocating.

He wouldn’t shut up. His freaking voice wouldn’t leave her in peace!

Yanking the window open, she took a gulp of fresh air, letting the evening cool breeze bite her skin.

She closed her eyes and stood like that for a while, waiting until the panic that was filling her veins receded completely. She closed the window then, lying her forehead on the cool glass, settling her breathing down even more.

Safe, she was safe.

Staring at the clock, she groaned when she saw it was a bit more than four in the morning.

Feeling exhausted but knowing that she wouldn’t be able to go back to sleep, Felicity decided to get ready for the day. She went in the shower and pressed her forehead against the wall as she let the steaming water undo the knots in her body. She could have fallen asleep, hadn’t she been too scared to close her eyes. She hadn’t had two nightmares in a row in a very long time. She didn’t know what caused them but she could guess. It was probably because she was feeling stressed. Her life had changed a lot in the course of the last few weeks. Maybe this was payback for everything she had put herself through. She thought about giving a call to Doctor Hamilton. She was the therapist she had seen for a few months and she was the person who had helped her deal with the trauma and her PTSD. They were still in contact, in spite of Felicity moving on the other side of the country. Doctor Hamilton had really helped her deal with everything that had happened to her, she had pulled her out of the hole she had been after she had left the hospital. Felicity was better, thanks to her.

Unfortunately, there were just some things that even a doctor as good as Doctor Hamilton couldn’t heal. There were some things she couldn’t help Felicity with. Because there were some parts of her mind and soul that couldn’t be fixed by a therapy. They needed a special kind of healing, a soulmate’s touch. A touch that Felicity was never going to get so what was the point of calling Doctor Hamilton? She’d tell her to stop taking the Med and it was not something Felicity was willing to consider. She’d get herself out of this mess alone, she didn’t need anyone else’s help, especially not the help of a guy who had never cared about her.

Felicity took a cab to go to the airport and arrived half an hour earlier. She met Oliver, Isabel and Dig at the rendezvous point they had picked. The two men greeted her warmly whereas Isabel shook her hand so tightly, Felicity was pretty sure she was actually trying to break her bones.

“Are you okay?” Oliver asked as they were walking toward the plane. “You look tired,” he added.

She gave him a small smile. “I am fine,” she lied.

He frowned and she could see he didn’t believe her. But he didn’t push and she was grateful for it. Oliver had a way of watching her, his blue eyes had a way of solely focusing on her that made it really hard for her to lie to him.

They got in the plane, Oliver and Isabel sitting down next to each other naturally, hands in hands. Felicity sat next to Diggle, in front of them, a headache caused by the lack of sleep starting to make
her head throb.

“You okay?” Dig asked.

She nodded, but her mind wasn’t there.

“You don’t have to be afraid, Felicity. I am not going to hurt you.”

She clenched her fists.

“I am fine.”

He nodded and they spent the rest of the flight talking about his soulmate, Lyla, and their one year old son, John Diggle Junior. Diggle and Lyla had met in the army and bonded immediately. They had come back from war together but without John’s brother Andy, who had died in Afghanistan, and had helped each other dealing with the damages violence and blood had inflicted them. If Doctor Hamilton had heard that, she would have been proud of them. Now four years later, Lyla was working for a federal agency and Diggle was Oliver’s bodyguard. He had been hired to protect him right after Oliver had gotten out of the hospital, after his car accident. They had grown very close to the point where Diggle had asked Oliver to be the godfather of his son, John Junior.

“Everyone calls the little guy Jay though,” Dig added, showing her picture of a cute little boy with messy hair and a bright toothless smile.

“Just like everyone calls you Dig.”

He nodded. “Exactly.”

She held him his phone back and his eyes caught the bracelet she was wearing. It was an arrow, a little reminded of her gone soulmark.

“It’s beautiful,” he said. “But why an arrow?” He asked and she tensed up. Oliver, who had been busy showing things on his tablet at Isabel looked up from the screen and stared at her.

She shrugged. “I just like arrows,” she replied before adding her bracelet under her flannel shirt again.

Oliver got back to his tablet after that, his expression unreadable. Diggle and Felicity talked some more, until the plane landed. Then, Diggle went to help their taxi driver put their luggage in the car’s trunk. Felicity tried to protest, to argue she could carry her own stuff alone, but internally, she was relieved. She felt really tired, her headache was getting worse as time passed and Diggle’s muscles looked way more capable than hers to lift heavy weights. Not that Felicity travelled heavily, unlike some other cold bitch she wouldn’t name…

They made it to the hotel where they had around an hour to get ready before they lunch with Martin Walker. When they arrived at the hotel, Felicity’s jaw nearly dropped. Never in her life had she stayed in a five-stars hotel before. Everything was just so luxurious, the doorman, the bell-boys, everyone was waiting on hand and foot around them and it was just too much for Felicity. She quickly realised it was what travelling with Oliver Queen meant and if she was going to keep working with him, she’d have to get used to it. Quickly.

Her bedroom was immense, ten Felicitys could easily fit in the room. The couch looked perfectly comfortable, the bed downright amazing. Even the carpets looked fluffy enough to sleep on them without waking up with backaches. Sighing, she got the dress she had picked for the occasion out of her travel bag and went to the bathroom, which could probably welcome five more Felicitys, and got
ready. She undid her make-up completely and did it again, trying her best to hide the marks left by her two sleepless nights. She took an aspirin for her headache and rubbed her temples with the tips of her fingers lightly, trying to loosen the pressure currently exerted in her skull.

Satisfied with her appearance, she got out of her room and met Oliver and Diggle in the hotel’s lobby.

“Where’s Isabel?” She asked, holding her trench above her arm.

“Still getting ready,” Oliver explained, staring at her intensely.

She shifted, suddenly feeling ill-at-ease. “What?” She asked, her tone more defensive than it usually was.

“Your dress is… pink,” he told her. “It’s very pink.”

She frowned. “What’s wrong with pink?” She looked down to her dress. “Oh my god, do I look like a marshmallow? That’s it! I look like a freaking marshmallow. You can say it, go on, I can take it. Damn, I knew I should have picked the yellow dress,” she complained, biting down on her lower lip.

“Felicity,” Oliver said, one of his hands landing on her shoulder to calm her down. “You’re the only person I know who can pull out a dress that pink with so much panache and elegance.” Smiling, he added. “And you do look like a marshmallow. But it is a very nice and very edible marshmallow.”

She froze and he paused, his mind catching up with what he had just said. “I didn’t mean it that way. Damn, what are you doing to me? Three weeks ago I’d have never said anything like that.”

She chuckled, remembering all too well the countless times she had made sexual innuendos in front of him. One of the most memorable ones was the time they had been debating what to have for lunch and Oliver had refused categorically to order “greasy and unhealthy food” arguing that he was “very particular” with what it was he put in his body, to what she had replied “I noticed. I said not noticed right?” Because, she had totally noticed. Oliver was a very good-looking man, wearing button-up shirts that did really nice things to his abs, tailor pants that did even nicer things to his tight butt, and ties that always brought out his very blue eyes. She knew she was his employee but she was a young woman, first and foremost. Women could not be exposed to so much perfection and just not noticed.

A throat being cleared behind them was what took Oliver’s hand away from her shoulder. She held back a shiver, immediately missing his warmth. They turned around and saw Isabel staring at them, a strange look in her eyes, her arms crossed over her chest. Oliver walked to her and kissed on her cheek before offering her his arms and leading her to the car Martin Walker had sent them.

Felicity had never stayed in a five-stars hotel. She had never eaten in a five-stars restaurant either. Today was obviously a day of firsts for her. That day, they were having lunch with Walker, his wife and a few of his associates, meaning the meal was spent talking business. Felicity listened more than she talked. Tiredness was taking its toll on her and she was trying to save her strength for later. She’d have to be fully functional during the conference that afternoon, given that she’d have to take down notes. She felt like a hammer was using her brain as its personal anvil, but yet she did her best to listen to what was being said. She could feel Isabel’s eyes on her and she didn’t want to give the woman any more reasons to hate her. It wasn’t that hard to focus on Walker’s words though. He was a man in his mid-forties, who had been married to his soulmate for almost twenty years. Father of three, he felt truly concerned with the world’s situation and where it was going. He was a very selfless man, full of ideals and principles, two things Felicity appreciated and valued immensely.

They left for the conference around one and a half pm. Martin drove with them, explaining that he had help organised the conference as he partly worked at Coast City’s university. His relations and
connections with the business world had helped him get important people to come, just like his relations and connections with the science world had helped him.

The auditorium was already very much crowded when they arrived and unfortunately, Martin had to leave them, as he was supposed to make the first speech of the day. Isabel, Oliver and Felicity sat down and the blonde got her tablet out of her purse, ready to take down notes.

“How are you going to take notes on something that small?” Oliver whispered in her ear.

“Watch and learn Mr Queen,” she replied as they shut down the lights in the room. She tensed up immediately as they were plunged into darkness. Oliver who was sitting right next to her felt it immediately.

“What’s wrong? Scared of the dark?” He teased her.

She gulped.

“I am just giving you my mark.”

“We’ll bear it for eternity.”

“Something like that,” she replied, doing her best to shut her memories down.

His whole demeanour changed at her words as she felt him grow more concerned. “Are you gonna be okay?” He asked her.

She nodded, letting out a small breath when a screen was turned on, enlightening the room. Walker walked on stage, a single spotlight focused on him. He made a vibrant and powerful speech about the importance of realising that changings needed to happen now and not in a year or two. Now. Then he let scientists and specialists go on stage, as well as businessmen. They talk about global warming and renewable sources, Tamara Anderson even came on to talk about wind energy and her new windmills.

“She’ll be at Walker’s tonight, for dinner,” Oliver whispered in Felicity’s ears.

“Get your flirty game up,” she told him.

“You do realise that my soulmate is sitting next to me, right?”

Felicity contorted herself to take a peek at Isabel. She was lost on whatever it was she was reading on her phone.

“She looks busy,” she said, shrugging.

There was a questions/answers session after the presentation. Oliver had a few of his own, Felicity had written them down as he had whispered them to her during the presentation and she had added two of her own. The debate was animated and serious, minds and opinions clashing. When the conference was over, it was time to move to the small cocktail party. And Oliver and Felicity went on a mission, talking to all the people, scientists, engineers and businessmen who shared Oliver’s vision and opinions. It was the whole point of his journey after all: securing things with Walker, meeting new people, and building contacts. Just like at the party at the Queen mansion, Oliver didn’t let Felicity drink alcohol. She didn’t protest, though she could have. Her headache was still very much present, making it hard for her to focus on what was being said. She wasn’t going to let anything else affect her senses.
She stood by Oliver’s side for two hours, without ever complaining or wincing, in spite of her heels killing her feet, exhaustion pulling at her muscles and her head throbbing painfully. She kept smiling and answering in the best way possible to the questions she was being asked, the conversation keeping her mind away from her nightmares from the previous nights. Isabel, who stood close to Oliver, with one of his arms wrapped tightly around her chest, watched her carefully during the evening and she hated every second of it, without ever making the mistake of showing it to her. She felt scrutinised, spied on but she ignored her the best she could.

At some point, she went to the bathroom. She was about to exit it when the door was pulled open and Isabel Rochev walked in, as if she owned the place.

She made a small sound of disdain when she saw Felicity before walking toward a mirror, pulling out a make-up bag out of her purse.

“Felicity Meghan Smoak,” she said, applying a mascara to her already perfectly painted eyelashes. Gritting her feet, she turned around. “Yes Miss Rochev?”

“I can see what you’re doing, Miss Smoak, I am not blind.”

Felicity arched an eyebrow. “And what am I doing exactly?”

Isabel put her mascara back in her clutch and took out lipstick instead. “You’re doing your best to impress my fiancé and all the people out there. You’re trying so hard to be looked at and appreciated, it’s almost pathetic.”

Felicity rolled her eyes. “I am just trying to do my job. I am trying to help Oliver and maybe you’d do that as well if you weren’t so wrapped up around yourself.”

Isabel put her lipstick back in her purse and turned around to face Felicity, her lips now a bloody red. “One day, Oliver will realise what a big mistake you were. I wouldn’t get too comfortable around here Miss Smoak, you’re not meant to stay.”

She left Felicity before the blonde could add anything else. Leaning down against the door, she closed her eyes, revelling in the mostly silent bathroom. She did her best not to give any importance to Isabel’s words. Just like Moira, for some reasons she didn’t know about, she seemed to hate her and to be desperate to never see her again. But in the meantime, she felt so tired and so emotional, she couldn’t help but feel hurt. What had she done to deserve to be treated like that? She had thought that she fit in Star City, that she belonged there. The feeling of familiarity which came along with the city had comforted her, made her feel that way even more. But what if she had been wrong? What if it had been all a lie? What if she didn’t fit? She had started to have nightmares again after all. Maybe it wasn’t just because she had been pushing herself lately. Maybe it was because she was losing her way by staying somewhere it was obvious she was not wanted.

Her phone buzzing got her out of her thoughts.

--

“6:56 pm

We’re leaving, where are you?

OQ”

--
She took a deep breath to settle her emotions down before walking out of the bathroom a brave mask plastered on her face. She was Felicity Meghan Smoak and she’d resist to Isabel Rochev the same way she had resisted to Mandy Miller in high-school: by being strong.

They went back to their hotel to freshen up and change again before having dinner at Martin Walker’s house. Felicity took a shower and traded her bright pink dress for a black one, much simpler. She let her hair down and free and walked out of her, meeting with Diggle in the lobby.

“Oliver and Isabel aren’t here yet?” She asked.

He shook his head. “You okay Felicity?” He asked, looking concerned. “You look exhausted.”

She shrugged the question off because she had seen Oliver and Isabel walk out of the elevator. She was wearing a red sexy dress, with a split on the side that exposed inches of smooth skin and her perfectly shaped thigh, something that Felicity would most definitely never have.

The drive to Walker’s house was spent in silence. Felicity stared at the city through the window and neither Oliver nor Isabel made an attempt at saying anything. The atmosphere was heavy, the tension so thick Felicity could have cut it with a knife. She didn’t know why though and was too tired to care. All she wanted to do was crawl up in bed and forget everything about the last few hours.

Walker and his family were leaving in a gorgeous beach house, with a pool almost as beautiful as the Queen’s. His house was big and entirely environmentally friendly, something he took great pleasure explaining to his guests.

When they sat down for dinner, Felicity found herself between Oliver and Walker’s oldest daughter. She was fifteen and despite being used to business dinners and the presence of guests in her home, she was reserved and quiet. The conversation started with the conference of the day, people going back to what had been said during the questions/answers session. Then it moved towards the conference from the following day and they all talked about their expectations. It was really interesting, Felicity wasn’t doubting it but she just wasn’t there. She was feeling so tired, and her headache wasn’t going away. She just wanted to go to sleep but she had to hold on, just a little bit longer. And Oliver’s presence right next to her didn’t help.

She knew he knew something was off with her. He had noticed it in the morning when they had met at the airport. He hadn’t pushed her to talk but she knew he’d seen something was wrong. And she also knew he worried about her. She had felt his eyes on her more often than not throughout the day, watching her, checking on her. It was really nice of him but she didn’t need that. She didn’t need him to worry about her or to wonder if she was okay. She didn’t need him to offer to comfort her or anything. She could take care of herself alone.

While they were eating desert, someone asked about Walker and his wife and the story of how they’d met.

“We almost didn’t meet because her father was a member of an anti-soulmate’s group,” Walker explained. “That’s why I am fundamentally against the Med. It’s a heresy.” He turned toward Oliver. “What about you Mr Queen, I heard that you used to be a part of an anti-soulmate group as well, along with some of your friends.”

Oliver nodded. “That’s correct. But I never took the Med though, I never wanted to be cut off from my soulmate, and I never will,” he added, reaching for Isabel’s hand. He held it tightly but his blue eyes lacked any real warmth and his tone sounded fake to Felicity’s ears.

“What about you Tamara, what do you think?” Walker asked.
“I think I don’t have time for a soulmate,” she explained. “I am too busy with my company.”

“Fair enough,” Walker said. “I won’t lie to you and say that I am not a fervent supporter of Mr Rollins’ law concerning the distribution of the Med.”

Felicity tilted her head. As someone who took the Med on a daily basis, she kept herself connected to the news related to it. Mr Rollins was a powerful and influential man who had started a campaign asking for the Med to only be given to those who had gotten a prescription from a doctor. Basically, it meant that only people like Felicity’s mother, people close to losing their sanity, were going to be allowed to take the Med. When Mr Rollins had started his campaign, Felicity hadn’t been worried but now she was. He was becoming more and more influential every day and had strong people supporting him.

“So you’d vote to take away people’s right to choose?” She asked, her tone casual.

Everyone turned toward her, eyebrows arched in surprise. She hadn’t spoken a lot during the meal.

Walker tilted his head. “There is no choice to make Miss Smoak. Your soulmate is who you’re destined to be with.”

“Well, some people want to have the choice and the Med can give them that. The choice. It’d be unfair to take it away from them, don’t you think? Because, you know, sometimes it’s not about wanting to be with your soulmate but about being able to be with them,” she explained, her cheeks reddening as people kept staring at her, one pair of blue eyes more intense on her than others.

“Felicity, may I ask you how old you are?” Walked said.

“I turned twenty a few months ago,” she replied softly.

He smiled. “You’re just too young my dear, but when you live as long as I have with your soulmate then you’ll realise there’s nothing soulmates can’t overcome.”

Felicity though about her mother, who had been abandoned by her father but held back her snarky comment. The night wasn’t about soulmates, it was about business.

It was almost midnight when they got back to the hotel. Felicity’s mind was solely focused on her bed and sleeping for nine uninterrupted hours. She got ready for bed but when she lied in between the soft sheets, she found herself unable to close her eyes. She tossed, she turned trying to find a comfortable position but nothing was doing the trick. The monster wasn’t in her bed, it was in her head. She couldn’t sleep because she was too scared. Scared of having another nightmare, scared of having to go through the pain again. She couldn’t close her eyes, afraid that the darkness would swallow her and keep her.

She hadn’t really slept when her alarm went off. She had put her headphones in her ears and had listened to music, her mind zoning out from time to time but never really resting, never getting its strength back. She was weakened, both physically and mentally exhausted. She could feel her bad thought, her dark memories, pressing at the doors of her conscience.

“I know it hurts but it won’t last.”

“Soon you’ll be mine.”

“Just SHUT UP!” She yelled, throwing the shoe she had been putting on across the room. It knocked a vase off a shelf. Fortunately enough, it fell on the carpet and didn’t break.
“I am just giving you my mark.”

She pulled her head between her legs, pulling at her hair tightly, tears rolling down her cheeks. It was exhaustion. Everything was caused by her exhaustion. If she could sleep just one night, if she could just rest, she’d be able to shut the voice down. She just needed to sleep.

Taking a shaky breath, she got on her feet and went to get her shoe. She put it on, the heels killing her already sore feet, pulling at the muscles of her legs, which protested by shaking. She straightened her spine. She could do this, she knew she could. She had handled her mother and her demons, she could handle her own. She could do this.

Walking out of her room, she went to meet Oliver, Diggle and, the thought made her cringe, Isabel. But when she walked in the eating room, the bitch was nowhere to be seen. The moment she entered the room, Oliver’s blue eyes travelled to hers and he smiled happily at her from behind his cup of coffee. She smiled back and made her way to them, sitting down next to Dig as she was expecting Isabel to come down at any moment.

“You okay?” Oliver asked, handing her a cup of coffee.

God, the man was a mind reader! A huge cup of strong coffee was the thing she needed most right now.

“I am fine,” she replied bringing the cup to her lips and drinking half of the black and steaming beverage in a go. She’d need a lot of caffeine in her system if she wanted to survive the day. “You?” She asked, finishing her drink and filling herself another cup.

“Yes, everything’s fine,” he told her, pushing the sugar towards her, knowing she liked her coffee with more sugar than actual coffee.

“Where’s Isabel?” She wondered, looking around to see if the cold woman was coming down.

“Something came up, she had to leave and go back to Russia,” Oliver explained. There was something in his eyes, something weird but she was too tired to identify it. She just assumed he was annoyed his soulmate had to leave so quickly.

“During the night?” She couldn’t help but ask, a “Is she insane?” very much implied.

“Yes during the night, now can we talk about something else?” He said, shifting uncomfortably in his seat. “Hey are you sure that you want to do this?” He asked as she was trying to add more coffee to her already dangerously full cup.

“Drink coffee? Yes, why?”

“It’s going to be your third cup,” he pointed out. “You might want to slow down.”

She shook her head. “I am tired.”

He tilted his head in question, worry filling her eyes. “You already were tired yesterday,” he stated.

Again, she shook her head, and said reluctantly. “No, you said that I looked tired. I told you I was fine.” She was well-aware her tone was cold, slightly aggressive and she really felt sorry for it. Oliver wasn’t responsible for her bad mood and sleepless nights, it was unfair to take her frustration out on him.

“I am sorry,” she apologised quickly. “I am just really tired. But let the monster drink as much coffee
as it wants and you should be fine,” she added, in an attempt at making him smile.

When his lips stretched slightly, she gave herself an internal nod of approval.

The day went smoothly after that. They met with the Walkers for brunch and then they all went to the last conference of the weekend. It was a shorter one but just as interesting as the one from the previous days. Oliver had a private meeting with Walker then and when he walked out of it, he was grinning so brightly and so stupidly, Felicity snapped a picture and sent it to Tommy and Thea.

They parted ways with the Walkers then, thanking them for a very interesting weekend and promising to stay in touch. Then, they enjoyed the rest of their day in Coast City. Oliver insisted on going to the beach, and so they did. Felicity took off her heels and they strolled along the coast, Diggle right next to them, exchanging stories from their past. Felicity was the quietest one, because she was feeling tired and because Oliver told stories so well, it would have been a shame to prevent him from speaking. They ate dinner in a small pizzeria, Oliver paid as he almost always did when they were eating together, something Felicity fight over with him all the time. But not today, she didn’t have it in her and he smirked at her when she didn’t bat an eyelid when he took his wallet out.

They went back to the hotel after that and Felicity bid them goodnight and thanked them for the amazing day they had had when they reached their floor. Oliver and Diggle left together, apparently they had a game of Star City’s basketball team to catch up with. Felicity took a long and hot shower before going to be, hoping that the hot water would help her relax enough to sleep.

And it did, somehow. She slept for two hours. Only to wake up after another nightmare.

Except it had been a different one. It had been less intense than the other meaning that as soon as she had recognised the darkness and silence suffocating her she had been able to yank herself out of the dream. She had never been able to do that. She had never been able to get out of a nightmare before but this time she had and it meant so much to her. It was progress. It had to be.

Taking deep breaths, she focused on the memories from the day, the beach, Dig’s smile, Oliver’s voice and felt the last remnants of panic withdraw. She needed fresh air in spite of feeling better. She needed to feel that she was free to move, that she wasn’t tied to anything. So, she reached for her short boots, and put them on, as well as a hoodie, her scarf and a beanie. Her hair was damp with sweat and the evening’s air was cool. She wasn’t going to risk to catch a cold. Her copy of Charlie safely tucked in her pockets, she made her up to the rooftop of the hotel where she knew were a pool, deckchairs and a mini-bar. She had no interest in the mini-bar and went to lie down on a deckchair, staring at the pool’s water, which was bright and enlightened by small lamps underwater with fascination.

“Felicity.”

Her heart skipped a beat. She turned on her side, curling herself up around her. No, no, no. She was wide awake, she had gotten out of the nightmare. It was over, she was okay.

“Felicity.”

No, no, no.


“Felicity?”

She yelped when someone touched her and she would have probably tumbled to the floor if the hand on her shoulder hadn’t tightened its grip to hold her still.
“I am sorry,” Oliver said. “I didn’t mean to scare you.”

Blue met blue and she took a deep breath as warmth spread in her body from where he was touching her, as his voice filled her ears and covered the one torturing her, silencing it more efficiently than the music she listened to or the sound of water hitting the shower’s floor.

“It’s nothing,” she assured him, sitting down on the deckchair. Oliver sat down in front of her, his head cocked, his blue eyes solely focused on her, in that special way of his that made her skin tingle.

“What are you doing here?” She asked casually, as if it wasn’t three in the morning and she wasn’t sitting down on the rooftop of a five stars hotel with her boss staring at her intently. She lied back down on her side, facing him. His eyes followed hers.

He shrugged. “I couldn’t sleep. You?”

She looked down toward her hands, her eyes focusing on her nails painted a bright red. “I couldn’t sleep either,” she confessed.

“But you were tired,” he objected.

She tangled her fingers together, knowing exactly what he was doing, feeling it in her bones. He was asking the questions he had been holding back ever since he had seen her at the airport the day before. The questions he had been holding back the previous day and during the day as well. The questions she hadn’t wanted to hear, filled with concern she didn’t need.

“Felicity,” he said, his low and steady voice a command for her to look up and meet his eyes. Oliver, she had realised, spoke a lot with his eyes. They conveyed different and subtle shades of emotions for those who paid attention. And Felicity paid attention. “Please, tell me what’s wrong,” he said, determination meddling with the concern and worry storming in his blue orbs.

“It’s nothing,” she said, a lump forming in her throat. “Just a nightmare,” she quickly added, turning her head away so that he wouldn’t see the tears that were flooding her eyes.

“Felicity, it doesn’t look like it’s nothing,” he told her, his tone patient but firm, one of his hands reaching out to hold hers. “Does it happen often?”

She shook her head, still avoiding his gaze. “I don’t want to talk about it,” she said hurriedly and his hand squeezed hers.

“Felicity, how often does that happen?”

She shook her head, still avoiding his gaze. “I like to say it’s like the tide. It comes and goes. Sometimes, it’s overwhelming and sometimes it’s not.”

“What is it about?” He asked softly and she froze immediately at his words, her fingers clenching around his hand, all her muscles tensing up.

“I don’t want to talk about it,” she said hurriedly and his hand squeezed hers.

“What do you want then?”

Finally, she looked up from their joined hands, his big and toned, hers, small and white and met his eyes. She saw certainty shine look back at her and she knew in that moment that no matter what’s
she asked for, he would give it to her in a heartbeat.

“I know it’s unprofessional but…” She hesitated for a split second. “Can you give me a hug?”

He gave her a small smile before getting on his feet. She started moving.

“Don’t move,” he told her.

Frowning, she obeyed nonetheless and remained on her side. He went around her deckchair and lied down on his side as well, behind her. He wrapped his arms around her, engulfing her in his warmth, his scent, hot and most definitely male surrounding her, stopping her tears. She felt him press a short kiss on the top of her head but it was so short, she thought she had imagined it.

It was remarkable how a simple contact with another human being could make things better. Felicity didn’t know how he felt, but the moment they were settled down, she felt good again, the coil in her body loosening up. She couldn’t hear his voice in her head, just his breathing in her ear. She couldn’t see the darkness anymore, just his joined hands as they met in front of her. She closed her eyes, letting his presence comfort her.

It was truly remarkable, the power of a simple hug, she thought before succumbing to the darkness.

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)


Hey guys!!!

Here's the next chapter!!! But first things first, I want to thank you for the INCREDIBLE response the last chapter got, in spite of its darkness, and the incredible response this story is getting in general. I really wasn't expecting it, so THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!! :D

About this chapter, it's another monster #SorryNotSorry. It's a really important one and might not like what happens in it, but it has to happen. Some things said here, will be repeated, so really it's important! Also, I am on vacation for now and I left my house to go to see some family, meaning that I have less time to write than I usually do. The updates might not be as regular - I'll try to keep it to twice a week though but it'll be hard, especially if I keep writing monsters (and I have a feeling I will). I'll stop rambling about my life now.

Happy reading, thank you guys and I really hope you'll like this chapter *crosses fingers*! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 6:

“*I pick my poison and it’s you*

*Nothing could kill me like you do*

*You’re going straight for my head*

*And I am heading straight for the edge.*

- Rita Ora, *Poison*

Felicity felt the caress of the sun on her face before she actually opened her eyes. Turning around, she buried herself in her pillow, enjoying her last minutes of slumber peacefully, feeling both content and sated. She went after her dream, chasing it, her heart aching at the thought of it. She wanted to catch it and hold it close to herself forever. It had been a beautiful dream, the kind of dream she hadn’t had in a while. She couldn’t remember it clearly, only sensations like the caress of the wind on her cheek, the blinding clarity of the light, warm hands exploring her body making her feel both safe and cherished. She turned on her other side, a happy smile spreading on her lips. Stretching lazily, she opened her eyes, humming contently. Today was going to be a really good day, she could feel it in her bones.

Her alarm broke off and she happily got out of bed, cheerfulness kicking in her veins. She padded towards the bathroom and started the shower, not feeling like going out for a run. Things had
changed for her ever since she had had her last series of nightmares. She had fallen asleep in Oliver’s arms, something she couldn’t quite explain and she didn’t even want to try. There was just something about him that connected to her. And that night, on the rooftop of their hotel, he had made feel safe enough and she had been able to fall asleep. The next morning, she had woken up at noon, comfortably tucked in her bed. He had brought her back and at first, she had felt very embarrassed but in the morning, he had acted like it was no big deal, simply telling her he had been happy to help. And then things had changed. She had been afraid to go to sleep the following night, fearing her demons would come back to haunt her. They hadn’t, to her biggest surprise. Now, she hadn’t a nightmare in almost two weeks and she felt immensely better. Something had shifted inside, she couldn’t pinpoint what neither why nor how but she knew it had. She felt lighter, happier.

During their little trip out of town, and because of Moira’s disdain toward her and Isabel’s obvious hostility, Felicity had felt like maybe she didn’t fit by Oliver’s side, maybe she wasn’t made to work with him. She had been proven wrong in the simplest way when they had returned. Things had indeed just gotten back into place, as if they hadn’t attended the party at the Queen mansion where his mother had insulted him, as if they had never gone on a trip with his cold fiancée. They had gone back to being Oliver and Felicity and it had been all the reassurance she had needed. He called her messy and she called him fussy at least ten times per day. They weren’t able to agree on where to eat lunch and often had to pick a place by playing rock-paper-scissors. They teased one another and bickered over silly things, like his habit of ordering her highlighters by shades or her tendency to ramble and get lost in whatever it was she was trying to tell him. He still turned to her for help whenever Curtis was updating him on his next improvement – the guy was awesome but could never completely get rid of a tech language and she still asked him a lot of questions about the business side of things. They made a good team and Felicity wouldn’t let his mother’s attitude or his soulmate’s rudeness ruined what they had.

The night on the rooftop changed many things, and one of them ended up being their friendship. They hadn’t talked about it, but what had happened that night had been huge for Felicity. She had never relied really on anyone’s for help, never trusting anyone completely to let them take care for her. But she had let Oliver hug her and hold her, she had even cried in front of him and it had been something. She hadn’t told him what had happened to her, and she never would, it was her burden to bear, but she had opened up. Slightly. And there was more to the story. They had shared an intimate moment. His arms had been wrapped up around her, his hands had been holding hers, she had been pressed to his chest when he had carried her to bed. They hadn’t talked about it but it had been intimate. Now she knew why the both of them hadn’t addressed the topic openly. It had been intimate, yes, but in the meantime, it hadn’t meant anything. He was engaged to his soulmate and they were going to get married soon. They were just friends and really, it was fine with her. Furthermore, she had a feeling they were going to become even greater friends.

It had already started actually. They always ate lunch together, with Dig either sitting with them or watching them from afar, his dark eyes unreadable. Sometimes people joined them, such as Tommy or co-workers from Q. Inc. But most of the time they were alone and filled the silence with easy talking about anything. Their favourite thing to do was playing twenty questions and each of them always tried to come up with the best question – “If your life could be a movie, which one would it be?” “Oh no, I can’t answer that, you’ll think I am a nerd.” “I already think you’re a nerd.” “Fine, I’ll tell you but when you hear my answer, remember you were the one asking in the first place.” Or “If the only thing you could ever eat was either Doritos or cheerios, which one would you pick?” “None, I’d rather die of starvation.” “You’re no fun Oliver!” “You’re the one sentencing me to either eat Doritos or cheerios for the rest of my life.” Some other times, they ordered each other’s food, Oliver asking for as much vegetables as possible and Felicity making sure that his whole meal had been fried. They had a lot of fun in the office and out of it, sometimes meeting for coffee at Sara’s before going to work, some other times texting and emailing silly things – okay the last part was
mostly Felicity’s doing but he did send her a gif of a cat hugging his master once.

She was more aware of him now, of the subtle shift in his mood his body always betrayed him. She was learning how to read him without realising she was. She was noticing things about him, such as the way his eyes always laughed whenever Tommy was around or his smile would soften, grow more affectionate when Thea was around or mentioned. She was noticing how he’d rub his fingers when he felt nervous or how his brow would furrow when he was upset. His lips were always pursed when he was focusing on paperwork, always half-stretched in a smile when he was listening to her. She was noticing how he always held the door open for her or how he always pulled her chair out whenever they weren’t eating in the office. She noticed how his eyes shone when they were talking or how his hand fell on her shoulder whenever she started rambling. She noticed a lot of things and she wondered if he did too.

Humming cheerfully, she got ready for her day. When she opened her closet, she realised she was in the mood for pink and bright and so she put on a white and pink dress which hugged her waist tightly. Tying her hair in a high ponytail, she left her apartment and went to Sara’s coffee-shop where she lingered for a while, talking with her friend. She had gotten closer to Sara ever since she had gotten back. They had yet to go out for their drink but Sara had invited Felicity to come with her to boxing class and the blonde had really like the first two lessons she had been to.

It’s with her head moving to the rhythm of the song she had been listening to in her car that she walked in Q. Inc, her ponytail swaying happily. She pressed the button of the elevator and stepped in. But she tripped on her very high-heels and probably would have fallen if two strong and warm hands hadn’t caught her, pushing on her back to keep her on her feet. She turned around, blushing.

“Careful, I really don’t want to fill the papers to report an accident at work,” Oliver said, looking down toward her feet.

“Sorry, I am trying out new shoes today,” she replied, offering him a small smile.

His hand left her back for her shoulders, to stabilize her and only left them when she stood completely still. “With longer heels,” he noticed. “Why?”

“Because you and Diggle are two gigantic men! Talking to you gives me torticollis.”

He chuckled. “It’s not our fault if you were born so small,” he teased her.

She nudged him playfully. “Careful Mr Queen, you don’t want to get on my bad side.”

He tilted his head. “Oh really? Miss Smoak, I have to ask, are you threatening me?”

She shook her head, smiling innocently. Maybe too innocently. “I’d never do such a thing! I am simply making a statement.”

He smiled back at her and they both exited the elevator, only to find Diggle already waiting for them. Felicity frowned. Oliver and Diggle usually arrived together. As if he had sensed her question, Oliver explained.

“I came in early this morning, long story short I had to call Isabel. And Diggle waited for me here when I went to get a bowl of fresh air.”

Felicity nodded. She didn’t know what kind of relationship Oliver and Isabel had but it surely wasn’t a conventional one. It was unusual for two bonded mates to leave apart from one another, she didn’t know how they handled their mate’s haze – and quite frankly, she didn’t want to have to think about it because he was her boss and it was just ew.
They started their day then, going over the things they had to go over and getting ready for Oliver’s skype conference with a firm in China. Felicity was still going over her notes, long after noon. It wasn’t until Diggle walked in with Big Belly Burger bags in hands. Felicity looked up, smelling the delicious scent of fries and greasy burgers.

“John Diggle you’re my hero,” she told him getting on her feet to get her food.

“Thank Oliver, he’s the one who suggested it.”

“So, am I your hero?” Oliver asked, cocking his head in a way that made Felicity’s heart clench in her chest.

“Let’s see what you got me first,” she said.

“What? You called Diggle your hero without checking your order.”

“But I like Dig, Oliver,” she teased him.

He crossed his arms over his chest glaring at her. Her smile only grew wider.

“So, what do we have here? A burger with extra pickles, a little bit of fries and a little bit of potatoes, chicken nuggets, BBQ sauce, a coke, a vanilla milkshake and a chocolate chip muffin,” she smiled brightly. “Oliver Jonas Queen, you’re my hero.”

Oliver winked at Diggle and the three of them sat down and ate their lunch. Felicity was quiet, listening to them talking about sports. She wasn’t really interested but she liked listening to the two men, especially Oliver. He was a really big fan of Star City’s Archers, had been ever since his dad had taken him to his first game when he was six, and always got really impassioned when he talked about them, or a game or whatever it was that was happening on the basketball field. Felicity liked to see his eyes shining more brightly, his hands moving as he mimicked a motion of his favourite player, his cheeks reddening as if he was the one playing, when really all he was doing was telling a story.

They finished lunching and got ready for Oliver’s conference. It went well and they debriefed it together. They were still going through it when they were interrupted by Felicity’s ringtone. It was her emergency ringtone, the one she had set up especially for her mother.

“Excuse me, I really need to take this,” she told Oliver, her heart skipping a beat in her chest. What was going on? Did something happen? Was her mother okay?

“Mom,” she said, picking up. Just as she walked out of Oliver’s office, she saw Moira Queen stepped out of the elevator. She stared coldly at her, not greeting her, not saying anything, just staring down coldly at her, disdain filling her eyes as well as a calculated hatred.

“Felicity are you there?”

“Yes, mom, what’s going on?” She asked worriedly, stepping in the elevator to have some privacy. She heard someone cry over the phone but it wasn’t her mother.

“It’s Georgia,” Donna explained. “Something happened, she needs you.”

Felicity arched an eyebrow. She had talked to her friends the previous day and she had been fine, excited even. She had been about to meet her soulmate, they had met thanks to the SID and had planned a first meeting for this week. He was a pilot and was going to be in Vegas during the week. But why was she crying? She had been looking forward that first meeting for so long. It should have
been the happiest day of her life, she should be smiling, dancing around, laughing. Not crying.

“What happened?” She said, chewing down on her lower lip.

“*She… It’s not very clear, she came to me crying and she just won’t stop. I don’t know what happened, but she keeps saying “I couldn’t push the door”. What does that mean?*”

Felicity clenched her eyes shut, taking a deep breath. “She got cold feet,” she said, pinching her nose. “Mom, I am at work now and I need to get back to it. I’ll see with my boss if I can leave a bit early, exceptionally and I’ll call you back as soon as I can, okay?”

“Oh. Okay. *Hurry up Felicity, she doesn’t look okay.*”

When the elevator’s doors opened again, Moira Queen’s loud voice was the first thing she heard. Taking a step back, she didn’t want to get involved in a mother / son argument, she did her best not to eavesdrop. Until she heard her name.

“This is unacceptable Oliver. You can’t keep this Felicity girl with you.”

“And why is that mother?”

“Have you seen her resume? She is not qualified. She is too young and far too pretty. Rumours about how she got her position will be festering like cancer very soon.”

“The journalists know I am not into very young girls fresh out of college, blonde additionally.”

Okay. That wasn’t hurtful or offending at all.

“Well, you should tell that to the photographers we had to pay so they wouldn’t release the pictures of you and your assistant standing pretty close from one another at the party we held at our house, or the pictures of how friendly the two of you were in Coast City, especially the second day on the beach.”

Felicity blinked. What the hell was she talking about? She hadn’t heard about any pictures. But then if Moira had made sure they weren’t published, it was normal.

“Mother, should I remind you of my soulmate’s existence? Surely, you remember *Isabel.*” There was something with the way he said her name, something cold and detached. As if his words carried more than just their usual meaning. “Besides, you don’t have to worry about Miss Smoak mother, she is just an employee. She brings me coffee and helps me handling my agenda. Nothing more.”

Felicity froze at his words, the sting of his previous comments about her worsening, turning into a burn that spread from her heart to her whole body. She felt heat, hurt, anger and humiliation, kick in her veins, igniting the fire which had started to consume her.

“Oh really? I heard Thea say you and she have been spending a lot of time together.”

She heard Oliver chuckle, but it wasn’t the warm and amused chuckle she had grown used to. This one lacked any kind of warmth and it turned Felicity’s heart to ice. “Thea doesn’t know what she is talking about. I haven’t spent more time than appropriate with Felicity. She is just an employee. I barely know her to be honest. Our interactions are strictly professional.”

She staggered, catching herself on the wall. She felt her stomach twist in her belly as bile rose up her throat. Blood rushed to her ears and she blinked for longer than usual, in an attempt to calm herself down. What was she hearing?
“You really don’t have to worry mother. Felicity is just an employee, and I treat her as such.”

Deciding that she had heard enough, she walked toward his office, her heart hurting in her chest. Clearing her throat to let them know she was here, she saw the exact moment Oliver realised she had heard everything. His eyes widened and his lower lip trembled slightly and she guessed her watery eyes, her scarlet red cheeks and clenched fists had something to do with it.

“Mr Queen if you’re busy with your mother, surely I can come back later,” she said, her voice steadier than she had thought.

“No, no, it’s fine. My mother was just leaving,” he informed her, giving his mother a look.

“Very well then,” Moira complied turning around. Her cold blue eyes fell on her and although she really wanted to crawl back Felicity didn’t. She held her gaze.

“Miss Smoak,” The Queen’s matriarch said.

“Mrs Queen,” she replied just as coldly, hoping her blue eyes were carrying just as much coldness as Moira’s.

She left her son’s office, without ever looking back. Felicity watched her retreating form before turning back to face Oliver, who looked a bit paler than he had a few minutes ago.

“Felicity about you heard,” he started to say.

“There is no need for you to explain your words Mr Queen,” she cut him off. “I am just an employee after all, you don’t owe me anything and certainly not an apology,” she added, her tone icy.

He winced and ran a finger through his hair, something he did when he was nervous. “Felicity, please let me explain.”

“I just wanted to ask you if me leaving a bit earlier was fine with you,” she went on, determined not to let his words reach her. “Something came up, a personal matter, and I need to go take care of it.”

“Sure you can go, but is everything alright? Do you need anything” He asked worriedly, concern filling his eyes.

She braced herself, not letting the emotions she was shining in his eyes reach her. Friends helped each other and he had made abundantly clear they weren’t. “With all due respect Mr Queen, I am afraid this is none of your business.”

“Felicity, please,” he took a step towards her and she stepped back. “I didn’t mean anything, I didn’t mean a word I said, you know that right?”

She crossed her arms over her chest in a defensive gesture. “Actually, no I don’t,” she disagreed. “After all, what do I know? I am just a very young girl fresh out of college, blonde additionally.”

He clenched his eyes shut. “Felicity, I didn’t mean anything. You know I like you, I care about you. It scares me a little bit sometimes, I’ve just met you and yet it feels like it’s been forever.” He paused, and shook his head, as if he was trying to chase a bad memory. “It’s just… My mother doesn’t like you and I don’t know why but she really does and I just thought that if I told her you didn’t matter to me, she’d drop it.”

Her eyes went wide, and anger kicked in her veins. “And you think it makes what I heard better?”
He blinked, surprised. “I just told you I didn’t mean it.”

She rolled her eyes at him in frustration, feeling her heart tighten in her chest. “If this is you caring about me Oliver, I don’t want it. I want my friends to stand up for me not to back down and drag me down with them when things get hard.”

“Felicity, this is not what happened,” he tried to reason her.

“Yes it is!” She yelled. “We’re friends Oliver, at least I thought we were. Because what you just did is not what friends do.” She paused, struggling for words. There was a lump of emotions forming in her throat, one she had a hard time swallowing back. “You just told your mother I meant nothing to you, you even lied about my work here reducing me to the kind of dumb girls she sees in me. You just insulted me, and disregarded my importance straight to the face of a woman who despises me. And do you want to know the worst part of it all?” She waited, he didn’t say anything. He just stared blankly at her. “You don’t even realise you did it,” she let out, her voice lowering down, her shoulders going limp. She was suddenly feeling defeated. “I needed you to have my back Oliver and you just let me down. But maybe it’s my fault after all, maybe I thought there was more here, that our “friendship” deserved better.”

A flash of pain, caused by her words, crossed his eyes. She could see he wanted to walk towards her but was holding himself back because he knew she’d step away from him. “Felicity, I didn’t do it to hurt you. I just wanted her to get off my back. Our backs. And I’m sorry I hurt you in the process, it was not my intention.”

She shook her head, all her insecurities coming back to hit her hard. “I had doubts about us being both colleagues and friends but you convinced me to give it a try and I gave in… I shouldn’t have. This is obviously not working and since your mother hates me, maybe I should just leave.”

“No!” Oliver protested immediately and vehemently. “You’re not going anywhere.”

She shook her head, a tear rolling down her cheek. “You’re not the boss of me Oliver! You don’t get to decide what I do or don’t do.”

“Felicity I screwed up, I realise it now, please let me fix this.”

She shook her head.

“I need to leave,” she repeated, her mind running away from what hurt, him, being in his presence, and focusing on what it could handle. Georgia, her mother. “I wasn’t lying when I said I needed to leave early.”

“I already told you that you could go,” he reminded her. “Now the question is, will I see you on Monday?” He asked, the distress clear in his eyes.

She sighed, her shoulders going limp as his tensed up. “Yes,” she said, her voice lower than it had ever been in his presence.

She turned around then and went to her desk, where she gathered her things before hurrying toward the elevator. She almost ran into Diggle in her haste to get away.

“Felicity are you okay?” He asked, holding her shoulders with his strong hands to steady her.

“Yes, yes, I’m fine,” she lied. “I just really need to go.”

“What’s going on?”
She shrugged, getting inside of the elevator. “Someone needs me,” she just said as the doors closed. Reaching for her phone, she typed a quick text, saying she’d call her mother back in twenty minutes max. She drove skilfully through Star City, knowing the streets by heart now, every turn, every traffic lights, every speed bump. She felt numb as she made her way through the buildings and houses. Oliver’s eyes and the look on his face when she had turned around were haunting her. But his voice, his words, were echoing in her ears.

“She is just an employee.”

“I barely know her to be honest.”

She clenched her fingers around the wheel, shaking her head in denial, refusing to cope with what she had heard. She couldn’t believe it, she couldn’t believe he had actually done that. She had never expected him to choose her over his mother or his soulmate, and it was why she hadn’t wanted to involve him in her arguments with the women in his life in the first place. But she had at least expected some respect from him, some recognition of who she was and what she did for him. It didn’t matter to her he hadn’t done it to hurt her but because he had wanted his mother to let them be. It didn’t matter to her at all. Because in the end the result was the same: he had told a woman who hated her she was expendable, she wasn’t important, she didn’t matter. And it hurt. It really really hurt. Especially after she had started to let her guard down and actually be herself more around him. Especially after the moment they had had. It hurt because for once she had relied on someone, she had let him help her and he had turned his back on her. She felt betrayed and she hated herself for feeling that way. It wouldn’t have happened if she hadn’t opened up, if she hadn’t accepted his help and if she hadn’t expected more of him.

She hadn’t stepped in her apartment and yet she was already on the phone, calling her mother back. From what she had told her, it seemed that Georgia had refused to go meet her soulmate. Felicity knew he had been taking the Med from the moment her friend had turned sixteen until very recently. She remembered the day Georgia had called her to tell he had finally stopped taking the Med. She had been so happy, thrilled beyond words. Felicity had felt her excitement through the phone, and her desire to meet him, after all this years had made no doubt to her. But she hadn’t gone to the meeting, she’d gotten cold feet and now it was up to Felicity to understand why and help her deal with everything.

The irony of the situation wasn’t lost on her.

“Felicity, everything okay?” Her mother’s voice said through the phone.

“Yes, I talked to my boss and he let me go early,” she clenched her fists, trying to block the memory of her last conversation with Oliver out of her mind. “What about you? How’s G?”

“She has stopped crying,” Donna informed her. “But I am not sure it’s a good thing. She’s sitting by the window and she’s just… Staring at the void.”

Felicity sighed. “Hand her the phone, please.”

She waited as her mother went to Georgia. When the two girls had met, Felicity was a clumsy fifteen-year-old who needed a part-time job to pay the bills and Georgia had been a twenty-one-year-old with dreams bigger than her wallet but with her heart on her sleeve. They had bonded quickly at work, sticking together and helping each other out whenever Daisy gave them a hard time. They had kept in touch when Felicity had left to go to MIT because although she had been more than ready to leave Vegas behind her, she hadn’t been ready to leave her only friend. Now four years later, they were still friends, texting each other daily, calling each other at least once a week.
“G,” she said when she heard the phone go from her mother’s hand to Georgia’s hand. “G, it’s me Felicity.”

For the longest moment, her friend didn’t say anything. And it worried her. But then, she let out a shaky breath and whispered. “I screwed up F.”

“Tell me what happened,” Felicity prayed her, her voice soft and patient.

Although she couldn’t see her friend, she could feel her shrugging. “I couldn’t do it. Everything was going on perfectly, the moment I came close to the restaurant we’d picked, I felt my mark grow and burn but I couldn’t do it. I just couldn’t. So I ran away but now the mark won’t stop burning and I don’t know what to do, and I am just feeling so lost...” Her voice broke then as a sob wrecked her body, cutting her rant off, and Felicity’s heart broke for her friend.

The soulmark was more than just a black mark on people’s skin. It was more than just the physical proof of an evasive bond. Scientists actually compared it to an organ. An organ was by definition a collection of tissues joined in a unit to serve a purpose in the body. And that’s what the soulmark did. Before the bonding, it served the connection between soulmates, blood was actually drawn directly from above the soulmark to be analysed and determined the level of pre-bonding entanglements. When two soulmates met, the mark grew, sometimes going from one inch and a half to almost four inches! It also started burning and people said only the touch of the soulmate could stop the pain. And after the bonding, the mark kept growing, especially during sexual activities or a mate’s haze. The fact that Georgia’s mark hadn’t stopped burning meant that she had been too close from her soulmate, physically speaking. Their minds had been connected ever since they had been born and now it was their bodies’ turn. There was no running away from it and Felicity needed to make Georgia understand this. But first, she needed to understand why her friend had ran. Why she was scared.

“G, what went through that mind of yours? Why didn’t you push the door open?”

She knew Georgia by heart now. She was full of insecurities, as a result of her soulmate taking the Med for so long. She spent a lot of time questioning herself. It had taken her a while to realise she was meant for more than serving burgers at Daisy’s and to pursue her dream and become a decorator.

“I was scared. He has stopped taking the Med now but what if one day he starts taking it again? What if he realises he can have better? What if he leaves? I don’t want to get a taste of heaven if it’s only to have it be taken from me.”

Felicity closed her eyes. “G, listen to me very carefully. You don’t know why he started taking the Med. You don’t know what happened to him in his life, what made him the man he is today. It’s not your fault, you’ve been cut off from him for a long time. But maybe it wasn’t his fault either, maybe he had no other choice. And you won’t know for sure until you ask him.”

“I am scared he’ll be disappointed...”

“You’re the girl meant for him,” Felicity cut her off. “He can never be disappointed in you.”

“We both know it’s not true. And what if he already has...” She tried to protest.

“G, no! He stopped taking the Med. He contacted you through the SID. He reached out, he took a step toward you and it matters. It means something.” She paused for a second then added. “You are a beautiful, smart, talented young woman Georgia Wickins. You’re funny and kind, and he should feel lucky to have you as his soulmate. No scratch that, I am sure he feels lucky to have you as his
soulmate and he’s probably dying to tell you all of this in person.”

“You don’t know that,” Georgia argued.

Felicity smiled. “You’re right I don’t. So why don’t you call him. If only to set up another meeting. The two of you need to touch, the sooner the better.”

“I am scared F,” she whispered through the phone, her voice so low it was almost as if she was afraid to be heard. She sounded like a little girl and it was up to Felicity to find the right words to reassure her.

“I know you are G, but I also know you’re strong enough to overcome this. You’ve been through so much already and this, meeting him, it’s the easiest thing you’ll ever have to do in your life. You know what they say about meeting your soulmate anyway…”

“It’s like waking up from a beautiful dream only to realise it had become true,” her friend finished, sniffling. “I am going to call him,” she eventually said after a beat of silence.

“You do that. And make sure to tell him how you feel,” she added. “It’s important the two of you communicate a lot. And well.”

Georgia chuckled at that and the two girls talked some more, Felicity knowing her friend needed to think about something else, to take some time to recollect herself before she faced her soulmate again. They talked about everything and nothing at the same time and it did Felicity some good as well. It kept her thoughts from going back to Oliver and what had happened at Q. Inc.

After they hung up, Felicity remained on her couch, staring at the ceiling for a whole minute, a swirl of emotions storming in her chest. Comforting her friend who was afraid her soulmate would take the Med again and leave her as she was taking the Med herself made her feel slightly uncomfortable. She felt like a huge hypocrite and it forced her to face a few things she’d rather stay away from. There were some boxes which were just better left closed. Her soulmate was one of them and yet in that moment, he was all she could think about. Was he feeling like Georgia? Was he full of insecurities because of her? Did he feel like he had disappointed her somehow? He had, when he had been involved with those girls but did he know it? Had he realised he had made her feel unwanted, undesired, like a burden and not a blessing? And how had he felt when she had taken the Med for the first time? Had he understood? Had it hurt him? Was it hurting him now? Was he in pain because of her? Or had he resigned himself to taking the Med? She shook her head, biting on her lips. So many questions she’ll never know the answers to. Her hand fell on her hipbone, where her soulmark used to be. She felt the connection stirred inside her, it pressed against the bar of its prison. She winced, the pain sharper than it had ever been but didn’t take her hand away.

Her soulmark had grown and burnt once, when she had been fourteen years old. Felicity remembered that day of May as if it had happened only a few hours ago. Her mother had been working in a famous casino back then but that night, she hadn’t been feeling well. She’d zoned out in her memories, just like she used to before she started taking the Med. Felicity’s bubbe had been really tired so Felicity had called a cab to let her rest and had gone to the casino alone at almost eleven pm on a school-night to pick her mother up. The moment the cab had entered the parking lot, the connection had roared to life, swelling up in her chest until it was so big Felicity had feared her heart would burst. She had lifted her tee-shirt only to see her soulmark had doubled its size. The burn had been scorching, so strong and intense her skin had felt hot under her shaking fingers. She had tried to look for him, to find him but the crowd had been too big. So she had gotten to her mother, and despite the pain, had gone back home with her. Her bubbe had taken her to the hospital when she had come back home that night. They had given her a shot of the Med – that’s how she had learnt her pre-bonding level was so high actually – and when she had woken up the next morning,
everything had gone back to normal. She had gone back to the casino the following night but nothing had happened. He had left.

A text got her out of her thoughts.

--

“4:37 pm

Meet me at SCSC in twenty!

TM”

--

She groaned not feeling like going out, especially not with the best friend of the man she was so desperately trying not to think about.

--

“4:39 pm

Why?

FS”

--

His reply came quickly. Tommy was a fast texter, especially when he wanted something.

--

“4:40 pm

Need to ask you sth.

See you in 20, I’ll order your usual.

TM”

--

Getting on her feet, Felicity locked herself in the bathroom to put on more comfortable clothes. Then, she got out of her apartment wondering about what Tommy wanted to ask her. She ran into Mrs. Williams on the way, and helped her carry her grocery bags to her kitchen. They talked for a few minutes, Felicity asking about her family and grandchildren. She had met some of them once and had really liked them, in spite of them being… energetic!

She walked in Star City’s sweet coffee and waved happily at Iris, standing behind the counter. She found Tommy upstairs, with two steaming cups of coffee in front of him.

“I am warning you, I don’t want to talk about what happened with Oliver,” she said, sitting down in front of him.

He arched an eyebrow. “What happened with Oliver?”

She tilted her head. “Come on Tommy, I know you know. I usually finish working around this time
and when you texted me, you told me to be here in twenty minutes, meaning you knew I had left Q. Inc early, meaning Oliver told you what happened.”

Tommy shook his head. “Dig called me, said you looked pretty upset when you left and that you might need a friend.”

“He called you of all people?” She asked, her brows furrowed.

“Come on Felicity, you know you like me,” he replied, offering her a bright smile.

She couldn’t help but smile back at him. Because, she did like him, she really did. Everything in Star City felt familiar and she had gotten used to it. She knew things about places, she felt like she had already visited some of them although she knew she hadn’t. Star City was a place of deja-vu, it felt like a home. And she felt the same way around Tommy. It was actually why she had forgiven him his bad manners so quickly. Because Tommy was okay, Tommy was safe, Tommy was family. She knew she could trust him with everything and it was a really weird feeling, because she didn’t know him that well and yet she knew.

“I still don’t want to talk about it,” she insisted.

“It’s okay,” he assured her, taking a sip from his coffee. “Can I just say one thing?” He asked.

She nodded, adding sugar to her coffee.

“Whatever it is that happened between the two of you, it is not worth losing what you have.”

That made Felicity pause. “And what do you think we have exactly?”

He shrugged. “Something worth keeping.”

Felicity shook her head. It wasn’t the kind of answers she had expected. Moving on, she leaned forward. “So what did you want to ask me?”

“What are your plans for Thanksgiving?”

She choked on her coffee. “Thanksgiving? My plans for Thanksgiving in more than four weeks?”

He nodded. “Yes, it’s one of the perks of being bonded to a planner who loves thinking ahead,” he chuckled slightly, his eyes filled with love at the mention of his soulmate, Laurel Lance, Sara’s sister. Felicity had yet to meet her but she knew Tommy was planning on introducing them. “I was wondering if you were going to go visit your mother in Vegas. And if you are not, to tell you you’re welcomed to join us.”

“Great, you can bring her along if you want! Sara will be here too with her dad, Iris’ family. I invited my dad, but I highly doubt he’ll join us.”

“Actually, my mother is coming to visit me,” Felicity explained, nervously playing with the handle of her cup. She had gotten along pretty quickly with Tommy but she hadn’t expected him to invite her for Thanksgiving. It was a lot and it meant just as much to her.

“Great, you can bring her along if you want! Sara will be here too with her dad, Iris’ family. I invited my dad, but I highly doubt he’ll join us.”

Felicity reached out for his hand, squeezing his fingers lightly. Tommy rarely spoke of his father but she didn’t need him to tell her anything. He was the active of Merlyn Global, a lot could be found about his life on the internet. He had lost his wife and soulmate under tragic circumstances almost twenty years ago. She had been shot in the Glades, Star City’s troubled area. According to Tommy, his father had never been the same after that and Felicity could easily understand why; he had lost
half of his soul, the mother of his child.

“What about Oliver?” She asked to cheer him up a little.

Tommy shook his head, hiding the emotions in his eyes. But Felicity knew anyway and held his hand a little bit tighter.

“The Queens are celebrating Thanksgiving in family.”

“But you are family,” she objected.

Tommy smiled at her, a smile so bright she had to look away from him for a second. “I am happy you think so but what I meant is they celebrate Thanksgiving together. Pretty sure Isabel will come back from Russia for the occasion.” He had this way of saying Isabel’s name, as if she was an annoyance he couldn’t get rid of.

“You don’t seem to be too fond of her,” she pointed out.

“Well, let’s just say I am relieved she’s not my soulmate.”

Felicity gave him a look. “But she is your best friend’s soulmate.”

“Doesn’t mean I have to like her,” Tommy shot back looking unapologetic. “Anyway, will you come and celebrate Thanksgiving with us?”

She nodded. “I’ll talk to my mom but I don’t think she’ll mind.”

“JJ is gonna be so happy,” Tommy told her and a small smile spread on Felicity’s lips.

They lingered at the coffee shop for a while after that, talking their most memorable Thanksgivings. Tommy had more to say than Felicity but she didn’t mind. Tommy was a breath of fresh air and as they spoke, she couldn’t help but compare him to his best friend. It was easy to talk to him as it was to talk to Oliver but he was different, much different. He was cheerful and open-minded, loud and bright in ways Oliver wasn’t. Tommy was happiness. Sure, there was a shadow in his eyes, losing his mother so young had wounded him deeply, but he didn’t let it affect him. Instead, he revelled in his bond to his soulmate, radiating mated bliss. She didn’t get the same vibe from Oliver, he was more guarded, more cautious.

They parted ways around six pm. Felicity wanted back to her apartment, shambling. Her thoughts were going back and forth between Oliver and Oliver and Oliver again. Always Oliver. She was upset and annoyed by it. She didn’t want to be upset, she didn’t want to care. She wanted not to care about whether or not they were friends, about his mother, about his words. And yet she did and it annoyed her profoundly. She noticed he hadn’t tried to call her or text her. She noticed she thought of him when the news mentioned the upcoming game of Star City’s basketball team. She wished she didn’t but she did and it annoyed her. Two months ago, she hadn’t known anything about him and now she was moping because he had been an ass to her?

She went to bed, feeling both disappointed and hurt. She couldn’t believe the same morning she had woken up from a beautiful dream, happy and content. She had been so sure the day would be beautiful back then. She had been wrong. She tossed and turned for hours, sleep always slipping away from her. Around three am, she kicked her comforter away from her angrily and got out of bed, angry at herself because she couldn’t fall asleep and angry at Oliver for being the reason of it all.

She settled down and her couch, deciding that a Doctor Who marathon was the only thing to do. She was half-way through her first episode when she heard a knock at the door. She pressed “pause”, her
heart pounding in her chest. Getting up, she rushed to the door, knowing who she was going to find on the other side. She turned the handle, feeling so confident she didn’t check the peephole and opened the door.

Oliver Queen was standing in the doorway, wearing dark jeans and a leather jacket on top of a white tee. She stared at him for a whole minute, her mind pleasantly numb and frozen. He looked very good in that tee, it hugged his perfectly chiselled muscles and brought out his bright blue eyes. His hair was messier than usual and she liked it, it made him look younger, less serious. He was carrying a plastic bag in one hand, a bouquet of pink daisies in the other. She felt a bubble of pure happiness burst in her chest. He had come to her and it meant a lot. It meant everything.

But she wasn’t going to tell him that, at least not yet.

“It’s three am in the morning, what are you doing here?” She asked, crossing her arms over her chest.

He blinked, rubbing his fingers the way he always did when he was feeling nervous. “I couldn’t sleep, after how we left things today…” He paused for a second, collecting himself. “I couldn’t sleep and from the look of it, you couldn’t either.”

“Don’t think too much of yourself Oliver, maybe it wasn’t because of you.”

“I know it was though,” he insisted. “Because you were the reason I couldn’t.”

She sighed.

“Can we talk inside?” He asked. “I brought you mint chocolate chip ice-cream and flowers. They’re your favourite right?”

She nodded taking the bouquet he was handing her. “How did you know?”

“I asked you once.”

She arched an eyebrow. “And you remembered?” She was truly impressed. They had played 20 questions so many times, there was no way she was remembering everything he had told her, all the things she had asked him.

“I thought this one was worth remembering. Just in case and now I am really glad I did.”

“How did you find flowers at this time of the night?” She asked him, bringing the bouquet to her nose letting the fresh and soft scent of the flower fill her head until the world spun around her.

He gave her a smile, his smile, the smile which spelled trouble and fun at the same time. “I’m Oliver Queen,” he just said.

She shook her head and stepped aside to let him in. It was the first time he came inside and he looked very big, very out of place in her rabbit hutch. She got them two spoons, to eat the ice-cream he had brought and they settled down on her couch. She felt slightly conscious now, alone with her boss in the middle of the night. She was wearing her pajamas, which were revealing more skin that she was comfortable with and she had a serious case of bed hair while Oliver looked perfect. Reaching for a hairband on her coffee, she tied her blonde curls in a messy bun on top of her head, Oliver watching her intently. She motioned for him to open the ice-cream and he did, holding the cup in between them.

“You wanted to talk,” she eventually said after five minutes of silence. It hadn’t been uncomfortable
but she could feel the tension between them and wanted it gone, as soon as possible.

“Yeah, I wanted to but I didn’t expect you to be so…” He hesitated. “Calm. Earlier, you looked really upset and mad.”

“I don’t want to fight with you,” she stated. “So I think we should…” She paused, took a little bit of ice-cream. His next breath got caught in his throat and she went on, “Clear the air.”

“I’m sorry, for what I did, what I said. I went to talk to my mother right after you left and I told her you were my friend before being a valuable employee. You are here to stay and I recommended she got used to the idea.”

She nodded, hearing his words. Her heart skipped a beat at the way he said she was here to stay. He said with such certainty, it was almost scary. She hoped his mother would get the message. She let her spoon in the cup and rubbed her hands against her thighs nervously, goose bumps breaking on her skin because of the temperature’s difference. Oliver noticed, his eyes trailing down her legs and he wordlessly wrapped a blanket lying on his side of the couch around her legs.

“I didn’t tell you about it but your mother talked to me at the party and she said some really nasty things about me, basically calling me a manipulative gold-digger. And don’t get me started on how Isabel acted like a total bitch to me when I met her and then later during the weekend. They made me feel unwanted, undesired but you… You accepted me immediately and without asking any questions. You made me feel like I belonged, like I had a right to be here. And this is why it hurt so much when you didn’t defend me. I felt like you were giving up on me, like it had all been a lie. I get why you did it and I need you to get why it hurt me so much in return.”

He nodded, putting the unfinished cup of ice-cream away. He shifted on the couch slightly then so that he could look at her in the eyes, bringing her legs across his because her couch was small and he was tall.

“I am so sorry Felicity, I hope you know that. Earlier, I didn’t like seeing you this upset and I hated myself for being the one who had made you feel that way. I shouldn’t have taken you for granted, and I shouldn’t have dismissed the importance of our friendship. I won’t do it again, I promise.”

She nodded, believing him, believing the honesty and remorse she could see shining in his eyes. She knew, deep in her heart, he wasn’t faking any of this. She let him take her hands and squeeze her fingers. Her thumb stroke his knuckles in response and for a second, it was just them, blue meeting blue, creamy skin against calloused fingers. Then he blinked and she slipped her hand from his grasp. She felt a patch of rough skin in the palm of his hand and she frowned.

“What’s that?” She asked, her thumb coming back to him without her consent, looking for the puckered skin she had felt. She found it and realised it was a scar. “Where did you get it?” She asked, her eyes looking up from the rosy skin.

“It’s from my car accident,” he told her, a mix of emotions filling his eyes, the dominant one being pain. Raw, burning, acute pain.

It was the first time he mentioned his car accident in front of her, the one he had almost died from four years ago, the one he had taken so much time recovering from.

“It must have been awful,” she said, her thumb not leaving his scar, none of them doing anything about it. “What happened?” She asked, knowing he wouldn’t shut her out.

He closed his eyes for a second, his pain more evident before saying, “I lost control of my vehicle,”
he eventually confessed, his voice barely higher than a whisper.

Her heart clenched in her chest. She wished there was something she could do, something she could say to make him feel better, to chase his demons away. But there was nothing she could do. She wasn’t his soulmate, her touch couldn’t soothe him the way Isabel’s would. And yet, she kept rubbing his small scar, the only she could see but not the only one on his body.

“What were you watching?” He asked her, moving the conversation somewhere less personal. Felicity understood where he came from and respected the boundary he was putting back in place.


“The show with the weirdo living in a police box?”

She rolled her eyes at him, slapping his shoulder playfully. “It’s called a TARDIS mister.”

She leaned down to get the remote control before coming back down, pressing play. His eyes fell on her collarbone and he tilted his head, his hand reaching for the patch of skin which had been exposed when her hoodie had slipped from her shoulder.

“Is that your soulmark?” He asked and she realised it was his way of asking her the permission to touch.

She shook her head. “Just a tattoo,” she told him and his fingers brushed the four small birds flying right under her collarbone. It was a small tattoo, usually easily covered by her clothes.

“What does it mean?” He asked, his voice easily drowning the sound of the TV.

She took in a sharp breath, feeling heat spread from where he had touched her. “What makes you think it means anything?”

He cocked his head. “Come on Felicity, I am starting to know you.”

She nodded. She didn’t his question right away, looking for the right words, weighing the pros and cons in her mind. It was something very personal, something she felt she could share with him but in the meantime, she felt a bit scared.

Taking a deep breath, she said. “A few years ago, I let go of something and most of the time, I try not to think about it. But once a year, I add a bird to the tattoo. Because even though letting go was the right thing to do, I don’t want to forget.”

Oliver stared at her, contemplative. “Four birds,” Oliver counted. “Four years.”

She nodded. He reached for her hoodie’s sleeve and put it back in place before settling down more comfortably in her couch, his arms on her legs across his lap.

“So,” he said. “About that weirdo in a blue police box.”

She chuckled, feeling like a weight had been lifted from her chest. “Stop calling him a weirdo Mr Queen or I’ll kick you out of my place.”

“You wouldn’t dare,” he teased her.

“Try me,” she challenged him and he just shook his head. He started asking her questions about the show and she answered them. He made no attempt to leave and she made no attempt to get him out.
She was feeling as happy and as content as she had felt when she had woken up from her dream in the morning and she didn’t want to let go of the feeling just yet.

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)

Chapter 7 - Cause I've still got a lot of fight left in me

Chapter Notes

Hey guys!!!!!

Here's the new chapter and guess what... It's a MONSTER!!! :D Lots of things happen in this chapter, I hope you will like it :) I am sorry I am slightly late with the update, it's been more than a week oops!, but I said I was in vacation and I got sick so... There's that. I am much better now though so no worry! I know there are still five comments I need to reply to, I will do it first thing in the morning tomorrow.
As always I am blown away by the responses this story is getting. It's close to 800 kudos which is just... Crazy. Yeah crazy. Thank you guys for the support, it means so much to me, I can't even find the words to express how HAPPY you all make me.

Happy reading!!! :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 7:

“My power’s turned on

(Starting right now) I’ll be strong

I play my fight song

And I don’t really care if nobody else believes

Cause’ I’ve still got a lot of fight left in me”

- Rachel Platter, Fight song.

When Felicity woke up, the first thing she heard was the sound of TV. Some anchor woman was talking about the news in the city and Felicity’s fuzzy brain caught a few words, such as “restricting policy”, “Rollins” and “the Med”. It should have worried her, it should have woken her up with her heart beating wildly in her chest and a mind full of fears. But it didn’t. She was surrounded by warmth. It was warm everywhere around her, and so comfortable. She felt like a bird in a nest of fluffy blanket, heated bodies, solid chest and strong thighs.

She paused for a second.

What?

Heated bodies? Solid chest? Strong thighs?

She opened her eyes, gasping. Blinking she took the scenery in, her mind unable to accept what her
eyes were seeing was not a dream but a very tangible reality. She was curled up on her couch, her legs wrapped up in a fluffy blanket and lying across Oliver’s lap. Oliver Queen, her boss, was looking as good as ever after a sleepless night, his blue eyes shining as brightly as usual. His hands rested on her legs, his fingers patting her legs, and they seemed to be moving with a will of their own.

As if he had sensed her waking up, he turned his head to face her a smile spreading on his lips.

“Good morning,” he whispered, his low and rough voice too much for her to handle with zero caffeine in her body.

“Morning,” she replied, rubbing her eyes. She frowned when she didn’t meet her glasses.

“I took them off of you when you fell asleep,” Oliver explained. He leaned toward her coffee table and retrieved them for her.

“Thank you,” she said, her cheeks turning a bright red, not because of the heat in the room, but because she was feeling embarrassed, mortified even. She had fallen asleep on her boss. Again. She remembered vividly watching a few episodes of Doctor Who with Oliver, defending her favourite TV-show from his snarky comments with everything she was worth. But then, he had gotten up to change the DVD and she had told him to be careful with her baby and then… Nothing. She had fallen asleep. Biting on her lower lip, she clenched her fingers nervously.

Feeling her stiffened next to him, Oliver arched an eyebrow. “What’s wrong?” He asked.

“I fell asleep on you,” she told him, the word “again” very much implied.

He shrugged. “It’s okay, I don’t mind. I’d have moved you but when I tried, you almost woke up so I decided to just let you be. I know you have trouble sleeping.”

Felicity felt her cheeks redden even more. At this moment, she felt exposed, vulnerable. And she didn’t like it at all.

After her father had left, breaking her mother’s heart and mind in the process, Felicity had had to grow up fast. Her bubbe had given her a seemingly normal childhood but she had been an old woman, working forty hours a week as a help and a sitter to provide for her daughter and granddaughter. She had loved Felicity dearly but had very often be really exhausted, the loss of Felicity’s grandfather, her soulmate, not making things any better. So Felicity had had to learn how to take care of herself, quickly and efficiently, for those nights where her grandmother came home so tired, the only thing she could do was going straight to bed and sleep until she had to wake up before dawn. Felicity had learnt how to braid her hair alone, how to make herself sandwiches to eat at school, how to pick clothes adapted to the weather… This childhood had shaped Felicity into a very strong and independent woman. And when she had given up on her soulmate, her independence had grown exponentially. She had had to accept his family’s help to save her mother and after that, she had sworn on her bubbe’s grave it would be the last time she accepted anyone’s help. She had sworn to be better, to be enough for her mother and for herself. She had stayed true to her word ever since. Even when her mother had gotten out of the hospital, Felicity hadn’t really relied on her, keeping her problems for herself instead and dealing with them on her own.

This situation with Oliver was not okay. It had to stop, sooner rather than later. She knew she was the one to blame for it, but her asking a hug from him had been a one-time thing. She had been exhausted and he had been there, all warm and kind and she had given in. Just once. It shouldn’t have happened again. Because she didn’t need his help, she could handle herself just fine. And more importantly, she didn’t want him to care for her. It was already enough he knew she had a problem,
she didn’t want to expose herself more, she didn’t want him, or anyone for that matter, to know her that intimately. He hadn’t moved her just because he hadn’t wanted to wake her! It meant something right? It meant he already cared, at least enough to give her time to rest. They were friends and she valued their friendship but she didn’t want him to care for her in _that_ particular way. Because if he started caring, she might get used to it. And she couldn’t get used to it because the day she’d lose it all, it would be hard and it would hurt so damn much. She had been there, she had done that and she didn’t want to go through it all again.

“Felicity are you okay?” Oliver asked.

“I am sorry, I am so sorry for last night, I… I shouldn’t have –,” she started.

He cut her off immediately. “It’s okay, really,” he assured her, his hands reaching for her shoulder in the familiar motion he used to calm her down whenever she started rambling. “It was the least I could do after what happened yesterday,”

She shook her head, taking her legs away from him and bringing them back to her. “Let’s not talk about what happened yesterday anymore, okay?” She suggested, bringing her knees close to her chest in a defensive way, hoping it would be enough to prevent him from getting under her skin. Again.

She knew why she had fallen asleep on him in Coast City, she had been exhausted after a few sleepless nights and honestly she could have fallen asleep on anyone, really. But what was excuse for last night? And more importantly how did Oliver always manage to pulverize her defences in one second?

She was lost in her thoughts, struggling with her emotions but then, the anchor woman’s voice pierced through her mind’s barriers and brought her back to the world of the living.

“Andrew Rollins will be seen by the governor of California before his speech in Los Angeles where five thousands militants are expected. His petition to regulate the access to the Med developed by Krast laboratories has been signed by more than two millions people and is being supported by very important personalities such as Martin Walker, Bruce Wayne CEO of Wayne Enterprises or Tom Altec, winner of five Academy Awards…”

Felicity shook her head as the woman on the TV went on. Oliver noticed it and arched an eyebrow.

“Does it bother you?” He asked, confusion filling his eyes.

She shrugged. “I just think it’s better to let people choose what’s best for them,” she told him. She didn’t know what she’d do if a law was indeed created to regulate the access to the Med. What would become of her? A doctor would never allow her to take it, her physical condition, or mental state did not require she took the Med, on the contrary! What would happen between her and her soulmate? Would he be like Georgia? Unable to trust her? And what would he say, when he’d learn she had accepted to be cut from him for money? Maybe he’d understand but maybe he wouldn’t. What would happen then?

“What do you think?” She asked him. “I know it’s a silly question to ask, you’re with your soulmate after all, but you did belong to an anti-soulmate before…”

Something shifted in his eyes as he turned his face away from her, staring into the void. “I think we should be able to be with whoever we want to.”

Felicity frowned. Clearly, his response implied he was against regulating the Med, but that was the
thing. It implied he was against it. Why hadn’t he answer her right away? And why had he turned his face away?

She didn’t have time to linger on that though, because he pushed on his hands to get up from the couch. Then he reached for her hand, saying, “How about we go out for breakfast?”

She turned to check the time on her watch and gasp. It was not seven am yet.

“How about we go out for breakfast?” she replied, offering him an out. “You haven’t slept at all and…”

He raised a hand to stop her. “I don’t mind not sleeping.” He paused before adding, laughing. “It actually reminds me of my wild years, at least the recipe hasn’t changed: a beautiful night and a beautiful girl.”

She snorted, her cheeks turning bright red. “Please tell me this is not with that kind of particularly lame lines you got all those girls in your bed and while we’re at it, how many girls are we talking about exactly Casanova?”

It was his turn to snort. “Not nearly as much as the media says. I’ll tell you more around breakfast.” When she didn’t move, he went on. “Come on, you need to try the eggs and bacon from the place I have in mind. It’s at the seaside, you’ll love it,” he insisted, stamping his feet like a petulant child.

A flash of wooden chair and glass table crossed her mind. “I’ll need to put some clothes on first,” she told him, taking his hand and letting him pull her on her feet. He was so strong he did it all on his own and it was kind of sexy – at least Felicity’s tired brain found it sexy. And fascinating. Would he be able to support her weight on one arm only? Because it was how strong he looked. And damn what was wrong with her brain? Why was she thinking about this?

He grinned at her. And really, it was unfair how good he looked after a sleepless night. Even his clothes were impeccable, not even slightly rumpled. “See that’s not exactly what I used to hear during my wild years.”

She rolled her eyes at him. “Boor!” She called him, climbing the stairs of her mezzanine. “Turn around!” She commanded as she took off her pajamas to put on some clothes.

“Okay, okay,” he said, obeying her.

She quickly found something comfortable to put on and got dressed, still talking. “Can I ask you a question?”

“Yes,” he told her.

“I know you said there weren’t that many girls but what about Isabel? She must have felt your involvement with them,” she added, remembering very vividly how she had felt her soulmate’s desire for other women as if it had been her own.

“Not really,” he explained quickly. “Our pre-bonding connection wasn’t that strong, only a three.”

“I see,” she nodded, still not thinking it made his behaviour acceptable. “Honestly, I don’t know how you do it. Even if, your pre-bonding connection was only a three, the two of you are bonded now. It must be painful to be apart so often and for so long.”

“We’ve learnt how to deal with it,” he replied. “And we’ll be living together once we are wed.” His voice was strained though, he didn’t sound really happy at the thought of his upcoming wedding. She turned around to see he had stiffened slightly, and he was rubbing his fingers nervously. She
assumed it was probably hard for him to talk about it, it was certainly a sensitive topic.

She ran downstairs, her coat thrown on her shoulders and patted his chest lightly, her fingers traveling to his shoulder, mimicking the soothing gesture he always did to calm her down.

“Let’s go,” he told her a smile coming back to his lips catching her hand to drag her with him.

They got out of her apartment and Felicity was relieved when she saw he had come to see her with one of his cars and not his bike. She had nothing against the engine and watching him drive it was kind of sexy – he and Tommy had shown her how cool driving a bike could be but she had categorically refused to climb behind either of them. He opened her door for her, like a perfect gentleman and she sat down, a smile on her lips. The day had barely started and it was already a good one.

He drove skilfully through the streets of Star City. The sun was barely rising, as days were shortening now that fall had begun, and Felicity realised it was her favourite sight of the city. It was truly beautiful when it was still sleepy and yet the light was there, engulfing it, casting a golden glow over the tall glass buildings.

He parked the car near a small restaurant close to Emerald coast. The moment she got out, Felicity was hit by the fresh and salty air of the ocean, wind dancing with her curls, which she had let down. Cold air reached her senses, tickling them awake. She turned around to smile at Oliver. He smiled back at her and motioned toward the restaurant with his head. Felicity followed him, looking around her, drinking the landscape in. The sun was rising on the other side of the horizon, meaning that the sky above the ocean was still dark but Felicity didn’t mind it one bit. She loved the darkness of the waves and the sound of them crashing on the rocks. It was wild and free and exhilarating.

“I love this beach,” she explained to Oliver after they were settled down in the restaurant, the wooden chairs and the glass tables exactly how she had thought they’d be. “I found it a few days after I moved in. It’s gorgeous.”

Oliver nodded. “I’ve been coming here ever since I was a little boy. Raisa, the housekeeper, used to take me here for walks. Tommy and I have learnt how to surf of those waves.”

Felicity tilted her head and listened to him tell her about his first surfing class. They were interrupted by the waitress, who brought them their bacon and eggs – which were as good as Oliver had said they would – and he went on when she left. Oliver, Felicity realised as he kept talking, in spite of his name and who he was, was a simple man, with very simple taste. Of course, he could still come to someone’s house in the middle of the night with pink daisies in hands and act as if it was completely normal but he was also the guy who enjoyed renting DVDs with his little sister on Friday nights or eat breakfast at seven am and a half in a small restaurant near the beach with his executive assistant. It was maybe her favourite part of him, his desire not to be just Oliver Queen, but also allowing himself moments as just Oliver. And she felt honoured he let himself be just Oliver around her. She felt so comfortable around him, it made her happy to see he felt the same toward her.

Felicity liked working with Oliver, especially because they did so well together. But she loved being his friend more and she felt grateful for him being so adamant after their first movie night together. She listened to him share a few stories from his past, his voice low, amused and his blue eyes shining happily. He didn’t get into the wildest details, it was something she realised he didn’t like to talk about, as if he was ashamed of who he used to be and what he had done. He seemed to regret most of his actions and she wondered why. Because he didn’t seem to be the type of person who regretted things and yet, he did regret his past. Why?

In spite of that, he did tell her a few stories, all of them including one infamous Tommy Merlyn. She
really liked listening to him, she liked the dimple appearing whenever he smiled, making him look even more beautiful. She shared a few stories of her own from Vegas and he listened to her carefully, filling the gap between her words with his laughter. She liked this aspect of him, where he, famous Oliver Queen, listened to her, unknown Felicity Smoak, and was truly interested in her and what she had to say.

They had a nice time together, watching the day starts, eating good food and sharing stories about their past. Felicity felt a pang of something missing tugging at her heart throughout the conversation though. She had never gone to parties like him, she had never hung out with friends in nightclubs or even gotten drunk. Oliver seemed to regret a few things, though he didn’t tell her about them exactly and stiffened every time she tried to learn more, but he most definitely did not regret all the fun he had had with his friends. She felt sad she had never lived anything he had. Oliver asked about her sudden quietness and when she told him, he laughed at her. He reminded her he was older than her and she was not even twenty-one yet. She still had time to do the things he had – though he made it pretty clear to her, he’d do his best to keep her away from clubs and drunk nights. She realised he was right and remembered she still had to go out for a drink with Sara. They hadn’t had time yet, between their jobs and boxing classes, but she knew, eventually they would.

It was time she went out and enjoyed her youth.

When the shrilling sound of her ringtone pierced through the silence of her quiet rabbit hutch, Felicity groaned and buried herself deeper in her pillow. She couldn’t see the sunlight, meaning it was not seven am yet and it was unacceptable to be woken up before nine am on a Sunday morning. Especially considering she had a full night of sleep to catch up with. Felicity travelled down her bed, until her feet reached the edge and her head was entirely covered by her comforter, trying to get away from her phone and adulting.

The annoying sound stopped and she hummed contently, her brain already going back to sleep, where her dreams were filled with melted mint chocolate chip ice-cream and pink daisies. But then, just as she was drowning back in her drowsy bliss, the shrilling sound echoed against the walls of her room again. She groaned her hand coming out from her warm nest, clumsily locating her phone to pick it up. It had to be important if whoever was calling her was insisting.

“Felicity Smoak,” she mumbled, her voice half-muffled by her pillow.

“Felicity, hello? It’s Iris.”

Felicity lifted herself up on her elbows, rubbing her eyes with one hand. “Iris, yes, I know, I recognised you!”

“I am so sorry, did I wake you up?”

Felicity bit back a snarky comment. “It’s okay, what’s going on?”

“I’m so sorry, I didn’t know who else to call. My nanny called in sick, again, and I have no one to look after JJ. Would you mind coming over?”

Felicity shut her eyes close. “No, I don’t. I am on my way,”

“I’m really, really sorry Felicity, I’ll make it up to you, I promise!”
“Don’t mention it Iris,” Felicity told her, shifting the hand holding her phone and kicking her comforter away. “I’m really happy to spend some time with my buddy.”

“Barry should be back by noon,” Iris added. “Again, I am really…”

“Iris, it’s okay. See you in twenty.”

Felicity reached out blindly for a pair of jeans and a tank top. She put them on quickly, doing it again for her tank top when she realised she had put it the wrong way round. She grabbed small boots and a jacket, her small shoulder bag and got out.

Iris didn’t live far away from Felicity’s building – it was a twenty-minute walk and a little bit more than a five-minute drive. Felicity made it quickly, there was no traffic at this time of the day, especially on a Sunday. She knocked at the door and Iris opened it, looking really upset.

“Felicity, you’re a life saviour!” She said, hugging her quickly.

“Don’t mention it,” her friend replied, hugging her back quickly.

“I owe you, big time!” Iris insisted. “JJ just woke up, he’s sitting on the couch.” They walked in the small living-room where JJ was indeed sitting on the couch, wrapped up in a fluffy blanket, his teddy bear safely tucked under his chin, his thumb in his mouth.

“Hey buddy,” Felicity said softly, waving at him. He was looking so cute, it made her heart flutter in her chest.

He waved back at her, but didn’t take his thumb out of his mouth. Poor thing, he was probably very tired.

“So,” Iris explained, “He hasn’t had breakfast yet but you can give him cereals, he loves Cheerios. He doesn’t need to shower but he has to freshen up a little bit. Make sure he brushes his teeth correctly, he is one quick monkey who likes sneaking away. Don’t let him talk you into watching too much TV, or to spend too much time on the tablet and…”

“Iris, Iris, relax!” Felicity cut her off, her hands landing on her shoulders. “I know how to take care of a three-year-old,” she added, sounding both reassuring and confident. After all, it couldn’t be harder than taking care of a depressed forty-year-old.

“Sorry, little mama bear moment,” Iris chewed on her lower lip. “I really hope he won’t give you a hard time.”

Felicity gave her a smile. “Don’t worry about that, your son is my buddy, right JJ?” The little boy nodded, his curls dancing on top of his head. “See, we’re all good? Now go to work or you’ll be late.”

“Thank you again,” Iris said, throwing her bag over her shoulder. “I owe you, big time! And you can help yourself with anything, it’s okay. Mi casa es tu casa or whatever it is they say in the movies.”

“Thanks,” Felicity repeated, chuckling and waving a hand at her.

Iris got out of the house, waving right back at her. When she was gone, Felicity turned toward JJ.

“So,” she told him, rubbing her hands together in a cheerful gesture, a smile spreading on her lips at how cute he looked. “Breakfast?” She suggested.
He nodded again, before holding his little arms out for her. Felicity walked toward him and lifted him up, his body curling around her hip. She went to the kitchen, which was bright and full of colours – Felicity hadn’t expected anything else from Iris, really – and she settled him down on a chair. She got a quick breakfast ready for themselves, pouring herself a cup of coffee and warming the milk for his cereals the way he had told her he liked before sitting down next to him. He had put his teddy bear on the table, right under a huge board on which several pictures were pinned. They were family pictures mostly, but some of them included friends and two got Felicity’s attention: the first one featured JJ sitting down on Oliver’s lap, opening a gift and the other JJ’s father Barry was standing next to Oliver, arm in arm. Both men were smiling proudly at the camera. Felicity knew Oliver was friend with Iris but he hadn’t told her how he’d met her and she’d assumed it was through Sara. But he looked pretty cozy next to JJ’s father.

“You know Oliver?” She asked JJ.

He nodded, a moustache of milk above his higher lips. Felicity rubbed it away with her thumb as he said. “Uncle ‘liver,” he enunciated, swallowing down a mouthful of Cheerios.

Felicity chuckled. Uncle ‘liver would be really happy to hear he was actually an organ. “Yeah, you know him well?”

“He’s daddy’s friend, daddy makes him laugh. And he brings me presents on my birthday. He got me Coco,” he pointed at his teddy bear.

“You know he’s my boss? I work with him every day.”

JJ tilted his head. “Really? You’re lucky! Uncle ‘liver always carries me on his shoulders and he throws me in the air like a rocket and he goes with me in the big water slide at the swimming-pool.”

Felicity smiled, shaking her head. She had no doubts picturing Oliver doing all these things with JJ. Or with any child, really. They finished eating their breakfast and then moved to JJ’s room where she picked some clothes for him before taking him to the bathroom. He remained calm and nice, brushing his teeth properly, letting her clean his face with a washcloth and comb his curls.

They went back to his room after that, where JJ showed her his collections of legos and they decided to start building a castle. It took them an hour and a half but in the end their castle was half the size of JJ and colourful, made of pieces in different colours. Felicity snapped a picture of JJ kneeling down proudly next to their creation and grinning. She sent it to Iris before JJ insisted on snapping one of her, arguing she had helped building the castle as well. She sent it to Uncle ‘Liver.

--

“9:03 pm

Looking for a new job…

Maybe as an architect?

FS”

--

The reply came almost an hour later, when she was reading a story to the little boy.

“9:58 am
Very funny Miss Smoak, I expect you at the office at 9 am sharp.

PS: You can tell JJ his castle is beautiful.

OQ”
--

She chuckled at that. It was very Oliver-like.
--

“9:59 am

How do you know it’s JJ’s?

FS”
--

“10:03

The walls.

OQ”
--

Felicity looked up to the blue walls of JJ’s room. There was a rocket painted on one of them, and fluorescent stars were glued to the ceiling. She asked JJ about them.

“I want to be a cosmonaut when I grow up,” he informed her, precisely articulating each syllables.

“I wanted to be one too,” she confessed. “But then, I realised I was afraid of heights.”

Her comment made JJ giggle. “Will you do me a favour when you are a cosmonaut?” She asked him, tickling his sides playfully.

He giggled more, louder and she leaned down to kiss his chubby cheek. “Say hello to the stars for me, okay?”

They read some more before settling down on the couch, watching cartoons featuring superheroes. And just like Iris had promised, JJ’s father came back home before noon.

“Daddy!” JJ yelped when he heard him coming in. He rushed toward him, leaving the couch, where he had been all wrapped up around Felicity and jumping in his father’s arms.

“Hey buddy!” Barry said, lifting him up. “I am happy to see you too!”

“Me too daddy,” he soundly kissed his father’s cheek before saying, a small pout on his lips. “But I don’t want Felicity to leave, I love Felicity she is nice and funny. Can we keep her?”

Barry chuckled at that, just as Felicity got up from the couch to greet him. They had run into each other a few times at the coffee and although they hadn’t had time to talk a lot, Felicity had felt like he was a nice but slightly dorky guy.

“Felicity’s not a pet JJ,” Barry explained patiently, “you can’t keep her forever!”
“What if I marry her? Then she’ll have to stay with me.”

Felicity snorted and Barry’s smile widened. “Well, first you’ll have to talk with your mother about this – and between us, I highly doubt she’ll allow you to marry anyone before you’re forty. Then, maybe Felicity doesn’t want to marry you.”

“You don’t?” JJ asked, his big brown eyes looking at her expectantly.

“Well…” He cocked his head, his eyes giving her up a puppy look she found herself unable to resist to. “Fine, I’ll marry you. Until you don’t want me anymore.”

A smile spread on the boy’s lips and he high-fived his father. Then, he said. “Will you stay for lunch?”

“Yeah,” his father approved. “Offering you lunch is the least we can do,” he added.

She shrugged. “I really didn’t mind watching him, you don’t need to feel like you owe me anything.”

Barry smiled at her, before pressing a small kiss to his son’s temple. “Okay, let me rephrase this: do you have anything else better to do?”

She shook her head.

“It’s settled then, you’re staying.”

Barry and Felicity cooked a quick lunch and JJ helped them by setting the table – meaning he put things on the table and Felicity came after him to right their position. Felicity and Barry fell into an easy conversation, the both of them sharing a multitude of interests. They talked TV-shows and movies and comics and Felicity really liked that. It was the kind of conversation she couldn’t have with Oliver, Diggle or Georgia because they weren’t nearly as much into that kind of stuff as her. And she understood and respected that. They all had their hobbies and very own universes. But it felt nice to talk to someone who understood puns such as “May the 4th be with you” or knew instantly what she meant when she said “I want a sonic screwdriver for Hanukkah”.

At some point during the meal though, JJ’s eyes started fluttering and Barry put him to bed for a nap.

“Poor thing, he’s been up for so long,” she pointed out.

Barry nodded, sitting back down in front of her. “Yeah, thank you really for this morning though. You saved us, big time!”

She raised a hand to stop him. “It was a pleasure, he’s a sweet and lovely boy.”

Barry chuckled. “With you, yes. He enjoys torturing us, his parents, can you believe it?! He asked, sounding slightly offended.

Felicity huffed back a laugh. “I can actually!”

They started talking about their work after that, he was working on an exhausting case, he couldn’t tell her much about it just that it was big. She told him about Q. Inc and they ended up talking about Oliver.

“I owe him a lot,” Barry confessed as they walked toward the living-room and sat down on the couch, the both of them holding a steaming cup of coffee in their hands. “When we moved in Star City, things were complicated. Iris was pregnant, jobless and I had to work extra-hours to pay the
bills. I ended up working on a robbery case in Oliver’s apartment. The detective in charge of the investigation was a douche, he still is – a douche I mean – and he works with the traffic units now.” The thought made him smile. “He basically told Oliver to get reimbursed by his insurance and forget about what had been stolen. He was a Queen after all, he didn’t have to worry about getting his money back. But the thing was, the thief had taken some family jewels Oliver really wanted back. So I kept investigating on my own, you know, running a couple more tests on the evidence found on the crime scene. My work paid off and we found the robber and what he had stolen before he could sell it back to a wholesaler. Oliver was so grateful, he didn’t know what to do to thank me. In the end, he introduced Iris to Sara, she offered her a job and we’ve been friends ever since.”

“Wow! That’s an unusual way to make a new friend.”

Barry smiled at that. “Yep, but I can’t say I regret it. Oliver is a good man, loyal and trustworthy. You’re lucky to work with him.”

“Careful Barry, you sound like someone who has a crush.”

Her comment made him laugh.

“I consider myself lucky to have him as my friend,” she went on. “We had a fight on Friday and he showed up at my house at three am with flowers and ice-cream as an apology. Seriously, what kind of crazy person does that?”

Barry chuckled lightly. “The craziest kind!” Felicity rolled her eyes at Barry and he quickly developed what he had meant. “I mean, the best kind! And Oliver, he is a good man, really. Good men do that and more for their friends.”

Felicity tilted her head, sensing the shift in his tone. “What do you mean?”

Barry shrugged. “He helped me when I was in trouble.” He paused for a second, clearly figuring out if he could tell her more or should just shut up. He went with the first solution. “A year ago, my mother died in a car accident and… losing his soulmate nearly killed my dad. Oliver helped me find a place for him in a soulmate’s clinic. He’s still there but is getting a little better every day,” he explained briefly. “All thanks to Oliver.”

A wave of understanding and compassion washed through Felicity as she realised exactly what Barry wasn’t saying. His father had broken down after his soulmate’s death, the same way her mother had after her father had left. And just like her mother, he had needed to be closely followed by doctors, therapists and specialists in order to get better. And thanks to Oliver, he had gotten the care he had needed. Something shifted inside Felicity as a new form of respect for her boss and friend blossoming in her heart.

“My mother was in a clinic too,” she replied softly and his eyes widened when he understood what she was implying. They didn’t know one another very well but they got that. They got each other’s pain and fear for their remaining parent. He nodded and Felicity knew she had just gotten a new friend, one with whom she shared more than just a couple of personality traits. It was a friend who was going through the same thing she had been through, one who was feeling what she had felt. It was a friend who understood without her saying a word.

And it was priceless.

Barry and Felicity kept talking a little while longer but at some point, tiredness caught up with the blonde and she left to go home and rest. A long week at work was ahead of her, she needed her rest. She wrapped herself up in a blanket and curled up on her couch, her head resting on a bright pink
fluffy pillow her mother had gotten her.

Again, she was woken up by her ringtone and she mentally slapped herself for not turning it down when she had gotten home.

“Smoak,” she uttered, her voice rough and sleepy.

“Good afternoon “Smoak”, this is Oliver Queen. May I speak with my sweet and lovely EA, please?”

“She is sleeping,” she groaned. “At least, she is trying to but people keep calling her at indecent hours.”

Oliver chuckled on the other side of the line and it drew a smile on Felicity’s lips. “There she is, my smiling girl Wednesday.”

She tilted her head, surprised. “How do you know I’m smiling?”

“Just a hunch” he replied before going on. “Felicity, I need your help.”

She rolled her eyes. “I figured that much already,” she teased him. “What is it?”

“Remember how my parents helped funding the new aisle of Star City’s museum?”

She nodded sensing where this was going. “Yeah…”

“Well, the inauguration is on Saturday and I was wondering if you wanted to be my date. My very friendly and platonic date, but still… The girl on my arm. There’ll be a ball and I’ll need someone to dance with.”

“Why don’t you ask Thea?”

“My little sister is attending the ball on her own,” he explained.

That made Felicity laugh, he sounded really offended Thea had refused to come with him. “You must be desperate if the only friend you can ask also happens to be your EA,” she said, shifting from her position on the couch.

“Or maybe you’re the only friend I wanted to ask,” he corrected.

Her next breath got caught in her throat and she coughed, her cheeks reddening. “Honestly, I don’t think it’s a good idea. Me at a party with your mother…” She shivered. “Been there, done that.”

“I talked to her Felicity, she promised me she’d stop.”

“Oliver…” She tried to protest.

“Come on Felicity. I’ll make sure everything is nut-free and I’ll even let you take a sip of champagne.”

She arched an annoyed eyebrow, though she knew he couldn’t see her. “Wow, you really know how to talk to a woman Mr Queen,” she said, dryly.

“Felicity, don’t make me involve Tommy. You know how persuasive he can be.”

Felicity chuckled at that. Honestly, she didn’t need to be threatened with Tommy to accept. She
could picture Oliver in her mind on her own, his blue eyes pleading with hers, his lips pouting slightly in that cute way to coax her, his head slightly tilted, his hair messy and tempting her fingers to run through the sandy strands.

She sighed, consciously ignoring how screwed she was.

“Okay, I’ll come. But you better let me have my own flute of champagne,” she warned him.

She heard him breathe in relief of the other side of the line. “Felicity, you’re a life-saviour.”

She chuckled at that. “Tell me something I don’t know.”

“Felicity, did you print the reports I asked you?” Oliver asked from his office. “Felicity?” He called her when she didn’t reply, when she didn’t even do as much as acknowledging him. “Felicity?”

Oliver said, getting up and coming to her. “Felicity are you okay?” He asked, worried.

His presence got her out of her drowsiness and she quickly locked her computer, so that he wouldn’t see what she had been staring at.

“The reports?” She asked, turning her chair to face him. “Yes, I got them somewhere, here, hidden,” she started rummaging through her files before finding what she was looking for and holding it out triumphantly for him.

“Thank you!” He started to walk away but then he stopped and spun around, facing her again. “You sure you’re okay?”

She gave him a small smile, untightening her grasp around her mouse slightly. “Yeah, I am all good,” she assured him, unlocking her screen and closing her email box, her heart pounding in her chest.

She saw him arch an eyebrow and open his mouth to say something but she was saved by the bell. Or more precisely by the elevators’ bell. Frowning, they weren’t expecting any visitors, Felicity got up from behind her desk to join Oliver. Her heart skipped a beat when she saw both Moira and Thea Queen walked toward them. Felicity didn’t mind the young girl’s presence, it was her mother she was less fond of.

“Mom?” Oliver asked, surprised, stepping in front of Felicity to meet his mom. “What are you doing here? And why isn’t Thea at school?”

“Woah, hello to you too Ollie, how are you? Fine? Me too, thanks for asking,” Thea sighed, crossing her arms over her chest and scowling, obviously upset. But it seemed to Felicity she wasn’t mad at her brother but at her mother. Moira was standing next to her but Thea was paying extra attention to her, to make sure their shoulders weren’t brushing, and she was all tensed-up. Something had obviously happened between the two.

“Later Oliver,” Moira said as an answer to her son’s question. She offered him her cheek then so that he could kiss it. “Miss Smoak, good afternoon,” she said, her tone cordial and her eyes not cold or filled with hatred meeting hers.

Frowning, Felicity did shake her hand in greetings. “Mrs Queen,” she said, not really understanding
what was happening. She knew Oliver had talked to his mother but she hadn’t really been expecting her to act like this, all polite and cordial, around her.

“Thea, why don’t you go tell your brother what you did today?” Moira suggested, her eyes not leaving Felicity. “I’ll stay here and speak with Miss Smoak.”

The teenager followed Oliver into his office reluctantly, dragging her feet.

“So Felicity, how is work?” Moira asked, her perfectly manicured hands trailing along the files on her desk.

Felicity frowned. She was by no mean a woman comfortable with pretending or acting like some things had never been said.

“Are we really doing this?” She asked, frowning.

Moira tilted her head. “What are you talking about dear?”

Felicity didn’t like the way she called her “dear”. It was meant to be kind but Moira’s mouth had a way to make the word sound threatening. “The thing where you pretend you like me and I act like I don’t know you hate me.”

Moira smiled at her. “I have to say I like your honesty Felicity,” she told her. “But I’ve been speaking a lot with my son lately and I decided to give you a chance. I realised what I had said and done to you was completely unjustified and I am just trying to start over. If it’s okay with you, that is.”

Felicity stared at her suspiciously, trying to see if Moira really was sincere or was just playing a new game. The mail she had gotten earlier not helping. But before she could say anything else, Thea and Oliver came back, the latter with furrowed eyebrows.

“Oliver,” Moira said, her tone cheerful. “I was just telling Felicity I am looking forward seeing the two of you at the museum opening this week. This is why I am actually here, there’s a few things I need to discuss with you Oliver. Thea stay here with Felicity, I won’t be long.”

Mother and son left them and Felicity found herself alone with Thea. The youngest Queen came to sit down on her chair, and she started turning on it, playing with it.

“So,” Felicity said, taken aback by Thea’s attitude. “Why aren’t you at school?”

Thea shrugged. “I got sent home.”

Felicity’s eyes widened. “What happened?”

“Oh, you didn’t ask “what did you do?” it’s nice to see someone still has faith in me.” She laughed dryly and Felicity frowned. She wasn’t anything like the cheerful and happy girl she had met before. She opened her mouth to say something but Thea cut her off. “And before you say anything, you should know that, for once, no, the idea wasn’t mine, but yes it was worth the look on my mother’s face when she came to get me. How can you spend hours sitting down on this chair?” She asked, patting it arms. “It’s so uncomfortable,” she complained.

Felicity blinked, not knowing what to say or what to do. There was something in Thea’s eyes, a mix of pain and frustration she was doing her best to hide and it made Felicity’s heart clench in her chest.

“And before I forget, I arranged an appointment with Carl for us on Friday at three pm. I heard, you
decided to remain around the Queen family, God help you, and I’ll make sure you are dressed up to play the part. I won’t let the wolves tear you apart.”

Felicity huffed back a laugh. “Come on Thea there’s no need to be so dramatic, your family isn’t that bad.”

“Or so you think,” Thea replied mysteriously. “And before you say anything, I talked about it with Ollie, he said it was fine with him.”

Felicity shifted, feeling suddenly a bit uncomfortable. “Is it really necessary to go so early? I mean we could meet with Carl after I am done at Q. Inc.”

Thea shook her head. “Nope. We have so many things to do, I am pretty sure we won’t have enough time.”

Felicity’s eyes widened and Thea burst in laughing. “I am going to torture you in the most delicious ways Smoak and you’ll be begging for more before it’s over.”

Felicity chuckled and Thea’s eyes sparkled with mischief, her cheerfulness chasing the shadows away from her blue orbs. Moira and walked out of his office a few minutes after and the women took their leave, letting Oliver and Felicity go back to their work. And as she watched them leave, Felicity couldn’t help but notice that Thea was walking next to her mother, yes, but was also making sure to be as far away as appropriately possible from her mother.

When Felicity came back from Curtis’ lab with his reports for the week, it was to find Thea sitting in her chair in front of her desk. Again.

“Still uncomfortable,” she said, pointing at the chair. “You ready to go?”

“I still have a few things to tell Oliver before I’m ready to go.”

Thea rolled her eyes. “Relax Felicity, you’re going to see him again tomorrow. I know twenty-four hours is long but I think the two of you might just make it.”

It was Felicity’s turn to roll her eyes at her. “I really need to tell him a few things about this report,” she said. “Then we can go.”

Thea put her beanie back on her head. “Waiting for you here.”

Shaking her head, Felicity came in Oliver’s office holding the precious report out. She dropped them on his office and explained a few details to him. In the end, he had to kick her out of his office because Felicity wasn’t comfortable with leaving the company early, two Fridays in a row. She told him so and he assured her it was fine, pushing her toward the exit, his warm hands on her shoulders, her cheeks red in embarrassment.

“Have a nice afternoon ladies,” he told them.

“Don’t worry big brother, I’ll take good care of your EA, she won’t have a hair out of place when you see her again.”

Felicity felt her cheeks redden even more and Oliver huffed back a laugh. “Felicity’s not the one I
am worrying about.”

He winked at the blonde and Felicity said, her tone reassuring. “I’ll watch your sister carefully, don’t worry.”

Thea rolled her eyes and the two girls walked out of Q. Inc, buttoning up their coats when they met the coldness of the air. A cold spell had started in Star City during the week, winter was coming and Felicity was so not looking forward going out the following evening, only wearing a light, silky dress.

Felicity drove them to Carl’s private showroom. The small man welcomed them with his usual cheerfulness and perfect manners. He offered them tea and asked them questions about the museum opening – asking who’d be there, what kind of music would be played and so many things about the organisation’s details. Thea answered most of the questions and once Carl had a better idea of where they were going and the kind of event they were attending, he started rummaging through the dresses in his showroom, grabbing five at a time, throwing them at their faces and pushing them toward the fitting rooms.

They had a really, really nice time trying on the dresses together. Carl had cleared a corner of his showroom, to give them some space to parade in front of him. They did it together most of the times, walking out of the fitting rooms together and they gave him a little show, posing and laughing together. Carl was mesmerized by them, saying it looked as if they had been doing it together for years. Both his assistants agreed with him and it made the two girls blush and giggle at the same time. Felicity didn’t know why, but she felt around Thea the same way she felt around Tommy. Thea was safe, Thea was okay. She could be herself around her and let go of things. So she did. She enjoyed herself and they had the best of time, sharing an intense moment of complicity, complimenting or teasing one another. At some point, Carl asked for a camera and snapped a few pictures of them, trying to capture their chemistry.

The best picture, the one Felicity sent to her mother and Thea to her brother, in spite of Felicity protesting and saying it wasn’t really appropriate for her boss to see her like that, was the last one he snapped. Felicity was sitting across a couch, her legs thrown over the armchairs and her short bustier dress revealing inches and inches of skin. She had set her curls free a long time ago and they had been spread on a dark red pillow, Thea’s hands lost in them. The young Queen was sitting down against the couch, the top of her head pressing against Felicity’s ribs, her legs crossed in front of her, hidden by the silk of her dress. Carl took the pic from above, climbing up a small ladder in order to do so. It was a gorgeous picture and the two girls both really liked it.

After that picture, they went back to their main activity though, which was finding the perfect dress for the museum opening. And unfortunately, problems arose when Felicity refused to try on a gorgeous black silky dress with a lot of cut outs.

“What’s wrong?” Thea asked, frowning.

“I just don’t like the cut outs,” Felicity replied, twisting her fingers together, feeling more and more uncomfortable as her friend kept on insisting.

“Girl, you have a killer body. You don’t have to be afraid, you’ll look great in it.”

Felicity shook her head, her hand coming up to hold her ribs.

“At least try it on, to make him happy,” she punctuated her sentence with the cutest pout ever, and she looked so much like her brother, Felicity almost gave in. But then her grip on her ribs tightened and she remembered why she couldn’t, didn’t want to wear cut outs.
“Thea, please just let go. Besides, I am already falling for the pink dress,” she quickly added, pointing at the dress she was currently wearing.

“It does look good on you,” Thea agreed, her eyebrows furrowed.

Carl raised two thumbs in approval and they spent a bit more time looking for a perfect dress for Thea. They eventually found it and then they started looking for accessories to go with their dresses. They tried countless pair of shoes, to Felicity’s delight. Carl gave them another lesson of grace and bearing, righting their ways of walking and moving while wearing heels with their dresses. It was way past five when they had everything they needed for the opening and Felicity really thought they were going to leave, earlier than Thea had planned to. But then Carl asked them to put their shoes on and made sure they knew how to dance on the music. Thea, of course, had been taking dancing lessons ever since she had been five. She was as graceful as a feather and she moved perfectly in synch with the rhythm of the music. Felicity on the other hand… She had the agility of an elephant in a china shop. She had never been a great dancer, her dancing should be actually called her jumping and throwing her arms in the air. She had danced at the Queen’s party but it had been more swirling around and she had had Tommy to guide her. The following day, Moira Queen had made sure the musicians would play waltz. The equivalent of torture in Felicity’s vocabulary. She really loved dancing but only when other people were actually doing the dancing. Even Carl, who was according to Thea, a miracle maker didn’t get her to “float around the room like a cloud in the sky”.

When they made it back to Felicity’s car, they were both feeling exhausted.

“I don’t know how I am going to drive,” Felicity said after a while. “He killed my legs.”

“Thank God your car is an automatic then,” Thea said winking at her, just when her phone buzzed. “Ollie replied to the picture I sent him!” She happily told her, as Felicity turned on the ignition.

“Really, what is he saying?” She asked, driving out of the parking lot.

“He loves your legs and thinks you should only be wearing that kind of dresses in the office.”

Felicity chocked on her saliva, her cheeks turning bright red. “What?”

Thea chuckled, the little vixen. “Just kidding.”

Felicity breathed out in relief, it was the third time spoke of them that way and it wasn’t sitting well with her. They were friends, nothing more and she didn’t want Thea to get the wrong idea of how things were. He had a soulmate, they had an unconventional relationship, yes, but still. There were some boundaries one just didn’t cross.

“He says he doesn’t allow you to quit to become a model. And he blames me for my “bad influence” on you.”

It was Felicity’s turn to chuckle. “What about your mom? Why didn’t you send her the picture?”

Thea scowled and stiffened immediately. “Because. What I do in my free time is none of her business.”

Felicity’s hand clenched around the wheel. She had noticed things were tensed between the mother and the daughter when they had visited them at QC on Monday but she had thought it had only been temporary, a one-time thing. Clearly, it hadn’t been.

“She is your mother,” she tried to remind her, her voice smooth.
“Tell me something I don’t know,” Thea sighed. “She is always trying to control everything, it’s exhausting.”

“I am sure she only wants what’s best for you.”

“The same way she was mean to you because she thought it was what would be best for Ollie if you disappeared?”

“She realised her mistake and apologised,” Felicity explained. Moira had come by Q. Inc again during the week and she had been nothing but cordial to Felicity. Of course, the blonde hadn’t forgotten what she had done to her, but for Oliver she wouldn’t hold onto the past either. It wouldn’t do any of them any good.

“If you truly believe that then you’re a fool. She hates your guts and will try to stab you in the back whenever she can.” Thea’s words were harsh and although Felicity wasn’t exactly hurt by them, she hadn’t been really convinced by Moira’s abrupt change of behaviour, she still winced. “Just so you know,” the brunette went on, “she doesn’t really approve of this,” she pointed at the both of them. “She’s putting on a good face for Oliver but she made me understand she wasn’t okay with me hanging out with you.”

“Why did you do it then?” Felicity asked.

“Because I like you dummy, you’re kind, honest and funny. It’s refreshing around here. Plus we have natural chemistry,” she showed her the picture on her phone and Felicity had to agree with her. “And also because not doing what Moira Queen wants me to do is my favourite activity.”

Felicity frowned, glancing quickly at the young girl sitting down next to her. She looked frustrated and sad, her legs to her chest, her eyes stubbornly facing away, staring at the darkness enveloping Star City.

“Theya, do you want to go eat something?” She offered.

She had been about to take her back to her house but the young Queen looked like she could use a good talk. It was obvious she needed someone to talk to, someone who wasn’t from her family and after all the things she had done for her, Felicity thought she owed Thea that much. And who knew, maybe she’d be able to help her.

“I am supposed to go back home immediately after I am done with Carl,” Thea reminded her.

“No one but us knows we’re done with him. Besides, you just said not doing what you mother wants you to is your favourite activity.”

Thea stared for a second, utterly speechless. “I knew there was a reason why I liked you Smoak.”

Felicity chuckled, shaking her head and drove to Big Belly Burger. They settled down in a booth in the back of the room, where no one could see them. She highly doubted anyone would recognise Thea but she didn’t want to take any risks. There, Thea proceeded to tell her a bit more about her strained relationship with her parents.

It was harder to be a Queen in Star City than it looked. People were expecting things from her, because of who she was and the things her name implied. Her parents put a lot of pressure on her shoulders, they wanted to shape her into what they wanted her to be and Thea just didn’t want the life they were setting up for her. It was very cliché but it didn’t mean it wasn’t true or painful for the young girl. She was craving normalcy and anonymity and honestly, Felicity couldn’t blame her. She had been in the spotlight her whole life long, she had never really had anything that only belonged to
“What about your soulmate?” Felicity asked, finishing her milkshake.

“If he is the slightest bit smart, he’ll stay away from me and my messed up life,” Thea replied bitterly. “Sometimes, I almost wish to wake up with my side of the bond alone, seeking his.” She chuckled, but it lacked any warmth and enthusiasm. “Can you believe it? I wish my soulmate would take the Med.”

Felicity’s heart clenched in her chest and she reached out to take Thea’s hands. “Have you registered to the SID?” She asked softly.

Thea looked up to the ceiling. “Mom’s handling my account. It could be that there is a match but I don’t know about it because mom thought he wasn’t an appropriate soulmate for me.”

Felicity froze at her words. “She wouldn’t do that, would she?” Her voice was shaking, her memory taking her back to that fateful day where she had met James Wilde. She wasn’t a fool, she knew there were a lot of people like her soulmate’s family. She felt really sorry for Oliver and Thea. Being born in that kind of family surely wasn’t easy.

Thea shrugged. “I honestly don’t know,” she confessed shaking her head. “Oliver is so lucky, Isabel is perfect, exactly what mom and dad had in mind for him.” She sighed, pushing the rest of her fries away.

“What’s your number?” Felicity asked, concern filling her. Did Oliver know about this? She knew Thea and he were very close but had she told him about this? He had already found his soulmate, so he didn’t have to worry about any of this but it didn’t mean he didn’t care about his sister’s soulmate.

“7.3,” Thea said.

Wow, a strong bond. It wasn’t rare to have weird numbers such as, 7.3 or 5.2 or 3.1. Measuring the level of pre-bonding connection wasn’t an exact science. Technically, Felicity’s bond to her soulmate had been 8.8. But since it was above eight, she had to round up to nine and take the Med as if her level was exactly 9.

“Can I tell you a secret?” Thea asked her after a few seconds of silence.

Felicity nodded, leaning forward. Thea reached for her bag and got a small needle out of it, it looked a lot like the one full of epi Felicity carried everywhere with her, because of her allergy to almost every kind of nuts. She didn’t have to ask what Thea’s contained though. She had seen a needle just like this once in a hospital in Vegas when she had been fourteen years old.

“He lives in the city?” She asked, not believing it.

Thea nodded shyly. “We’ve almost met thrice already. But honestly? He doesn’t deserve to get involved into all this mess. I don’t want that for him.” She paused for a second then added. “People think being a Queen is funny, they think having all this money and the shining cars is awesome. But that’s the thing. They only think about the bright and shiny side of things. The reality of my life is very different from what magazines keep writing.”

“Don’t you think it should be your soulmate’s call to make?” Felicity asked, her hand seeking Thea’s and squeezing her fingers lightly, to comfort her. “Maybe he wants to be with you,” she told her.

“Maybe,” Thea repeated. “But I don’t want to be with him.”
The words stung, they reminded Felicity of her own soulmate, who hadn’t wanted her, who had gotten involved with other girls and had partied so much she had feared he’d die from a cirrhosis at the age of forty. She felt the bond inside her roar to life, just like it always did whenever she thought about the past, about her soulmate. It pressed against the edged of her mind, looking for a way out, desperate to find its other half. She took a long breath to steady herself and it did slightly alleviate the pain in her chest. If Thea truly didn’t want to be with her soulmate, she’d act just her own had. She’d attend parties, she’d get drunk, she’d drugs. She’d even take the Med. But she wasn’t doing any of those things, or at least did it discreetly enough, and it told Felicity more about her than her words.

The two girls talked some more but soon enough, Thea’s phone started buzzing so Felicity drove her back to the Queen mansion. She hugged the young Queen tightly before they parted ways.

“If you ever need anything,” she whispered in her ear, “you know I am only a phone-call away, okay?”

Thea nodded, putting a strand of her hair back behind her ear. “Yeah thank you. For the meal and for the talk. I really appreciate it,” she said, looking and sounding really sincere.

“It was nothing,” Felicity assured her.

“It was already more than what other people ever did for me,” she squeezed Felicity’s hands before offering her a small smile. “Now go home and sleep! You need to rest after a day like this.”

Chuckling, Felicity nodded before leaving.

Felicity really should have seen it coming.

She really, really should have seen it coming.

After all, it wasn’t like Thea hadn’t warned her.

Or that she hadn’t had doubts about Moira’s apology to her.

But even if she forgot about all of this, she still should have seen it coming when she got Oliver’s text.

--

19:37 pm

My mother needs me there now, I can’t come and pick you up.

Meet me inside? I’ll make it up to you by taking you to BBG when we’re done, pinkie promise.

OQ”

--

Of course Moira would find a way to bring her son inside first so that Felicity would arrive alone. And of course she’d tell the welcoming team she was persona non grata and of course she’d keep Oliver busy so that he wouldn’t answer his phone.
“I am telling you mister, I am Oliver Queen’s EA, we were supposed to come in together, platonically, as platonic friends, because that’s what we are, friends I mean and also colleagues, because I am his EA. Did I mention I was his EA? Because I am, I work for him five days out of seven and damn what was my point already?”

“I hear you Miss Smoak but Mrs Queen clearly specified that you weren’t allowed inside the building,” the man she had been arguing with for the last ten minutes said, his voice strained as he was reaching the limit of his patience. “Now, you can leave on your own volition, or I can call the security team and have them escort you to your car.”

Her cheeks burning because of the feeling of humiliation she felt bursting in her chest, Felicity walked away, hitting the pavement angrily with her heels. She could feel people in the crowd watch her walk away as she tried one more time to call Oliver. When he didn’t pick up, again, she felt her last shred of dignity being taken away from her. She had never been so humiliated in her life before, Moira could give Mandy Miller a run for her money.

“Felicity?” She heard a familiar voice calling her.

Turning around, her eyes fell on Tommy, who was waiting to get inside, his soulmate, Laurel Lance, standing by his side, wearing a gorgeous golden dress. She wiped at her eyes and made her way to him.

“What’s going on?” He asked immediately, concern filling his eyes. “Where’s Ollie?”

“Already inside,” she said bitterly. “Moira told the security I was not to be let inside and he’s not answering his phone.”

“Damn it,” Tommy cursed, reaching for his own phone. He tried to call Oliver and in the meantime, Felicity introduced herself to Laurel properly.

“Felicity Smoak,” she told her, shaking her hand.

“I’ve heard a lot about you,” Laurel replied. “I am happy to finally meet you.”

“Likewise,” the blonde replied, truly meaning it. “Although I had hoped it’d be under better circumstances.”

“Oliver’s not picking his phone,” Tommy let out through gritted teeth, his frustration evident.

Felicity sighed. “It’s okay, I didn’t really want to go anyway. Tell him you saw me but I wasn’t feeling well, I don’t want him to argue with his mother over me.”

“Felicity no,” Tommy argued, grabbing her arm to hold her back. “I’m Tommy Merlyn and I’ll get you in, don’t worry. And then, we’re going to have a talk with Moira.”

“Tommy,” she protested. “It’s not necessary, really. They won’t let me in and I don’t want you involved. I don’t need…”

“Felicity just shut up and let me handle this, okay?”

She did shut her mouth, her stomach twisting inside her belly because of her nervousness, fear and humiliation. When they reached the man at the museum’s entrance, he refused to let her in, again.

“I am Tommy Merlyn and I am telling you Moira Queen had made a mistake. Maybe I should also remind you I am the second best donator to this museum and the whole Ancient Greece’s collections
was funded by my family.”

The man’s cheeks reddened furiously and he let them in. Felicity stared at Tommy for a whole minute, her mind completely numb. It was the second time he was saving her from Moira and she was at a loss for words.

“Felicity, you okay?” He asked, helping both Laurel then her getting out of their coats.

She nodded, the question, bringing her back to the present moment. “Yes, thank you for your help. Now, please let me handle Moira on my own, okay? And don’t tell Oliver anything. I got this.”

“You sure?” He insisted as they made their way toward the ballroom.

“Absolutely,” she assured him.

“Okay – and just so you know, if you want to throw a flute of champagne to her face, I won’t hold you back.”

Felicity chuckled at that and so did Laurel. “Something tells me Felicity is going to be more subtle than this though,” Tommy’s soulmate pointed out.

Felicity nodded firmly, her eyes scanning the crowd. When they fell on a familiar silhouette standing among people in a black tux, his broad shoulders and messy hair unmistakable, a smile spread on her lips. And then, as if he had felt her eyes on him, he turned around a smile of his own spreading on his lips. His blue eyes travelled from the top of her head and her elegant up-do to her feet, taking in her pink silky gown. It was a gorgeous gown with an asymmetric shoulder and a pleaded skirt and belted waist. It was very simple, except for the slit at her right leg, exposing inches of her creamy skin. It wasn’t an outrageous slit, it stopped mid-thigh, but it was kind of sexy and she pinpointed the exact moment Oliver spotted it.

He made his way through the people present skilfully, reaching them in record time.

“Felicity.”

Her name fell from his lips in a breath, a small confession carrying more than its meaning. His bright blue eyes on her filled with satisfaction and pride telling her everything his mouth wasn’t.

“Oliver,” she replied, taking the hand he was offering her.

They stared at each other for a while and the more his eyes remained on her, the more she felt her cheeks burn. They were so intense, so focused on her, it made her feel uncomfortable. Not awkward uncomfortable but it’s-so-hot-in-here uncomfortable.

Tommy clearing his throat reminded them of the world’s existence and their eyes broke away, shattering the bubble they had gotten lost in. They did some small-talk and were soon joined by Thea, who looked absolutely beautiful in her night blue gown. Oliver found it hard to speak when he saw his baby sister, who wasn’t a baby anymore, dressed like a woman.

They melted in the crowd after that, making their way from one group of people to another, talking about art and archaeology, complimenting the Queens for their donations to the new aisle and on the rare paintings, statues and other pieces of art they had gathered. Waiter and waitresses were walking swiftly among them, furtive shadows carrying trays and making sure everyone was holding a flute of champagne and eating petits fours.

They moved to the ballroom for Moira’s speech. The museum used to be a castle and when City Hall
had decided to turn it into a museum, they had kept some rooms, such as the ballroom, to hold receptions there. The Queen’s matriarch came on stage under a thunder of applauses, to which she responded with a bright smile on her lips and a tonic wave of hand. She stopped at the centre of the stage and when she spotted Felicity in the crowd, her eyes widened slightly before she got herself back together. She made a beautiful speech about art and the importance of remembering the past before announcing people the ball was finally opened.

Oliver turned toward Felicity expectantly, a small smile on his lips. But her eyes were focused on Moira Queen, who was talking to the museum’s curator. She made her way to her, promising Oliver she’d be back in a minute or so.

Anger had flared inside her, the moment she had seen the Queen matriarch. There was a lot Felicity could take. Insults. Disdain. Judgement. But hypocrisy and humiliation were too much. Moira had crossed a line and Felicity was going to make it very clear she wasn’t going to let herself be intimidated by her.

“Miss Smoak, what a surprise,” Moira greeted her dryly.

“I guess it must be a pretty big one,” Felicity said, crossing her arms over her chest.

Moira batted her eyelashes innocently. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” she assured with quite some nerve, her blue eyes cold and filled with renewed hatred. It only served to stroke the fire burning in Felicity’s veins.

“You know exactly what I am talking about,” she hissed. “You didn’t want me in here, you told the security I wasn’t allowed inside. Why?”

“Does it really matter?” Moira asked, looking annoyed. “You got in, sadly. But it’s okay, it’s only the beginning. I’ll have you out of this town before the year is over.”

“Oh so you think,” Felicity shot back. “I’m here to stay.”

“Says who? You? My son? Oh Miss Smoak please, don’t embarrass yourself any further.” She chuckled dryly. “You don’t think my son is going to pick your side, do you? Or maybe he will, the way he did the other day. I wouldn’t mind that to be honest.”

Felicity clenched her fists around her clutch, wishing she had a flute of champagne with her. Her cheeks burn at the memory of what had happened with Oliver barely a week ago.

“My son is never going to pick you Miss Smoak, because you’re nothing to him. You’ve never been anything and you never will be. Just get used to it and leave.”

Or what? Felicity thought.

“You know Mrs Queen you sound a bit too defensive, for someone so sure of winning.”

“Spare yourself a heartbreak Miss Smoak and just leave already.”

She tilted her head. “Excuse-me, a heartbreak?”

Moira snorted. “I see the way you look at him. I know an interested woman when I see one.”

Again, Felicity felt like she had been slapped. Instead of defending herself, she knew it was pointless to try and explain she wasn’t a gold-digger, she chose to attack.
“Oh really? Is it because you’re one yourself?”

Moira glared at her, truly glared at her and it took everything Felicity had in her for her not to take a step back. She held her head high, her spine straightened the way it used to be whenever she confronted Mandy Miller. Except this wasn’t just a bully. This was Moira Queen, her boss’ mother, a very wealthy and influent woman.

“Felicity?”

The blonde turned around, and saw Laurel staring at her worriedly. Felicity spun again, to face Moira but saw that she had left. She let out a deep breath.

“I’m sorry for interrupting,” the brunette in front of her said, “but Oliver is looking for you.”

“I need a drink,” she whispered, her legs shaking slightly after her confrontation with Moira.

“The bar is right over there,” Laurel told her, pointing toward it. “How about we go get you a little something? We can learn more about one another around a drink.”

Felicity gave her a small smile. She didn’t look like Sara at all but she sounded nice and Felicity really felt like talking to another woman.

“Don’t take it personally,” Laurel eventually advised when she explained her the whole situation. “Moira has always been very protective of Oliver.”

“But it seems so personal to her. She. Hates. Me.”

“And you have no idea why?”

Felicity shook her head. “Maybe I offended her in another life?” She suggested.

Laurel chuckled at that. They talked some more about Moira but Felicity quickly realised it was leading her nowhere and so she orientated the conversation toward a less sensitive topic. Since she needed something to cheer her up, she asked about Tommy and her.

“Ow, it’s one silly story,” Laurel confessed, blushing slightly.

“Really? Tell me! Tommy has told me a lot about you but nothing about how the two of you met.”

“It’s so stupid, I feel so dumb whenever I think about it,” the brunette admitted, chewing on her lower lip. “We met in high-school but we were all part of the same anti-soulmate group. It was fashionable to be part of one back then,” she explained, shaking her head in disapproval to her past-self actions. “We were both taking the Med and we were both dating other people but we felt a pull toward one another. He was the one person I always came back to.”

“Twisted,” Felicity commented, sipping her champagne slowly, savouring it.

Laurel nodded. “I know right?”

“Why did you stop taking the Med?” Felicity asked.

Laurel shrugged. “After Oliver’s accident, Tommy and I both realised how fragile life was. We decided to stop taking the Med together. Imagine my surprise when he proudly showed me his mark when it reappeared on his skin and I realise it was the same as mine!”

The image made Felicity laugh. “It’s a beautiful story,” she said. “The two of you were meant to be.”
“That we were,” Laurel agreed.

Suddenly, she felt a wave of boldness strike her. “I heard Oliver wasn’t taking the Med back then. Do you know why?”

“Yes! He had a strong connection with his soulmate, they were an eight or a nine, I don’t remember exactly. And he said he couldn’t cut their bond, that she needed him.”

Felicity frowned in confusion. Oliver had told her his connection with Isabel had been a three. “Are you sure?” She insisted. “He told me his connection with Isabel was a three.”

Laurel blinked and her grip tightened on her glass. “Oh yes, silly me! Now that you’re saying it, I remember. I mixed up Oliver’s story, with one of our other friends’ story. Sorry!” She chuckled nervously. “Yes, you’re right, his connection was only a three.”

Felicity blinked not entirely convinced. Laurel hadn’t seemed to doubt her memory until Felicity had pointed out what Oliver had told her. But if she had been right, it meant Oliver had lied to her. Or at least had forgotten about his number. And she knew for a fact that forgetting your number was practically impossible. It was itched to your memory the same way the soulmark was itched to your skin.

Before she could think about any of this more, she felt a large hand fall on her naked shoulder, encompassing it completely. The fingers flexed on her skin just as she felt a presence behind her, warmth and a familiar scent radiating off of it.

“Tommy’s waiting for you with Thea, Laurel,” Oliver told her.

She nodded. “Yep, felt it,” she pointed at her heart. “It was nice talking to you Felicity, I look forward to seeing more of you.”

“Me too, see you later Laurel,” Felicity replied, a smile on her lips. She turned around, to face Oliver. His lips were pursed, his eyebrows furrowed. “What’s wrong?” She asked.

“Why are you avoiding me?” He shot back.

Her eyes widened. “I am not avoiding you, why would say that?”

“Well, you haven’t been your usual self earlier and then you left to go speak with my mother, of all people, and with Laurel.”

It was true she had been pretty upset at the beginning of the party, because of what Moira had done. But it had absolutely nothing to do with Oliver, and he needed to get this idea out of his head. Quickly.

“I am not avoiding you Oliver, I promise,” she assured him, her hands coming up to right his bow-tie’s position. She patted his chest lightly when she was done, smiling. “From now on, I’ll be spending time with you and you only, okay?”

He nodded. “You don’t have to. It’s just you’re starting to become quite popular among our friends and I wonder what it will take for me to remain your favourite person in Star City.”

“What makes you think you’re my favourite person in Star City?” She teased.

“Let’s not lie to each other, okay?” He replied, his tone humorous.
His comment brought her back to her conversation with Laurel. She opened her mouth to ask about his connection with his soulmate. But then she realised: it was none of her business. Oliver and she were friends yes, and the soulmate’s topic was a very private and intimate one. And she couldn’t blame him for not wanting to discuss it with her.

“Felicity did you hear me?” Oliver asked.

She tilted her head, getting out of her thoughts. “I’m sorry what?”

“I asked you,” his hand grabbed her arm, his thumb tracing the line of her bones, his eyes watching goose bumps break on her skin with fascination, “if you wanted to dance,” he finished, his fingers meeting hers.

“Yes,” she said, breathlessly, squeezing his hand, all thoughts about his soulmate forgotten.

He walked them toward the dancefloor then, where Tommy was dancing with Laurel, Thea with her father and Moira with Walter Steele, Queen Consolidated’s CFO and a close family friend. The Queen matriarch’s eyes threw daggers at Felicity when she saw her with Oliver but the blonde chose to ignore her and to focus on the man in front of her. He raised their joined hands up, his other down falling on her higher back, pulling her closer to him. She caught herself on his shoulder, and she wondered for a second what kind of picture they made together.

“I should probably mention I am a terrible dancer,” she confessed as Oliver started leading them among the crowd of other dancers.

“I am an impeccable dancer,” he told her. “Don’t worry Felicity, I’ve got you!”

“Carl is an impeccable dancer too,” she reminded him. “And even he couldn’t get me to dance proper…” Her words were cut when he let go of her to make her spin, his hand coming back quickly to pull her back to him.

“I think you’re doing just fine Felicity.”

And of course, she almost tripped when he said that.

“Stop thinking about your feet,” he advised her. “And focus on something else.”

“Like what?” She asked just as she looked up from her feet to meet his eyes.

“Me for example,” he told her, his voice lower than before, his eyes darkening slightly.

His grip on her back tightened, and his spread his fingers until his thumb grazed her naked skin. She kept her eyes on him and their bubble from earlier came back. She forgot about everything else but him, his blue eyes being the only thing she saw, his breaths the only thing she heard. It was easy she realised, dancing, “floating around the room like a cloud in the sky” with him. It was easy to swirl around the room, to only pull away for brief second whenever he had to make her turn, his hands always bringing her back to him, every time a little bit closer. It was easy to be lifted by him, her petite waist fitting perfectly between his palms. It was easy to dance, it was easy to be, and Felicity realised it was a given around Oliver.
True to his words, Oliver took her to Big Belly Burger before driving her home. They sat down in the same booth she had sat down with Thea the previous day, Diggle in front of them. Oliver was the one to take off her heels and to stretch her legs onto his lap and after that, he let her steal all his pickles and if Felicity could have fallen in love with someone who wasn’t her soulmate, she’d have fallen in love with him right there and then.

They were about to leave when she got a text from Tommy.

--

“I:23 am

I know this is going to get me into a lot of troubles but I SHIP you guys!

TM”

--

She frowned, staring at the picture he had added to his text. It had probably been taken between two dances, because both she and Oliver were standing still. They were staring at each other, completely oblivious to the world, a small smile lingering on Oliver’s lips.

“What is it?” Oliver asked, when he noticed she had been staring at her phone for a while.

She shook her head. “It’s nothing,” she assured him. “Tommy’s just messing with me.”

She saved the picture anyway.

They drove her back to her building then and Felicity bid them goodnight before making her way upstairs.

She felt something was wrong before she was out of the elevator. The hair at the back of her neck rose up, all her senses on alert. When she saw her door opened, the handle broken, she dropped both her clutch and heels rushing inside her home.

To say her apartment was a mess would be an understatement. It had been wrecked, completely and entirely wrecked. Someone had ripped her couch opened, her coffee table had been split, her bookshelf and desk snatched from the wall they had been fixed. Clothes, books, and broken tableware were scattered around the room, torn pages mixing with white feathers and broken pieces of glass. Her mattress was stuck in the stairs, ripped open just like her couch. Even her laptop and DVDs had been smashed on the floor. Her fluffy blanket she loved so much had been torn into pieces and Felicity felt her heart break at the sight of her beloved rabbit hutch, invaded and destroyed.

She raised up her shaking hands, which were still holding her phone, scorching tears rolling down her cheeks, burning her skin. She unlocked it and opened the mail which had turned her blood to ice when she had received it at Q. Inc the previous day.

“Star City doesn’t want you Miss Smoak.”

Chapter End Notes
So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)}
Hey guys!!

This is going to be a long note, bear with me please :) 

First thing first, I wanted to thank you for the amazing response this story is getting, whether it is on Twitter, Tumblr or AO3 obviously. You guys are blowing my mind and making me want to write so much more, to give so much more. Thank you! :)

The second thing is about the plot of the story. Some people are concerned with the pace of the story, and whether or not Felicity and Oliver are going to find out soon they're soulmates soon. Well... It's a slow-burn and though one of them will discover the truth before the other, it will take some time before they're both aware of it and they come together. At this moment, they're not in the right set of mind to deal with this, with their connection. They're not ready for it, I can't stress this enough. And it'll make more sense as we learn more about their pasts and what exactly happened to them. Plus, I'd like to explore a side of them, where they fall for the other in spite of them not knowing what they are to each other. So bear with me, I promise I'll make it up to you :)

And finally, I don't know when I'll be able to update next! My vacation are coming to an end far too quickly and I have to get back in my college stuff, especially because I'll have exams when I get back. Plus my birthday is coming at the end of the week, meaning that I'll be partying a lot - yay - but meaning also I'll have less time to write. I'll try to write a little bit every day, but if I keep writing monsters then it might not be enough to update more than once a week. I hope you understand :)

Anyway, back to the chapter, I hope it won't disappoint you guys because I'm aware it's not what you were expecting... But on the other hand, we're getting to know more about Oliver in it and the last scene brought tears to my eyes when I wrote it so.... Happy reading!! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 8:

“Don't let me go,

Don’t let me go,

Don’t let me go,

We’re falling apart and coming together again and again.”

- The Fray, Never say never.

Felicity didn’t sleep in her apartment that night.

It took her a while to get a grip on her emotions. But in the end, her inner strength was enough to
tame her fear and worry. Scared Felicity went away and rational Felicity came in, taking over control of her body and doing what needed to be done in order to keep herself safe and sane. She called a cab in the middle of the night and drove through the dark streets of Starling City, a small bag with a few belongings held tightly and protectively against her chest. She slept in a motel for the night. Actually, she didn’t sleep but she did stay in the shabby room for the night. She sat down on the cold sheets, looking for what to do, step by step. She needed to think and rely on her intelligence and resourcefulness to get herself out of this mess.

It made no doubts to her who was responsible for the break in and the destruction of her things. Two people had made it pretty clear they did not appreciate her presence in town: one was in Russia, the other was in Star City and had the money and resources to do pretty much everything she wanted. It was intimidation, plain and simple and Felicity needed to be the smarter one there. She needed to straighten herself and show she wasn’t impressed or scared. She wasn’t really, she had been through worse but the violence and the extremes Moira had been willing to go to that night made her pause and wonder.

Why did she hate her so much? Why did she want her gone so badly?

She had done nothing wrong!

And it was because she knew she hadn’t done anything worth such a wrath that she was going to stand her ground. She had all the rights to stay in Star City because, contrary to popular beliefs, Moira Queen did not rule it. And she was so wrong to think she wasn’t wanted in the city. Because she was, she had friends and she knew they cared about her and wanted her here. Oliver. Tommy. Thea. Diggle. She was going to stay, for all of them. But since the Queen’s matriarch had decided to level up her game, she was going to do just the same, adjusting her own game to hers.

The first thing she needed to do was to move in another building, one with a better security system. It had always been part of her plan, moving out of her rabbit hutch, but still it saddened her to have to leave so early. She really had gotten used to her little nest and had wanted to save some money first, before going anywhere. The plan had been to move out in 2017, not October 2016. She’d have to change her plan but maybe it was all for the best. Her job at Q. Inc paid well and it would be nice to have an extra bedroom for her mother. She was going to come and visit her for Thanksgiving at the end of November. She knew it’d be complicated for her to be all moved out in four weeks but she was willing to give it a try.

So she spent the whole night up, looking for apartments in the neighbourhood, writing down phone numbers to call during the next day, using her tablet since her computer had been completely smashed. She enjoyed doing it. It kept her busy, helped her stop thinking about how this violation of her privacy was reminiscent of what had happened to her in the past, in that dark room, on that metallic bed. Deep down, Felicity knew Moira had gone too far. But what could she do? She was Moira freaking Queen. Surely, she hadn’t trashed her apartment herself – though the image of the ever impeccable Moira Queen destroying her things made her laugh – and she was smart enough to have covered her tracks well. The fact that Moira hadn’t tried to hide her hatred toward her could play in Felicity’s favour but in the end, if she went to the police and accused her of hiring someone to scare her away, they’d find no proof and things would become all tensed up and awkward with Oliver and she did not want that. He was the best thing to have ever happened to her, after MIT and she was not willing to risk their friendship.

“And what do you think we have exactly?”

“Something worth keeping.”

She was going to be super busy during the last week of October. She found six potential apartments
and scheduled two visits per night, starting on Monday and finishing on Wednesday. She spent these few days in a hurry, going to work during the day and doing her best to keep everything from Oliver, spending her lunchtime doing her accounting and leaving the office as quickly as she had come in to be on time for her visits. She knew she was acting weird and she knew Oliver was noticing things but she didn’t want him involve in any of this. She was a big girl, she could take care of herself and find a new place to live on her own.

Felicity had some money left from her soulmate’s parents but if she was going to move out in a bigger apartment, she’d have to pay three months of renting and removal men. She also had to fix the damages in her apartment, if she wanted to get her deposit check back. And the damages to her beloved rabbit hutch were really important, meaning the price to pay would be very, very high. She also needed to buy herself a new laptop – though she could still use her tablet for the time being – and some of her books and clothes had been irretrievably torn, broken and needed to be replaced. She knew the money she had saved could cover her expenses but she feared she’d have some work to do in her new apartment, meaning she’d have to get more money out… That was why she was doing her accounting very seriously, she didn’t want to get in trouble with her bank counsellor on top of everything else.

She ended up picking an apartment she hadn’t chosen to visit. But after her sixth visit and another disappointment, she finally found what she was looking for. The owner of the apartment she visited last, noticed her desperation – she hated living in a motel and couldn’t get back to her rabbit hutch because of the renovation work – and told her about a friend of hers whose tenants had just left her apartment, in the same building. She got her in touch with her friend and Felicity went to visit the apartment immediately after. It only had one bedroom, and that was why she hadn’t paid any attention to it when she had scheduled appointments, but with a little work and layout, she could turned the utility room into a second bedroom. And since it was a furnished apartment, she’d only have to pay for the work in that room, something her bank account would be very grateful for.

She found herself organising the pursuit of the operations, so to speak on a Thursday night in Sara’s coffee shop. The renovation work in her rabbit hutch were done and she had come back to live in it, though she didn’t sleep there well at night. She highly doubted Moira would send someone to kill her in her sleep but it didn’t mean she was feeling serene. The owner of the apartment she was going to rent was very eager to have a new tenant, so Felicity could get the keys as soon as her file with all the papers needed to rent a place would be complete. Since she had moved not so long ago, she had no problem finding all the papers and they scheduled an appointment for Friday evening. Felicity too was very eager to move. She wouldn’t have too much trouble to leave her place. Her landlady usually rented it to students, meaning that she only asked for a letter and the payment of the month’s rent. Felicity would have to pay November’s rent, though she would probably move out on the first or second weekend of the month. She’d lose money but she didn’t really care. It wasn’t that much money and as long as she was out and somewhere safer, she’d be happy. She wrote her letter notifying her desire to vacate, signed a check, adding pictures of the newly fixed apartment and felt a bit better when the envelope was sealed. Everything was going fast, too fast perhaps but she didn’t care. It was how she was. Fast and efficient, especially when it came to protect herself.

When she was done with the not so funny parts of moving out, she looked at the picture of the utility room she had taken with her tablet. There wasn’t that much work to do in it, just a lot of cleaning. The wooden floor and the walls just needed to be freshen up a little bit and she’d have to buy new pieces of furniture. She’d turn that room into a nest, her nest.

“Hey Felicity!"

The blonde looked up from her tablet, her eyes meeting the blue ones of Barry.
“Barry!” She said, putting her papers away so that he wouldn’t see them. She hadn’t told anyone she was moving out. “How are you doing?”

“Good, what about you?” He asked, sitting down in front of her.

“I am good,” she replied hurriedly.

He cocked his head, and his eyes fell on the envelope she had just closed and the papers she hadn’t had time to put away and were still scattered on the table.

“You’re moving out?” His eyebrows were furrowed in confusion. “Where to? Please tell me you’re not leaving Star City. Some people would be very hurt if you were and by “people” I don’t only mean JJ.”

Felicity gave him a small smile. “I’m not leaving Star City, don’t worry. I am just leaving my apartment.”

The news seemed to surprise him. “What? Last week I heard you tell Iris how much you loved your apartment. You said you felt like a fledgling in your nest.”

“All birds have to fly at some point,” she told him, locking her tablet.

“But why in such a hurry?” Barry insisted, going over her papers, cop’s habits she guessed. He always seemed to sneak his nose everywhere.

She paused for a second and just stared at him, considering if she could tell him the truth or if she should just shut up. She quickly concluded that she couldn’t. But she could tell him half of it, it wouldn’t hurt especially since he was working for the police. And maybe she’d feel a little better if someone else knew.

“Someone broke into my apartment,” she explained calmly, as if it was no big deal at all and she was talking about her grocery list.

His eyes widened and his whole demeanour changed completely. “What? Why didn’t you tell me sooner? Did you go to the police?” She shook her head. “You need to! You need to fill a police report, we need to open an investigation and…”

“Barry, Barry, please calm down!” She pleaded with him, as she could his outrage grow. “It was nothing really, nothing was stolen and I wasn’t hurt, okay?”

“Why didn’t you tell me?” He immediately asked her, now sounding hurt, offended. She scowled and he frowned. “Did you even tell someone? Oliver? Your mother?”

Her cheek reddened and she looked down toward her cup of coffee.

“Felicity, why haven’t you told anyone? For how long has this been going on? What if something had happened to you? I know you said it was okay but it’s not and you need to understand that, the sooner the better.”

Guilt and shame burst in her chest at the same time. Barry was right. But telling her mother would have only worried her, and after what they had been through after him, Felicity had just wanted to spare her a little. And Oliver… Well, telling him was just out of question.

“It happened during the weekend,” she told him, looking up again. She didn’t have to feel ashamed or anything. She had taken care of her business, as always. “But it’s okay now, I’ve found a new
place, with a better security system. And it’s closer from Q. Inc, so it’s really a win-win situation for me.”

“As a police officer,” he started.

“You’re a forensic scientist Barry,” she corrected.

He rolled his eyes. “Same. As a police officer I have to ask: do you have any idea who could have done that? If it wasn’t a robbery maybe it means it was personal, maybe they’ll try again…”

She raised a hand to calm him down. “Barry, I told you it’s okay. I’ve dealt with it.”

“Felicity, a break in is something serious. You should tell someone about it.”

“I did! I told you!”

Barry shook his head. “Tell your friends Felicity,” he insisted.

“Aren’t you my friend?” She said, smiling.

He didn’t smile back. “I am serious Felicity. You don’t have to go through this alone.”

She bit on her lower lip. She wasn’t going through this alone. She was taking care of things herself, she didn’t want to be a burden for the people around her. Some people would call her stupid, she’d rather call herself independent.

Barry left her soon after, giving her piercing looks and telling her to talk to her friends. She promised him she’d think about it, though everything was already all thought. Oliver had other things to think about, business were starting to get really serious at Q. Inc and she wouldn’t be the reason her mother started worrying again. She had been there and done that once. It had been enough.

She started thinking about her new apartment and what she’d like to do with the utility room, all the while checking on her bank account, making sure that her ideas were all affordable. She was taken out of her thoughts by the sound of a chair being pulled. She looked up from her tablet and blue met blue. Her heart skipped a bit. Not the blue she had been thinking about but she liked this one just as much. Tommy.

She cocked her head. “Hey!” She greeted him, a smile spreading on her lips, her heart thrumming happily in her chest. She locked her tablet, pushing the paper she had been taking notes on away.

“Miss Smoak, we need to talk,” he told her very seriously.

She frowned. He looked dead serious. “What do we need to talk about?” She asked.

“My best friend,” he replied. “He doesn’t know I am here, by the way you’re an easy woman to track down Miss…”

His words froze her blood. Normally, she wouldn’t have minded them but after the break in in her apartment…

“Felicity, are you there?”

“I am sorry, what did you say Tommy? I zoned out for a second.”

He huffed back a laugh. “Yeah, I’ve noticed.” He paused for a second, making eye-contact with her to be sure he had all her attention. Then he went on. “Oliver doesn’t know I am here, he’d probably
“kill me if he knew what I am about to do…”

“And what are you about to do exactly?” She asked, leaning toward him, a small smile on her lips.

“What did Oliver do? Why are you mad at him?”

She frowned. “I am not mad at him.”

Tommy arched an eyebrow. “Really? Then why he is moping around, saying you’ve barely talked to him during the week. He’s pretty sure things went well at the museum opening and he doesn’t understand what’s happening and he’s afraid to ask you about it because he can be an idiot sometimes.”

Felicity blinked then slapped her forehead. Of course Oliver would think he had done something wrong. Ever since they had argued, he had been really really nice around her, bringing her coffee in the morning, making sure she knew how much he regretted what had happened, making her feel wanted and needed in a way she had never felt wanted or needed before in her life. She hadn’t thought that her distancing herself slightly because she had personal matters to deal with would affect him but she should have known it would.

“Oh my god, I am so sorry… It has nothing to do with him. I’ve had to deal with a few things and… It’s really not about him, I am not mad at him or anything.”

“Really?” Tommy insisted.

“Really,” she repeated smiling.

Tommy let out a little breath. “Okay, can you go tell him this then? He was worried – don’t tell him I said that though, he’d kill me.”

Felicity chuckled, running a hand through her hair. “I will. Promise.”

“And will you tell him about what happened at the museum opening?”

She scowled. “No,” she said coldly, clenching her fingers around her stylus.

He sighed. “Felicity…”

“Tommy, please, we talked about this already. I can handle this.”

He sighed again, more deeply. “I guess I’ll have to stick around you to make sure the dragon doesn’t gulp you down.”

She rolled her eyes. “I’m sure your soulmate will appreciate it.”

He shrugged. “She likes you. It seems to happen a lot.”

“What?”

“People liking you.”

She blushed and looked down at her tablet.

Tommy smiled smugly, leaning down in his chair more comfortably. “What are you working on anyway?” He asked, reaching for the paper she had been taken down notes on.
“Painting, new bed, new desk, lights, removal men…” He read. “Don’t tell me you’re leaving Star City! People would be really sad if you are, me included.”

She snorted, getting her paper back. “Why do you all think I am leaving Star City?”

“Why do you need removal men?”

“Because I am moving out, genius,” she told him, gathering her things.

“Why hiring removal men?” He asked. She tilted her head in question and he went on. “You know me, Oliver, Diggle and even Barry – though the boy is thick as a stick. If we can help you move out, we’ll be glad to do it. And you won’t have to pay men to do the job.”

Felicity twisted her fingers together. “It’s okay, really I don’t need help…”

Tommy raised a hand to stop her. “This is not about you needing help. This is about you letting people help you.” She bit on her lower lip before opening her mouth. “Don’t try to protest, I’ve seen how you don’t want help on the Moira front, I am assuming you don’t want help on that front either? Too bad, I am offering mine and I am sure the others will be happy to give you a hand as well. I wasn’t kidding earlier when I said people liked you Felicity.”

She nodded. “I’ll keep you in touch,” she promised.

“You better. Because I am not going to let this go.” His phone rang and he got up to take the call. She grabbed her own phone and typed a quick text.

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“6:34 pm

How does pizza sound for dinner?

FS”

--

The reply came quickly after, drawing a smile on her lips. It was like he had known she would text and had been waiting by his phone.

--

“6:35 pm

Depends on what you order for me…

OQ”

--

She shook her head, knowing his favourite.

--

“6:37 pm

Cheese and pepperoni.
6:40 pm

Opening the wine. You can have one glass.

She rolled her eyes at his text and Tommy came back to her. “I have to go and... Why are you smiling?”

She shrugged. “I just got plans for dinner.”

He smiled at her. “Very well then, have a nice evening Miss Smoak.”

She got up and he helped her into her coat. “Thank you very much Mr Merlyn, have a nice evening as well.”

They both walked toward the door, waving at Sara on their way out.

“I am serious Lissy, talk to Oliver.”

“Lissy?” She asked, her head tilted.

He nodded, a smile on his lips. “Yep. You’re our Lissy now and we’re keeping you.”

She huffed back a laugh before hugging him tightly.

“I am not mad at you,” was the first thing she said when Oliver opened the door to his apartment.

He cocked his head, and her heart skipped a beat at the sight of him. He was leaning against the door, wearing jeans falling low on his hips and a tight black t-shirt. He was barefoot and his hair was slightly damp, telling her he had just gotten out of the shower. She could see drops of water running down his neck and she really shouldn’t have found it as sexy as she did.

“I am not avoiding you and I am not mad at you,” she repeated. “And I am sorry for making you feel like I was,” she added, handing him the pizzas she had bought.

He stepped aside to let her in and closed the door behind her.

“Let me guess,” he told her as she made her way in his loft, settling down on his couch. He had already poured each of them a glass of red wine, to go with the pizza. “Diggle?”

“I am not going to reveal my source, so you might as well want to let it go.”

“I will, if you tell me what’s going on with you,” he replied, sitting down next to her. He cut their pizzas as she took off her boots, to bring her legs under her. When she was in position, he handed
her a slice of her pizza and a napkin.

“Thank you,” she said.

He didn’t reply, and took a mouthful of pizza. He moaned happily, swallowing it down. “Luigis’s?” He asked and she grinned. “God bless you!”

Her grin widened and she took a bite of her pizza.

“So, what have you been up to?” He asked her, turning so that he’d face her.

“I am moving out,” she told him bluntly.

He choked on his wine. “What? But you love your apartment.”

“I’ve been told on many occasions it’s too small,” she reminded him.

“Well, it is small,” he replied, grinning.

She rolled her eyes at him and proceeded to tell him what she had been up to for the last few weeks, keeping the break in a secret though. She told him about the visits, how she had found her new apartment, the meeting she was going to attend the following day to get the keys and the work she’d have to do to turn the utility room into a bedroom. She even showed him the pictures of her new place, telling him the owner had been a bit sceptic about renting her apartment to a freshly graduated twenty-year-old.

“Woah!” He said, his eyes wide open. “I don’t know how you do it,” he confessed after a second. “You’re twenty…”

“Almost twenty-one,” she reminded him.

“Right, almost twenty-one,” he corrected, “but you handle things better than twenty-seven-year-old me would. Sometimes I forget you’re so much younger than me…” He paused. “How do you do it?”

She shrugged, playing with her glass of wine, enjoying the way the lights reflected themselves in the deep red liquid. This was what she had to become. How her life had shaped her. But she couldn’t tell him without him asking questions so she went with something much simpler. “This is the way I am,” she eventually said, trying to run away from the sudden seriousness of the conversation.

“I have to say I like it Miss Smoak,” he replied, smiling.

She smiled back at him and told him Tommy had offered to help her moving out. Oliver stiffened at her words.

“You told Tommy before telling me?” He asked, his voice sounding casual. Too casual.

She tilted her head. “Oliver Queen are you jealous?” He stubbornly looked away from her. She slapped his forearm. “I can’t believe it, you’re jealous!”

“Hey! You’re supposed to be closer to me.”

She chuckled. “Tommy may or may have not found me at Sara’s coffee shop and he may or may have not seen me planning things.”

Oliver relaxed a little bit.
“Oliver, stop being an idiotic jealous man! You know JJ’s my favourite.”

He rolled his eyes at her. “But JJ can’t go out with you on Saturday to buy all the things you need for your new apartment. He can’t cook you lunch and then he also can’t help you paint your bedroom. Or assemble your new pieces of furniture. That kind of stuff.”

She shook her head. “You’re unbelievable,” she sighed.

He shrugged. “So, you’re up for a busy Saturday?”

She bit on her lower lip. “Are you sure? Because I am sure you have something better to do.”

“Actually, I don’t. My soulmate lives on the other side of the planet, my best friends have soulmates to take care of and my little sister would rather go shopping with her friends than hang out with me so…”

“I am your backup plan to save you from a boring Saturday?”

He grinned. “You said it yourself!”

“Okay, let’s do this. It could be fun.”

“Come on, you know it will!”

She huffed back a laugh. She knew it would.

Everything went smoothly with her appointment on Friday. The woman really was sceptic with Felicity renting her apartment, she was young and her job at Q. Inc was her first one, so the blonde got where she was coming from. But in the end, she had the money and had a resume and references to speak for her.

Oliver knocked on the door of her rabbit hutch at eight am sharp on Saturday. They had a long day ahead of them and she didn’t know who was the most eager to live it. It was probably her, but his excitement was really palpable.

“It’s the first time I do this,” he explained her when she asked him about it. “I didn’t take care of anything when I moved out and Tommy didn’t really need my help either. We had people doing it for us. So I am glad I get to help you, makes me try new things.

His response made her smile and she was brought back to their breakfast at the seaside restaurant. Deep down, Oliver Queen really was a simple man.

“So where are your knew keys?” He asked her. “And is that a new couch?”

She panicked for a second, yes it was a new couch but it looked very much like the old one and she hadn’t thought he’d notice the difference. Thankfully, she had her keys to distract him with.

“Here they are!” She happily said, making them tinkle.

“Well congrats on your first decent apartment Miss Smoak,” he told her, taking them from her.
“Well thank you for hiring me Mr Queen, you made it all possible.”

“This is what I call a good investment,” he replied as she put on her shoes. She could feel his eyes intensely focused on her and she raised up an eyebrow.

“What?” She asked.

“How many pair of shoes do you own?”

She burst out laughing, getting up and putting on her coat. “Oliver, you should not ask questions you’re not going to like the answer to. Now come on, let’s go.” She patted his chest and they got out of her rabbit hutch.

He insisted on them going to her new apartment first. She gave him a tour and he listened carefully to all the things she wanted to do.

“There, I’m going to hang my Doctor Who’s poster.” or “All my books will go in the guest room, except for my favourites. These ones I’ll keep in my bedroom.” or “I think I’ll put the movies on the right side of the TV and my TV-shows and the left side. It’s bigger and I’ll be able to get all my funko pop out of their folders.”

He smiled when she mentioned her funko pops. Since he didn’t know what they were she had gotten him one of Jon Snow, arguing that he “knew nothing” and “it was time someone educated him and told him about all the wonders life had to offer.” He still had his Jon Snow on his desk at Q. Inc, it had become their private joke.

“So any idea of the painting you’d like to put on these walls?”

“Blue,” she told him. She had been thinking about it a lot during the past few days and she was sure now. “Something between blue and sea-green. I want the walls to remind me of the sea.”

He smiled at the dreamy look in her eyes and pushed her toward the exit.

“Let’s go get your painting. And your bed. Did I tell you I am probably the best mattress tester you could ever find?”

“I bet you are. You must have slept on your fair share of mattresses.”

He blinked, looking rather surprised. She winked at him and got into his car. He got in right after her.

“What? I was just kidding Oliver,” she said, slightly worried when he didn’t reply.

“I know you were.” He punctuated his sentence with a smile but she could see a shadow remaining in his eyes. She wanted to slap herself. She knew he hated talking about his past, she knew he regretted most of the things that had happened – though he refused to tell her why. She shouldn’t have made a joke about this. She really shouldn’t have and yet she had. What an idiot!

She let him pick the radio station, in spite of them having very different taste in music and listening to something he liked seemed to help him relax. She saw the tension in his shoulders loosen up a little bit and soon enough, her smiling Oliver was back.

They spent a few hours at the shop, and they had a lot of fun, trying on mattresses, pointing at ugly paintings or admiring beautiful interior designs. As always, it was fun and easy to be Oliver and she learnt a lot about him during that little trip. Contrary to what his apartment interior had made her think, he liked warm colours and comfy wooden pieces of furniture. When she asked him about it, he
brushed the topic away, saying Isabel loved modern and metallic things better. As soon as his soulmate was mentioned, she stopped pushing, not wanting to see him stiffen up, as he always did whenever Isabel came up in a conversation.

“I think I like this bed,” she told him, after three hours of walking, staring and laughing.

He tried to stretch on it and almost pushed her out of it when he did. “It’s too small,” he complained.

She rolled her eyes. “For you perhaps, but you’re not going to sleep in it, I am,” she argued. “And it’s just the right size for me. And it’ll go well with the painting and other pieces of furniture I’ve picked.”

“But what if you have someone staying over?” He insisted.

“I don’t plan on having someone staying over,” she shot back. “Or if I do, I have a guest-room.”

He chuckled. “I am not talking about a guest, I am talking about a guy. Or a girl. That you like. You know, what about your soulmate?”

Her eyes went wide open.

“Come on Felicity!” He told her, squeezing her shoulder. “You know a lot about me and my love life. What about yours? Have you met him yet?”

She blinked. What was happening? One second they had been talking about her bedroom and now he was asking her about her soulmate. What the hell was happening?

She closed her eyes for a second, her bond roaring to life, pressing against the walls of its prison in her mind. Taking a deep breath to calm herself down, she said, her voice not as steady as she would have liked.

“I’d rather not talk about it, it’s complicated.”

Oliver tilted his head. “Really? You know you can tell me about it, right? That’s what friends are for after all.”

She shook her head. “Yes, but I really don’t want to talk about it,” she insisted. The bond was pressing harder as feelings from the past assaulted her senses. Comfort, love, pain and rejection all melted into one wave of agonizingly strong emotions. It was another crisis, the ones she was having because she was taking the Med and she had to clench her fists to not cry out in in front of Oliver.

“Felicity are you okay? You look pale.”

She had no trouble believing it. She was a mess of emotions. Her bond was pressing against her mind, the pressure so strong, she was feeling her bars holding it prisoner crack. Her breathing fastened, her heart picked up in her chest as waves of panic wrecked her insides.

“Yes, I am fine. I just need to go to the bathroom. Wait for me here, okay?” She said hurriedly, rushing away.

She locked herself in the bathroom. With shaking hands and without thinking, she reached for the Tablet of the Med she always carried with her and gulped down one pill. She had already had one in the morning, this was the second. Immediately after, she felt the bond collapsed, numbed by the chemicals in the blue pill. She splashed water on her face and fanned herself with her hands, trying to cool down. It wasn’t the first time she had felt the walls crack. No, they had almost crack that day,
when she had been tied up to the bed, right before the police found her. But it was the first time a crisis had started so quickly, so suddenly. And it scared her. Because the bond was getting stronger, she was feeling more and more of it and it shouldn’t be happening. Not while she was on the Med.

She righted her hair and her outfit and when she was satisfied with her appearance, she walked out.

“You okay?” Oliver asked when she came to meet him again.

She nodded but he still looked worried, and there was something in his eyes, something that looked a lot like curiosity. Again, she assured him she was okay and they hurried to finish her purchasing.

They went back to his apartment, where he proceeded to make them lunch. Oliver Queen was a sight to behold, he did their quick lunch with as much love and care as if it had been a romantic dinner and it made her smile internally. Oliver was a dedicated person, she knew from the time they spent working together. She also knew it from the way he cared about his family and friends. And she was seeing it now, as he poured everything he had to give in the simplest things of life. He was impressed by her strength she was impressed by his dedication and she wondered why he was like this. What had happened to him to make him so involved, so committed, she was dying to know.

They went to her new apartment after that and worked in the utility room, getting their lightness and fun from the morning back. The bond was still sleeping, the double dose of the Med having a strong effect on it. They cleaned and fixed what needed to be fixed on the floor and then on the walls, Felicity spending a lot of time ogling Oliver, fascinated by the play of his muscles under his T-shirt. Her boss was a very handsome man and she could totally see how he had gotten involved with so many girls in the past. She probably would have fallen for his smile and dimples too.

They worked until late that night, ordering take-out at some point, eating their first meal ever in her new apartment. They were sitting in the middle of her newly painted in white bedroom, the lights of the streets reflecting themselves on the walls they had spent hours cleaning, fixing and then painting. They’d applied the sea-green painting she had picked the following day, if their muscles weren’t too sore.

“Felicity,” Oliver said cautiously after a few minutes spent admiring their handy-work silently.

She turned her head toward him. “Yes?”

“About earlier,” he started, shifting uncomfortably. “I am sorry I brought up your soulmate. I had no idea, it would do something like this to you.”

She shrugged. “I didn’t react that bad,” she tried to minimize.

“For a second, I feared you were having a stroke.”

She chuckled, sipping at her water bottle. “I wasn’t. It’s just complicated. My soulmate’s out of the picture, has been for a while and I don’t like talking about it.”

Oliver frowned. “Out of the picture? Is he… dead?”

That made her pause. Because honestly, she had no idea. Her bond was struggling against the Med, yearning to be set free but what if there was nothing waiting for it on her soulmate’s side? What if only a cold and silent void was waiting for her bond behind the doors of its prison? She didn’t know if her soulmate was dead, just like she didn’t know if he had started taking the Med – which would have been the smartest decision since she was herself taking it. She remained for a long moment before answering.

“He’s not dead,” she told him, knowing it was true the moment the words fell off her lips. If he had
died, she would have felt it, she knew it.

Oliver nodded, playing with the edge of his t-shirt. “And do you think he’ll be back in the picture one day?”

She shook her head. “I highly doubt it.”

“Well, his loss,” he stated getting up. He dusted his jeans before holding out a hand for her to take. She let him pull her on her feet and gave him a small smile. He replied with one of his own, before saying,

“If you ever need to talk about it, you know I’m here.”

She nodded, something tightening in her throat. “I appreciate it.”

And she truly did.

The next day, they came back and painted her bedroom. Felicity thought the colour she had picked brought out Oliver’s eyes so she let her pencil fell on his shirt on him once or twice. He rolled his eyes at her every time, but never fought back, arguing that he was “more mature”.

The following week, she spent her days at Q. Inc, and things were back to normal between Oliver and her. If anything, they were maybe a little closer. Accepting his help, letting him in a way had changed things for her. She felt less guarded around him. There were still some things she wasn’t going to share, but they all had their secrets – Oliver being the first one on the list – it was how life was.

And when her day was over, her night started and she spent her evenings travelling between her two apartments, bringing a few of her things with her every time. She invited Barry over one night and he helped her put together the new pieces of furniture she had bought for her bedroom. She would have asked Oliver but when he had tried doing it, he had started yelling not nearly an hour into it, cursing at the people writing instructions. Barry had more patience and assembled everything in a flash.

She moved out definitely the next weekend, only two weeks after the break in in her apartment and sometimes it seemed like it had happened months ago. She hadn’t seen or heard from Moira during these two weeks and though she didn’t complain, it did worry her. She knew it was the quiet ones that needed to be watched most. But so many things had happened, she had been so caught up in her mind to really have time think about her boss’s crazy mother and her undying hatred toward her. She didn’t even realise things were happening, and they were happening fast. She had moved out in two weeks for God’s sakes! She felt the need to press the button “pause” but knew she couldn’t just yet. Once she’d be settled, she would. Until then, she still had some work to do.

Oliver, Diggle, Barry and Tommy came to help her move her boxes while Laurel and Thea started unpacking things, following the instructions she had written with a felt-tip marker on the boxes “living room”, “bedroom” or “bathroom”. It was the first time Felicity was with all of them together at the same time and it was truly something. They made moving out fun and just by being their usual selves. Tommy teased everyone, only stopping whenever his soulmate rolled her eyes at him, Barry babbled about physics and lifting the boxes, Diggle was the quietest but reassured everyone but by his presence and Oliver and Thea bantered and argued only like a brother and a sister could and it was something really fun to see. Felicity had never really had a group of friends to rely on, she had been bullied in high-school and had had trust issues in college but as the day went on, she realised having friends and letting them help her out felt very, very good.

Diggle and Barry were the first ones to leave. They both had a soulmate and a child to go home to.
Felicity promised to call them for her housewarming. Then Tommy and Laurel left, they were invited by Laurel’s father to dinner. She thanked them for their help and they reminded her she was invited for Thanksgiving, with her mother. When she closed the door, he was left with Thea and Oliver. He was sitting down on her couch, resting while his sister was looking around, moving light boxes out of the way. There were still a few boxes to unpack but she’d do that on her own.

“Who’s up for some take out?” She suggested, coming back to sit down next to Oliver, who shifted his position to accommodate her. “I’m offering,” she added.

“Well, if you’re offering,” Oliver said, looking at Thea for her approval. The brunette nodded.

They ordered something to eat and chatted while they waited for their food to arrive.

“So,” Oliver started. “You happy?”

She gave him a bright smile. “It’s the biggest place I’ve ever lived in,” she confessed. “I hope I won’t get lost.”

He chuckled. “You won’t, don’t worry,” he assured her.

“Says who? You? Not all people grew up in a castle, you know? I’m not kidding, my college apartment was so small, it was half the size of this place.”

“Speaking of college, where do you want to put this?” Thea asked, holding out a box with college written on it.

Felicity stiffened immediately. The sight of the box enough to bring back unpleasant memories.

“Felicity?” Thea insisted when she didn’t respond right away.

“Felicity?” Oliver nudged her and she shook her head, pulling her mind out of Boston. She was in Star City and she was having a very good time that didn’t need to be tainted by dark memories.

“Give it to me,” she said, getting up. “I’ll take care of it.”

She hid the box under her clothes in her closet. It was covered by fabric, meaning she wouldn’t have to see it every day. Sighing, feeling slightly better, she came back to her friends. Their food arrived twenty-minutes later and they listened to Thea telling them about the upcoming winter ball she was organising for her high-school and at some point, she got Felicity to agree to go shopping for the perfect dress with her.

They left soon after dinner, Mrs Queen demanding that Thea was home early and Oliver being adamant his sister respected her mother’s wishes. He surprised Felicity by giving her a quick hug before leaving – they usually weren’t the hugging type. His sister hugged her tightly wishing her a goodnight in her new home.

Felicity knew instantly Oliver had something to ask her when he got up from his chair to walk to her. He had The look on his face. His lips were slightly pursed, and his blue eyes, bright and pleading though he had yet to say anything.

“What do you want?” She asked without looking up from her screen. It was Friday, the last day of their week from Hell. They were leaving Q. Inc for a week of break, to celebrate Thanksgiving and
spend some times with their families and they had had a lot of work to do before finally being able to
take a break.

He tilted his head a smile stretching his lips at her question. “What makes you think I want
something?”

She looked up from her computer screen and stopped typing. “You’re doing that cute thing with
your eyes you always do when you’re about to ask me something and you know I might say “no”.”

“I do a cute thing with my eyes?” He sounded surprised.

She nodded. “Don’t act like you don’t know what you’re doing Queen. And ask me already, we still
have a lot of things to do before we are officially on a break.”

“What are you doing tomorrow night?”

“Me? Nothing. But you are going out with Tommy, to a basketball game? Star City against Coast
City, right?” When he nodded in approval, she smiled proudly. “You see! I do pay attention when
you talk about sports.”

He chuckled, running a finger through his head. “Tommy just cancelled and I was wondering if you
wanted to come with me.”

She blinked. “Tommy cancelled? Why would he do that? He loves that damn sport even more than
you do.”

“Trust me, he cancelled with a good reason.”

She got up from her chair, walking toward the archive room on their floor. “Why did he cancel?”
She asked, going through the reports she needed to put away.

“He’s busy with Laurel, if you see what I mean.”

She paused, stopping her walk and Oliver almost bumped into her. “Gross!” She said, shaking her
head, to chase images of Tommy and Laurel lost in one another from her mind.

“Well, at least it’s happening now and not before Thanksgiving. I’d rather have him cancel our plans
than his Thanksgiving meal.”

“Well, when you put it that way…” She opened the door of the archive room and walked in, Oliver
right behind her. “Why don’t you go with Diggle?”

“He flies away with Lyla tomorrow in the morning.”

“Barry?”

“Roots for Central City.”

“Thea?”

“She has other plans.”

That made her pause. “She spends a lot of time out of the house,” she pointed out casually. She
knew things were hard for the youngest Queen and she was wondering whether or not Oliver
realised it.
“I was worse at her age,” he replied, shrugging. “So, you in?”

She sighed. She really wasn’t into sports. Not at all.

“Please,” Oliver pleaded her. “I’ll make sure you have the best of time, just say yes.”

She turned her head to face him and saw he was doing the cute thing with his eyes again. She felt her determination crumble. “Okay,” she told him.

He raised his fist high in victory. “Yes! I am so glad I get to be your first.” They both froze at his poor choice of words and Felicity’s eyes even widened. “I meant, I am glad to be the first to take you out to a basketball game. I’ll do things the right way, don’t worry.”

She chuckled. “I know you will. Now can you please grab me that box on the top of the shelf, please?”

“Sure,” he reached for it before handing it to her.

“Hold on,” she opened the box, filed the reports in it and then he put the box back on the shelf.

“Need anything else?” He asked, dusting his suit.

She shook her head. “I am all good. Let’s go!”

He opened the door for her and she rolled her eyes at him.

“I already said “yes” you know?” She told him, when he pulled her chair for her at her desk.

“Just making sure you don’t change your mind. You look fancy by the way? Is that a new dress?”

She gave him a look. He raised his hand in a defensive gesture. “I know it sounded like I was trying to coax you but my question is actually legit.”

“Well, I am going out with Sara after work and since we’re going to work until late, I won’t have time to go home to change so…”

He arched an eyebrow. “You’re going out? Where?”

“That, Mr Queen, is none of your business,” she replied.

“Okay, okay. Just be careful.”

She chuckled at that. “There’s a reason why we’re taking boxing classes.”

He went back to his office after that and they both got back to work.

She got a text from Sara at some point, cancelling their plans. She had to go have dinner with her father since Laurel couldn’t. Their father was taking the Med, since their mother, his soulmate, had died from cancer almost a year ago. From what Sara had told her, it had been hard for him to lose his soulmate so abruptly and needed a lot of contact with his two daughters. He needed love to fight the loss.
“6:00 pm

My car won’t start… Come and pick me?

*does the cute thing with eyes*

OQ”

--

Felicity groaned.

--

“6:02

What would you do without me? I wonder…

FS”

--

She threw her bag over her shoulder and got out of her apartment. She ran down the stairs, and walked out, excitement bursting in her chest. She wasn’t into sports, yes, but she was going to spend some time with a very good friend and that was enough to make her happy. Plus, Oliver fanboying over his favourite basketball team was a sight to behold, one of the funniest things she had ever witnessed and she was happy she was getting to watch him do it live. Tommy’s loss was her gain.

She made her way to her car. She unlocked and went to open her door but paused, all her senses on alert. Goose bumps spread on her skin and she turned away, her eyebrows furrowed. She felt watched, observed. She was always hyper-aware of her surroundings, ever since she had been taken. And at this very moment, something wasn’t quite right. She looked around, chewing worriedly on her lower lip. When she saw nothing out of the ordinary, she shook her head and got in her car.

She was greeted by an Oliver wearing a Star City’s jersey, and with green marks on his cheeks. He attacked her, with his fingers covered with greasy green painting he cautiously applied on her face, drawing an S on her right cheek and a C on the right one. He put a cap on her head.

“There, you’re ready to go,” he said.

She stared at him for a whole minute before saying. “Dork.”

He cocked his head before urging her out. “We’re going to be late, let’s hurry up.”

He insisted upon driving and she indulged him. On the way, he told her about the new season that had started in November and she listened to him quietly, amazed by his fervour. In thirty minutes, she learnt everything she needed to know about the players, their stats, the transfers that had happened during the summer and the new coach of the team.

They arrived a bit early at Star City’s arena but Felicity didn’t mind it at all. She took in the beautiful arena, the white and green benches and seats, the brand new basketball field, with a bright wooden floor, the giant screens, which were all black for now and of course, the brown marmoset holding three arrows, white, green and gold, the mascot of the team, the motto of the team “aim straight” written in black letters around the animal’s head. Everything was new to her and she was enjoying it all.
“Why is the mascot carrying three arrows?” Felicity asked Oliver, playing with her bracelet.

“Because one of the founders of the team was the Olympic champion of archery Neil Leyton, born and raised in Star City. Ever heard of him?”

She shook her head. “I’m not into sports.”

He rolled his eyes. “Shame. Anyway, Leyton is Star City’s little prodigy. He won countless titles and medals and gave money to the basketball team when she was created. He was a huge fan and wanted his city to have a team of its own. The arrows weren’t in the original emblem but when Leyton passed away, they were added.”

Felicity nodded. “I am guessing Leyton is also the reason why arrows are Star City’s symbol in general?”

“Yes. He helped the city grow. Star City was small when he first won a gold medal in 1932. Or was it 1936?” He shrugged. “It’s been a while since I had to do a history lesson to someone.”

“As if you had ever done one…” She teased him.

“True,” he admitted smiling. But then his smile faded away. “I hope you have a nice time.”

“Don’t worry,” she assured him. “Basketball and I have an understanding: it helped me get a B- in sport when I was high-school and in return, I enjoy watching it from time to time.”

Oliver chuckled at her words. She remembered the day of her sport exam as if it had happened the day before. Mandy Miller, her high-school nemesis, had been there and had mocked her all along, calling her a clumsy bag of bones unable to shoot to save her life. It was a bit before she cut the connection with her soulmate and he was a huge fan of the game, so she had drawn both strength and motivation from him. She smiled, remembering how good it had felt.

“Why are you smiling?” Oliver asked.

She shook her head. “No reason. I’m just glad to be here.”

“I’m glad too.” He quickly added. “To be here, that is.”

She rolled her eyes at him, again. A few minutes later, Oliver bought them pop-corn from a food vendor and the game started soon after. At the beginning, Felicity wasn’t really into it, she was focusing more on Oliver and his reactions – either happy or frustrated – than on the game. But then, her eyes were more and more glued on the field than on her neighbour and found herself anxiously tapping her feet on the floor whenever Coast City had the ball and balling her hand into a fist whenever Star City scored a basket.

Oliver and Felicity high-fived when the team won, the both of them smiling proudly. They made their way out of the arena, Felicity doing all the talking, commenting every single action of the game, using her hands to mimic the players’ movements, bouncing around happily, her ponytail moving with her.

“So, did you like it?” Oliver asked.

“Yeah, it was really funny. I loved the atmosphere. I’m usually scared of crowds, I feel like I am drowning, you see? But not tonight. The crowd was awesome and it was thrilling to think that we all wanted the same thing: to see our team wins!”
Oliver smiled at her enthusiasm and insisted on driving when they reached her car.

“If I am going to get into that thing you dare call a car, I want to at least drive it. It should save some of my maleness.”

She rolled her eyes at him, considered leaving him there but then decided on letting him drive them back to his place, where they were supposed to have dinner. He stopped at a red light and Felicity stiffened, the same feeling of being watched from earlier back. She turned her head around.

She saw the lights. Blinding.

She heard the screech of tires. Deafening.

And then nothing but cold and black silence.

His voice was the only thing she could hear. Darkness, the only thing she could see.

“Felicity, wake up, please.”

His voice was frantic, his tone pleading.

“Felicity, open your eyes, come on.”

It was remarkable, all the different layers of emotions a voice could carry.


So many layers.

“Felicity please, open your eyes.”

Blue eyes crossed her mind. She knew that voice. It came with warm arms, pink daisies and breakfast near the sea. It came with easy banter, floating around the room and bright smiles which showed perfect dimples. She had to open her eyes, to reassure him, to tell him she was okay. But it was just so hard… She wasn’t in pain but she was feeling numb. Like all her energy had been sucked out of her, drained. There was a pounding in her heart, a raw throbbing ache. She didn’t want to open her eyes but she understood it was important she did, so she tried. She didn’t know where she found the strength to open them in the end, but she did.

She fluttered her eyes open and the bubble she had been locked in shattered. She heard the sounds of sirens, of alarms going off. She saw red and blue go on and off. Panic burst in her chest as she realised she didn’t understand what was happening, she didn’t even where she was or what she had been doing before chaos broke all around her.

Warm hands cupped her cheeks and brought her eyes back to the blue her imagination had done no justice to.

“Oliver,” she croaked, her voice rougher than it had been in a while.
“Felicity,” he said, his thumbs stroking her cheeks lightly. She feels a hot trail, coming down from her forehead to her cheek. Adding that sensation to the throbbing in her head, she quickly realised it was blood. Her blood.

“What… What happened?” She asked.

He opened his mouth to answer her but suddenly, there were paramedics surrounding them and cops demarcating a “do not cross” perimeter around them. Two paramedics pulled Oliver away from her, to check out for any injuries. Everything felt it was happening in slow-motion, Felicity felt like her mind had left her body and she was watching everything from the outside. That’s why when two other paramedics started talking to her, asking her questions about what had happened and if she was hurting, she found herself unable to tell them anything. She didn’t understand what was happening. She didn’t even feel it when they took her to an ambulance.

“Miss, do you remember the car crash?”

The car crash?

Felicity turned her head and her eyes fell on her car. She saw her side entirely wrecked, her door was open.

“I don’t remember anything,” she whispered.

“Miss Smoak, we need to take you to the hospital. You have an opened wound on your forehead that needs stitches and it is high likely you have a concussion.”

The hospital?

No.

Flashes of her lying on a stretcher, doctors yelling orders to nurses, her ribs pulsing, her blood dried on her skin rushed through her mind, freezing her heart in her chest.

She shook her head, pushing away the paramedics’ hands who were working on her. She had yet to be put in the ambulance, they had sit her down at the edge of it.

“No!” She shout. “I don’t want to go to the hospital!”

“Miss Smoak, you need medical attention, this head injury could be worse than it looks.”

“No!” She insisted, pushing their hands away again. “No, I don’t want to go!” Her cries were growing louder, her movements more frantic in spite of the pain she was feeling and the dizziness that was threatening to overtake her.

“Miss please…”

“What’s going on here?”

Oliver. She rushed to him, her fingers clamping around his arm tightly. She felt the world spin around her immediately, her head protesting against the sudden motion and its speed.

“Felicity, what’s going on?”

“They want to take me to the hospital. Please don’t let them,” she asked, a few tears rolling down her cheeks and her fingers flexing around his forearms.
“She needs an MRI and stitches sir,” one of the paramedics said.

“Oliver please,” she begged him. “I don’t want to go.” Her voice broke and she shut her eyes, only to be assaulted with images from her past, of that doctor with the white beard who had done her stitches.

“Felicity, I am sorry but you have to,” he told her, one of his hands coming up behind her knee to lift her up. She pushed against his chest, struggling to free herself but he held her still. “Hey, you don’t have to be afraid. It’s just me, okay? I’m coming with you and I’ll be with you the whole time.”

“Sir…” A paramedic started to protest.

“Your colleagues said I was okay,” he cut her off dryly. “It’s her side of the car that was hit by that crazy driver. She is the one in need of medical attention, not me.” His voice softened when he brought his attention back on the blonde in his arms.

“I am scared,” she whispered softly. “I hate hospitals.” She shivered, remembering the coldness of the white walls of the room she had stayed in, of her loneliness too.

Oliver adjusted his hold on her, bringing her closer to him, to his warmth where she seemed to always be welcomed.

“You don’t have to be afraid, I’ll be with you the whole time, okay? I’m not leaving your side, not for a second,” he promised.

She nodded and he nodded back, getting in the ambulance.

He kept his promise and stayed with her through everything. He was with her when they took her down for an MRI. He was with her when they stitched up the wound on her forehead and cleaned the cuts on her arms. He held her hand and caressed her hair when she stiffened completely at the sight of the needles, which looked too much like the ones that had been used to fix the skin on her ribs. He wiped her tears away with his thumb, comforting her with words whispered with a soft and sweet voice.

She had a mild concussion. Her slight amnesia had been caused by the hit on her head. The wound on her forehead had needed six stitches to be closed. She could go home but needed to be watched carefully through the night, to be woken up every hour. Oliver brought her back to her apartment, wordlessly offering to stay with her. He had called his family to reassure them while they had been waiting for her results and he had also made sure the cops wouldn’t come to bother her with their questions. He offered to call her mother for her but she told him not to. She’d do it herself in the morning. Her mental state was still fragile and she tended to worry a lot about Felicity. She needed to be the one making the call otherwise, she might jump in the first place, to come check on her.

“Are you okay?” She asked, although her mind was already half-asleep.

“I’m fine,” he replied.

She knew he was lying though. His voice was strained and she could feel the tension in his muscles from where he was holding her to help stand on her feet.

“Give me your keys,” he said before she could push the matter further. They had just had a car accident. Surely, it had reopened old wounds, brought back bad memories to him, the same way her little trip to the hospital had to her.

It felt weird to be in her apartment again. When she had left earlier, she had been so happy, excited
even to go out with her friend and attend her first basketball game. It felt like it had been forever ago. Now, all her happiness and excitement were gone. She felt empty, like her emotions had been sucked out of her. Even her stranded bond was surprisingly quiet, not boiling, not struggling. Just numb, completely and utterly numb.

They stood there for a second, the both of them standing, welcoming the silence with relieved minds. Everything had happened so fast after she had woken up, everything had seemed to be completely out of their control. But now they were alone and they were getting their control back. All the things that had seemed to happen in slow-motion, all the things that had seemed blurry and coming out from a dream hit them. They became real. Because they were real.

Tonight a car had hit their car and had driven away right after.

Tonight, they could have died.

“Do you want to shower?” Oliver asked, his voice not as soft as it had been in the hospital. She could see why. If he was going through the same thing she was, things were suddenly hitting him as well. And considering his past, it was probably hurting him a lot more than it was her.

“Felicity?” He insisted when she didn’t reply. “Shower?”

Honestly, she was ready to collapse on her bed. “Later,” she told him.

“Need help to change your clothes?”

“I’ll be okay,” she said, a hand coming up to hold her ribs protectively.

“Okay.”

He took her to her room and left her alone while she changed. She struggled to take off her clothes and then get in her pyjamas but with slow and precise movements she eventually made it. She wasn’t really in pain anymore, the drugs they had given her at the hospital were already kicking in but they also made her feel numb and dizzy, as if she was wrapped up in a cotton ball.

“Oliver,” she called when she was finally lying on her bed.

He walked in and stopped at the edge of her bed. “You ready to sleep?”

She nodded. “You can sleep in the guest room, if you want to.”

“Thank you. You mind if I shower first?”

She shook her head.

“Good, I’ll wake you up in an hour and a half then.” He turned around immediately but she caught his arm.

“Oliver!”

He stopped, turning to face her again. “What?”

“I’m glad you’re okay.”

A flash of something crossed his eyes and she felt his arm tense around her fingers. He stepped toward her, one of his hands coming up to her face. She sucked in a breath, astonished by the different emotions swirling in his eyes, the most dominant one being pain. So much pain. Slowly, his
fingers stroked her cheek, pushing a strand of hair away.

“I’m glad you’re okay too,” he whispered.

“We’ll talk more tomorrow?” She asked.

He nodded. “Tomorrow.”

He turned around again and went to turn off the lights she had hung above her head.

“No!” She stopped him.

He paused, frowning.

“I can’t sleep in the dark,” she confessed.

He let the lights on then and walked out, leaving her door open.

She closed her eyes then, letting out a long breath. She didn’t remember the accident but she was no fool. She knew her dreams, or nightmares, would refresh her memory. And if they didn’t, if she didn’t dream of the crash then, she’d dream of him. The thought only was enough to twist her stomach painfully in her belly. She fisted her sheets and bit on her lips, to repress a sob.

The sound of the shower reminded her she wasn’t alone. Oliver was here and she knew he’d be right there if she needed anything. It helped her relax, though she still was afraid to fall asleep. But she couldn’t resist her exhaustion or the drugs anymore and she fell asleep.

She was woken up by Oliver.

But she wasn’t woken up by him shaking her shoulder and whispering her name in her ear, like the first two times.

No.

She was woken up by grunts. Loud grunts. And sounds. Incoherent sounds supposed to be words but she couldn’t make out one.

Getting up on wobbly legs, she reached for a jacket, to protect herself from the cool air of the room. She was confused, her head was spinning – she had gotten on her feet to fast after waking up – but she still made her way to her guestroom, supporting herself on the wall to make it without falling.

She saw Oliver, his huge frame too big for the bed in the room. He was convulsing around the sheets, beads of sweat rolling down his forehead. His whole body was tensed, tight, he had fisted his pillows in his sleep. Swallowing she took a step closed. His eyes were clenched shut, his lips half-opened.

“Please don’t go,” he whispered, grunting, his grip tightening around one of his pillows. “Please, don’t go, I’m sorry.”

She had had enough nightmares herself to recognise one. Her heart clenched in her chest at the sight of him, clearly in pain. Carefully, she reached for him.
“Oliver,” she called him, her tone firm.

“I’m so sorry, please don’t let me go!”

“Oliver,” she repeated, her voice louder and shaking his shoulder.

“Please stay,” he begged and it sounded more like a sob to her ears. “I love you!”

“Oliver!”

He jolted awake, his blue eyes wide open, a storm raging inside of them. His breathing was uneven and she knew from experience his heart was pounding in his chest. She also knew he was feeling lost and confused, as the last remnants of fear instilled by his nightmares shook him.

“Hey, Oliver,” she said, cupping his cheeks, forcing him to look at her. “You’re okay, it was just a nightmare and it’s over. You’re awake now.”

“Felicity,” he whispered, his fingers coming to grip hers. “It wasn’t a dream. It was real,” he added, his voice shaking. “It happened.”

His first accident. “I know, but it’s over now,” she reminded him, one of her hands coming up, her fingers running in his hair in a soothing motion.

He nodded but closed his eyes, one single tear rolling down his cheek.

“I can’t go through this again,” he whispered.

She frowned. “What do you mean? How often do you have nightmares?”

“How often do you?” He asked.

She shook her head. “No, don’t make this about me.” She paused for a second, staring at him straight in his eyes, seeing his pain, raw and throbbing.

“How often?” She asked again.

“Not nearly as much as I used to.”

It wasn’t really an answer but she decided to accept it. For now.

“Who were you talking to?”

He looked down. “My soulmate.”

She thought she hadn’t heard properly. “Isabel?”

“Yeah…”

She let go of him and took a step back, the air suddenly suffocating. “Maybe you should call her,” she said. “Talking to her will do you some good, I’m sure.”

He nodded and she walked out of the room, to give him some privacy. She made her way back to her room, conflicted emotions boiling inside of her.

She hadn’t been back for a long while when she heard a soft knock at her door.

“Felicity?” She heard Oliver whisper.
She lifted herself up on her elbows.

“Yes?”

“You mind if I stay with you for a while?”

She shook her head and sat down on her bed, patting the space next to her. He crossed the room and went to sit down next to her. He put his arm over her shoulders, pulling her against his side and after a second of hesitation, she leaned on him, letting her head rest on his shoulders.

“I was really scared earlier, when you were unconscious,” he eventually said and she wrapped an arm around his waist.

“I’m okay now,” she told him, squeezing his side.

“I’d appreciate it if you didn’t scare me like that ever again.”

“I’d appreciate it if we never had a car accident ever again.”

He chuckled at her words and kissed the top of her head. “Deal.”

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)
Hey guys!!!

First thing first, THANK YOU GUYS for the amazing response this story is getting. It's almost at 1000 kudos, can you believe it? Because I can't! It's crazy, downright crazy, and it's all thanks to you so yeah, BIG THANK YOU for that. I love y'all!!! <3 Also thank you for those who wished me a happy birthday, it made me really happy too :*

Now, let's get to business *rubs hands* here's the new chapter, I know you've been waiting for it! I'm sorry for the delay but life has been crazy lately and it's going to keep being crazy so... The next chapters might not come as fast as usual. Especially the next one, because chapter 10 is a VERY important chapter, one that I really don't want to rush so... I'll take my time with it. And if you feel like the ending of this chapter is incomplete you should know that chapter 10 will start right after this one end, meaning that the last part of chapter 9, starting with Olicity's conversation on Felicity's doorstep to the end with them at the charity - you'll know what I'm talking about in a few minutes - will be completed :) (saying this just in case you feel like something is missing).

Also, some of you have been pretty pissed that Felicity didn't go to the police right after the break in. I understand your point of view, and you should probably know that more will be revealed about her decision in chapter 10 as well (and woah, I'm talking way too much about chapter 10 in this intro for chapter 9... But now that I think about it they're quite the pair so...).

Anyway, I'll stop rambling right about now.
Happy reading!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 9:

“Tell me your secrets

And ask me your questions

Oh, let's go back to the start.”

- Coldplay, The Scientist.

Felicity woke up for the last time of the night very calmly, without an erratic breath, without her heart beating wildly in her chest, without beads of sweat rolling down the curve of her nape. It surprised her, in the best way possible. She woke up slowly, fighting against the last remnants of sleep which were trying to keep her in the resting darkness of her dreams. But when she did manage to open her eyes, there was an odd feeling of peace surrounding her, cocooning her. She wasn’t in pain, she wasn’t scared. She had slept well and tight and she felt safe, comfortably tucked under her comforter, warmth and soft sheets shielding her from the outside world.
She could see the sun shining through the curtains in her room. The part of her who had been born and raised in Vegas would have been delighted by the thought of another beautiful day ahead. But the rational part of her knew what that kind of sun was now, a bright but cold sun of fall. It was a cold beauty and illusion of comfort, a pale copy of the sweetness of summer. Felicity was by no mean a woman who cared much about the weather. She loved rainy days spent reading, wrapped up in a fluffy blanket, a cup of hot cocoa and whipped cream next to her. She loved sunny days spent walking in the park, enjoying the reflections of the sunlight on the green leaves of the trees just as much. But right now, as everything that had happened the previous night was slowly coming back to her, she realised she very much needed the heat of one of these suffocating Vegas days, where wearing clothes and having long hair were pure torture.

The basketball game. The car crash. The hospital. Oliver’s nightmare.

It all came back to her, making chills run down her spine. Gone was the feeling of peace. Gone was the feeling of safety. She was wide awake now and very much conscious of how close she had been from being seriously injured, of how close she had been to lose everything. And as if it had been waiting this whole time, her headache came back, raw and throbbing, making her clench her fists around her sheets. Kicking her sheets away, not feeling well anymore, Felicity got on her feet, her legs shaking slightly.

She made her way to her living-room, from where she could hear noise and was greeted with the sight of Oliver, sitting on her couch, watching the news. The moment he saw her, he turned his head toward her.

“You’re finally up,” he said, his blue eyes an ocean of emotions.

“Did you get any sleep?” She asked.

He shook his head and she felt something break inside of her, the memory of his nightmare from the previous night vivid in her mind. She knew his pain, she had lived it and still was sometimes. She knew how hard it was to have your own mind playing against yourself, to have your mind torturing you. It left invisible scars on people, the kind of scars that never stopped hurting, ever. She made a beeline for him and wrapped her arms around his neck, hugging him tightly. She knew her touch couldn’t heal him as much as his soulmate’s but she couldn’t just stand there and do nothing. She cared about him so much already, she couldn’t leave him in pain.

He stiffened when she started holding him but she figured it was because she had surprised him. He relaxed immediately under her touch, pulling her to him. She awkwardly sat down on her knees on the couch, one of his arms wrapped around her waist – she was so petite, he could completely circle it with one arm only – his head lying against her chest, his ear reaching her collarbone and the four little birds marking her skin. She hesitated for a second before running her fingers through his hair in what she hoped was a shooting gesture. When he let out a small breath, she realised it was and she kept doing it, enjoying the feel of his sandy strands against her fingertips.

“I’m sorry Felicity,” he eventually whispered and she pulled away from him, frowning.

“For what?”

“For not being my usual self. I just...” His voice failed him and he took a second to regain his composure. “I just need some time.”

“Honestly? I’d be worried if you were feeling alright, like what happened was no big deal at all. Take all the time you need, I’m not one to judge you.”
He nodded, his lips pursed. “How did you sleep?” He eventually asked. “How are you feeling?”

She took a deep breath before answering his questions, taking some time to collect herself. She was feeling better now. It was truly remarkable the power of contact with another human being, the things a simple hug could do to a person.

“I’m okay,” she assured him. “My head’ is hurting a little but it’s manageable.”

“Wait here,” he told her.

He got up from the couch and went to the kitchen, where he had left her medication when they had come back the previous night. He got her a tablet she had been given at the hospital and a big glass of water to swallow the pills down.

“Thank you,” she said, taking two pills in a one-go as gratefulness burst in her chest.

“Don’t mention it,” he replied, watching her carefully.

“What?” She asked of a whole minute of him staring at her.

“You really didn’t have any nightmares?” He insisted. “Don’t take it the wrong way, I’m glad one of us had a good night of sleep but… What happened last night was huge and I don’t want you to feel like you can’t tell me about it because of my own reactions to it.”

She blinked, once, twice. The big dummy. He thought she was lying to spare him some pain. It was totally something she was capable of, but not this time.

“I think I’m still processing what happened,” she admitted. “I still don’t remember anything so… Maybe it helps?”

He shook his head. “There’s not much to remember,” he explained. “One second everything was fine and the other, you were turning your head and that SUV was hitting your side of the car. Your head banged against your window and before I could comprehend what had happened, whoever was driving that car was already on their merry way.”

Felicity looked at her legs, she had brought them to her chest after setting her half-empty glass of water back on her coffee table. She was hoping for a glimpse of something to cross her mind, for something to flash behind her eyelids, for anything to come back to her. But nothing did and she didn’t know if she felt relieved or if it upset her. What she did know though was that she didn’t like the look on Oliver’s face and in his eyes. He had been scared, and clearly their accident had brought back very bad memories to the surface. But there was more than just the demons from his past in his blue orbs. There were anger and guilt mixed together and she didn’t like that kind of combination.

“If only I had heard them come sooner…” He said, fisting his hand.

Felicity covered his fist with her small hand, intertwining her fingers with his. “Hey, no thoughts like this allowed here mister! We both are more shaken than hurt, and I think we should focus on that.”

His other hand came up to her head and he brushed his finger over the gauze covering her stitches. She knew she’d have stiffened and maybe pulled away, had it been anyone else. But this wasn’t. It was Oliver so she didn’t. She let him touch her, the same way he had let her hug him. She could see in his eyes, he wished his fingers could heal her. And honestly? She wished they could too.

“You are more than shaken,” he whispered softly, his distress and guilt even more evident.
“I think I’ll make a full recovery Mr Queen. And either way, this wasn’t your fault so stop beating yourself up, okay?”

He opened his mouth to say something but he was interrupted by the buzzing of his phone. They both checked and the name of Thea greeted them, as well as her smiling face. It was the picture Carl had taken of the two of them the day they had tried on dresses for the museum opening. Seeing it twisted something inside of Felicity’s stomach. So much had happened since that happy afternoon, it felt like she had been posing with her friend forever ago.

Oliver picked up and talked with his sister for a few minutes, reassuring her about him. He then handed her the phone.

“She wants to speak with you,” he told Felicity.

The blonde took the device as he got up, mouthing “breakfast” and pointing at her fridge. She nodded, not that he needed her authorisation to help himself and do as he was pleased in her house.

“Felicity, hey how are you?” Thea’s voice sounded weird, all strained and worried.

“Good, I’m good,” she assured her.

“Quit it Smoak and be honest. I’m not ten, there’s no need to hide things from me.”

“It’s just a concussion and a few stitches Thea, it’s no big deal.”

The other girl laughed dryly on the other side of the line. “It’s not “no big deal. Are you going to be okay?”

It was Felicity’s turn to laugh. “The doctors think I might just make it,” she told her. She was truly touched by her friend’s concern, but really she had been through worst. And yes, she knew it didn’t automatically lessen the importance of what had happened to her, life wasn’t a trauma contest after all, but really, she was going to be fine. It’d take a few days, and she wasn’t entirely convinced she wasn’t going to have nightmares, but for now she felt okay, both physically and emotionally.

The two girls talked some more and then Felicity hung up. Oliver’s call log appeared on screen, it was the last thing he had checked before locking it and Felicity didn’t mean to, but she couldn’t help but see he hadn’t called Isabel last night, like she had suggested he did. Taken aback, she got up from the couch, to meet him in her kitchen. He had already pulled a few things out of the fridge, to fix them a quick, and of course healthy, something.

“You and I are going to talk about how you do your grocery shopping,” he told her when she gave him his phone back.

She didn’t smile at his small attempt at teasing her. “Why didn’t you call Isabel last night?” She asked him directly.

He started doing that thing he always did with his fingers whenever he was nervous and she crossed her arms above chest, hey eyebrows furrowed.

“She wasn’t the one I needed to talk to last night,” he simply told her.

She arched an eyebrow. What? “You and your soulmate surely have an unconventional relationship,” she pointed out.

“I’m not going to try and deny that.”
She shook her head. There was something wrong there. There was something very wrong. First, they lived apart from one another. What kind of soulmates did that? The unbonded kind. Then, maybe they were but she highly doubted Oliver was the kind of man who actually saved himself for his marriage. And there was also that weird thing, where he’d told her their number was a three and Laurel had let slip it was actually an eight or a nine. She had caught herself when Felicity had told her it was a three but… That was odd, right? For one of his oldest friends, his best friend’s soulmate to forget about something like that?

She opened her mouth, to press the issue but they were interrupted by a knock on the door.

“Were you expecting anyone?” He asked her, frowning.

She slapped her forehead, wincing in pain because the medicine had yet to kick in. Georgia.

“Damn, your friend from Vegas is coming to visit you, isn’t she?” Oliver said.

She nodded, her eyes clenched shut. “I can’t believe you remember.”

“Well, I did forget, because of everything that happened…”

Again, she nodded, wincing slightly, mentally slapping herself and shaking her head in disapproval. “I’m a terrible friend,” she whined as Georgia knocked again.

“Go open the door,” Oliver told her, pushing her toward the apartment’s entrance.

“There’ll be a lot of squealing and high-pitched screams,” she warned him. “Brace yourself.”

He gave her a short nod. Checking the peephole, she opened the door to her gorgeous friend who had died her hair red since she had last seen her in flesh and blood. The moment she did, Georgia dropped the handle of her luggage and rushed toward Felicity, engulfing her in her embrace.

“Felicity!” She yelled hugging her tightly.

“G!! I’m so happy to see you!” The blonde replied, hugging her just as tightly, ignoring the way her screams and squealing did no good to her headache.

“Me too, F, god I’ve missed you. And were you always so tiny?”

Felicity chuckled, pulling away with regret. She was truly happy to see her friend, to have her here with her – even if she had completely forgotten she was visiting her for two days, before her mother arrived for Thanksgiving.

“Don’t be mean G, or else I’ll put you back in a plane for Vegas.”

“I’m just messing with you and oh! I didn’t know you had someone staying over…” Georgia said, her voice dropping slightly as her eyes hidden behind her square glasses fell on Oliver.

“Oh my god, he’s not staying over!” Felicity immediately corrected her, not wanting her friend to get the wrong idea. “I mean, he did spend the night here but it was because I needed to be watched after the accident last night and…”

“The accident?” Georgia asked, concern filling her eyes. “What happened to your face?” She added, raising a hand to check the gauze on her forehead.

“Nothing, I’m fine,” Felicity started to say but was quickly interrupted by Oliver.
“A car hit ours while we were coming back from a basketball game last night,” he explained. “Felicity had a concussion and a wound which needed stitches. I stayed with her for the night, to make sure she wouldn’t fall asleep and never wake up.”

Georgia blinked, once, twice, processing all the things she had just been told. Then she said, “You managed to take her to a basketball game?”

Felicity huffed back a laugh and Oliver frowned, not knowing if he should be laughing or not. “G, don’t mess with him just yet, I don’t want you to scare him away. And by him I mean Oliver Queen, my boss.”

The red-headed nodded. Felicity stepped aside to let her in, before closing the door behind her. Georgia’s eyes widened at the mention of Oliver’s name.

“So you’re Oliver Queen? The Oliver Queen Felicity keeps talking about?” She said, raising her hand toward him. “Of course, you are, I may or may have not googled you when Felicity got her job at your company so I know what you look like, I’ve seen pictures but I have to say they don’t do you any justice.” She paused. “And I meant that as a compliment, not a flirt. I know you have a soulmate, I have one myself and I’m just going to shut up.”

Oliver looked at Felicity. “Do you get your rambling habit from her?”

The blonde shook her head, her curls following the motion. “It’s the other way around, I’m afraid. She gets it from me.”

That made Oliver chuckle. “Of course she does. Even I ramble now.”

“Yes, that’s part of her plan to get under your skin and if you aren’t careful, she’ll make herself comfortable and won’t ever leave you. She can be sneaky that way!”

“It’s a good thing I don’t want her to leave then?”

Georgia turned toward Felicity, smiling. “I like him.” Her eyebrows furrowed at the sight of her friend though and she bit on her lower lip nervously, more concern filling her eyes. “So you had a car accident, how did that happen? Are you sure you’re okay? Why didn’t you call me? Maybe I shouldn’t have come…”

Felicity shook her head firmly, her hand grabbing her friend’s. “No, it’s nothing really. We haven’t seen each other in so long, cancelling was out of question.”

“Besides, we kind of forgot about everything after the crash… We were actually very surprised when you knocked on the door.”

“I completely understand,” Georgia assured them. “It also explains why F is still wearing her pajamas.”

“She just woke up,” Oliver confirmed.

Georgia sighed, squeezing Felicity’s fingers. “I’m worried F. First there was the break in in your apartment, now this…”

Felicity’s blood froze in her veins the moment the words escaped her friends’ lips. A long silent followed her declaration, so long and perfect it was almost deafening. Confusion appeared in Oliver’s eyes and Felicity’s heart started kicking in her chest with a vengeance.
“The break in in your apartment?” He asked, his voice lower than before.

Georgia’s eyes travelled from Oliver to Felicity then back to Oliver. Surely, she was picking up the very sudden and very thick tension that had appeared between them. Her eyes widened and she said.

“You didn’t tell him?” Her tone was not judgemental but definitely accusatory.

“No, obviously, she didn’t,” Oliver said, coldly, crossing his arms over his chest.

“And you didn’t tell him about what his mother did that night as well?” Georgia went on.

Felicity glared at her. “G!” She yelled.

“F!” She replied, yelling as well. “Did you expect anything else from me? I’m your friend and here to have your back.”

“If that was true you would have shut up,” she hissed angrily.

“Enough you two!” Oliver cut them off. “What did my mother do?” He demanded.

Felicity looked away from her friend, to meet Oliver’s blue eyes. There was something in them, a mix of anger and pain she had never seen before. And it was directed at her, she was the cause of his anger and his pain. She had done that to him. But she didn’t understand why he was feeling that way. It wasn’t like she had kept a huge secret from him. She had just refused to share a few details about her life.

“It wasn’t that bad,” she started, shifting uncomfortably, not liking the way he was staring at her. His blue eyes were solely focused on her, pinning her where she was standing on the ground.

“Tell me what she did Felicity or God help me…”

She frowned, anger bubbling in her chest, making her blood boil in her veins. “Or what? You’re going to force the words out of me?”

“If I have to, yes, so quit with the lying!” He shout, his voice rising for the first time.

Felicity took a step back and Georgia looked toward the floor.

“Okay, maybe I should just let you guys deal with this…” She suggested, tapping the floor with the tip of her boot.

“No!” Felicity said when Oliver said “Yes.” She sighed before changing her mind and telling where the guestroom was.

“What did my mother do?” Oliver asked again, anger radiating off of him in strong waves that made her feel terrible.

“She told the security I was persona non gratta at the museum opening,” she eventually confessed through gritted teeth, her fists clenched tightly. “They wouldn’t let me in.”

His mouth fell open, all colours living his face as realisation struck him. “That’s why you called me so many times that night.”

She nodded and his shoulders dropped. “I ran into Tommy and he got me in,” she explained.

“So you got Tommy to lie to me too?” He asked.
“It wasn’t lying,” she tried to say. “I just didn’t tell you something about my life, because I have a right to privacy, you’re not…”

“What about the break-in?” He cut her off rudely, jumping quickly to the other subject and she realised he was more worried and upset about this than what her mother had done. She didn’t know how that made her feel. “Is it why you suddenly decided to move out?” He paused and added immediately after, not needing her to confirm his suspicions. “So I was right, it was really a new couch? Did they steal anything? Were you there? Were you hurt?”

She shook her head, twisting her fingers together, not liking his way of pressing her with his questions, not liking how the situation was so quickly getting out of her hands. He was never supposed to know. But now he did and he wanted the truth to flow and he didn’t care if she felt overwhelmed. “It happened during the museum opening.”

Oliver blinked. “A museum opening you wouldn’t have attended, hadn’t you run into Tommy. Is that why you didn’t tell me? Do you think my mother is behind this?”

“I don’t know, do you?” She shot back.

“Don’t make this about me!” He yelled, pointing an angry finger at her. “Why the hell didn’t you tell me? I thought we were friends!”

The words felt like a slap but she ignored the stinging pain and stood her ground. “I wasn’t going to come between you and your mother,” she yelled back.

“Felicity a break-in is a very serious thing! Did you tell anyone beside your friend? Did you call the police?”

She didn’t reply, looking down toward the floor. It was everything he needed. He let out a frustrated breath, rubbing his fingers together, not nervously this time but angrily.

“What the hell is wrong with you?” He yelled again. “This is your safety we’re talking about!”

“I didn’t want to let your mother intimidate me,” she replied.

“So you do think she’s behind this?”

“I got an email telling me I wasn’t wanted in Star City and I’ve been hearing that quite a lot ever since I moved in and from both your charming mother and your delightful fiancée!” She paused for a second, trying to get a hold on her emotions. Adrenaline had kicked in her veins, because of the fight but she knew she desperately needed to calm down. An argument so soon after a concussion, surely, wasn’t all that good. “I’m not accusing anyone of anything,” she calmly explained, focusing on her breathing. “I’m just saying it’s one hell of a coincidence.”

Oliver didn’t reply to that. He just stared at her for a while, pain and anger still swirling in his blue orbs. “When were you going to tell me this?” He asked coldly.

She looked away.

“Never?” He guessed. He chuckled dryly, shaking his head. “This is not okay Felicity. This is really not okay.”

“Listen Oliver, I get why you’re mad but…”

“No!” He cut her off, again. “No, you don’t. You said it yourself earlier “it wasn’t a lie”. Except it
was! You lied to me, hide things from me and this is not okay. This is not what friendship is.”

“I didn’t want to cause you trouble,” she said. “For God’s sake, it’s your mother we’re talking about here, Oliver.”

“And she is threatening you, my friend.”

“Friends aren’t as imp…”

He raised a hand to stop her and she did because of the dark look on his face. He had jumped from angry to mad in a second and it took everything she had in her not to take a step back. “Don’t you dare finish that sentence!” He took a deep breath, trying to collect his emotions. “After what happened in my office with my mother a few weeks ago, you said what I had done wasn’t what friends were supposed to do. Well, now it’s my turn to tell you what you did isn’t what friends normally do. And not only did you lie to me but you also didn’t go to the police and endangered yourself in the process and that…” He clenched his eyes shut for a second and she swallowed heavily. “That is not something I can accept. Do you have any idea how I’d feel if anything happened to you? And because of my mother on top of all things? How I’d feel if I knew I could have stopped it, had you told me everything?”

She opened her mouth, tears pricking at the corner of her eyes. “I didn’t do it to hurt you,” she said. “I wanted to protect you from this fight between me and your mother.”

He shook his head. “You’re a fool if you think I’m going to believe this.”

“Are you calling me a liar?” She gasped, offended.

“Well, you’re not the most honest person around here, are you?”

“That’s rich coming from the guy who lied about his connection to his soulmate,” she threw in without thinking. His eyes widened at her words and she saw a flash of panic cross them. It was brief but it happened and it ignited her anger. She hadn’t known if he had been lying before, but now she most definitely knew. “Laurel may or may have not said your connection to your soulmate was an eight or a nine,” she said as an explanation.

“She wasn’t even able to give you the exact number and you’d believe her over me?”

He had her there but when she opened her mouth, to argue with him, he cut her off, again. “Again don’t try to make this about me. I said I didn’t believe you because I’m starting to know you Felicity. No scratch that, I know you. I know how guarded you are, how protective of yourself you are. And I think that’s why you didn’t tell me. I think you simply didn’t trust me enough.”

She opened her mouth to protest but no sound came out.

He shook his head, disappointment joining the party his pain and anger were having in his eyes. She couldn’t feel her headache anymore, but she didn’t know if it was because of the medication she had taken or if the throbbing of her heart was covering everything else.

“And if there is no trust between us then I wonder what the point of this friendship is.”

He left after that and she tried to hold him back but it didn’t work. He just walked out without looking back and she was left standing in the doorway, knowing she was the only one to blame for what had just happened.

Georgia’s voice got her out of the numb state this fight had just left her.
“Felicity?” She asked carefully, sounding unsure.

“I’m going to go for a shower,” Felicity told her, making her way toward the bathroom without sparing her a glance.

She felt truly exhausted as she started the shower. She hadn’t really walked to the bathroom, she had more dragged herself. Her heart felt heavy in her chest and there was a bitter taste in her mouth. Her emotions were a tangled mess and she didn’t know where to start to untie the knots twisting her mind and heart. She knew she wasn’t angry anymore. No, her anger had completely faded away once Oliver had walked out of her apartment without even looking back. Now she was just a complete mix of negative and conflicted emotions. She was upset, that much was sure but it wasn’t what dominated her at the moment. What dominated was sadness. There was an aching hollowness inside of her, one that made it hard for her to breathe and think properly. One that hurt so much, she was now completely oblivious to the physical pain she was in.

Tears running down her cheeks in an uninterrupted flow, she got in the shower, hoping the hot shower would make her feel better.

“I thought we were friends.”

“What the hell is wrong with you?”

“You’re not the most person around here, are you?”

“If there is no trust between us then I wonder what the point of this friendship is.”

More tears came down her cheeks, burning and unbidden as the memory of the fight played all over again in her mind. It was like a broken record, his words coming back to bite her again and again, the pain of the sting more intense each time.

She knew where he was coming from when he said she didn’t trust him. She knew she had a hard time opening up to people, letting them in both because she didn’t want to disturb anyone with her problems and because life had taught her the hard way what could come out of trusting people, of letting them in. Felicity had learnt at the price of her own blood she could only count on herself. So maybe Oliver wasn’t wrong when he said she didn’t trust him, because from his perspective it certainly looked like she didn’t. But what he didn’t seem to realise was that she had actually opened up to him more than she had opened up to anyone else, and more quickly than ever. It had taken her a lot of time to allow Georgia in her apartment or trusting her enough to confide in her and tell her about her family and what she was going through at home. It had required time to build their friendship. With Oliver things had been very much different. One day, he hadn’t been here and the day after, he had been everywhere, invading every corner of her life to the point where she didn’t remember how life was before him. They had known each other for about three months and she had already let him in her home countless times, she had given away little details about herself, little things she was usually afraid to tell because she didn’t know how people would react to the real her. It didn’t seem like it was a lot to him but to her, it was everything. She did trust him, in her own way. She had told him about her nightmares and she had let him see her at her most vulnerable state. She had even fallen asleep around him a few times. But maybe that was the problem. She had showed him she was comfortable around him but when something had happened to her, she hadn’t come to him, she hadn’t told him about it.

Felicity shut down the water and got out of the shower, not feeling any better. She got dressed quickly and went to the kitchen, from where she could smell the delicious scent of home-made pancakes. She found Georgia setting the table, holding a plate of pancakes.
“I thought of this as an apology breakfast,” she explained. “But then I realised I’m not sorry for telling him. He deserved to know and you needed him to know. You can’t go through this alone F.”

Felicity nodded. She wasn’t mad at Georgia, not really. None of this would have happened, had she told Oliver everything from the beginning. She walked to the table and picked a raspberry from one of the bowls of fruits her friend had prepared. She felt another pang of sadness tugged at her heart at the thought of Oliver, who had wanted to cook them breakfast but she chose to ignore it.

“If this isn’t an apology breakfast then what is it?” She asked.

“A comfort breakfast?” Georgia suggested. “I didn’t mean to listen to your conversation but the walls are thin and the two of you were kind of yelling. Loudly.”

Felicity winced. “Sorry about that,” she apologised, sitting down. Georgia did the same and they started eating.

“Want to talk about it?” The red-headed asked.

Felicity shook her head. “It’s too soon, I still need to… Think about it.” She pointed at her head. Georgia nodded. “I understand.”

They remained silent for a minute, the both of them lost in their thoughts when Felicity decided to lighten the mood a little bit. “So how are things with the love of your life?”

A small smile stretched Georgia’s lips. Something brightened in her brown eyes and Felicity couldn’t help but smile back at her. Happiness suited her friend well. “Good, they’re perfect. Ben is…” She chuckled, stars in her eyes, a dreamy smile on her lips. “He’s perfect. I mean, it’s cheesy to say that, because he’s my soulmate so of course I’m going to find him perfect but… He actually is.”

Felicity snorted, popping a blueberry in her mouth. “You’re right it does sound cheesy but I get what you mean. What have you guys been up to? You’ve been pretty vague on the phone, saying the two of you have been out on a couple dates.”

Georgia nodded. “After our phone-call I went back to the coffee-shop, I told you about that right?”

“Yes! You said the idiot had been waiting for you.”

Georgia’s smile widened. “Yes, if that’s not a proof he really wants us then I don’t know what is.”

Felicity chuckled. “We had an amazing time and we decided not to rush things and to date for a while instead. You know, to strengthen our connection before actually… Bonding. It’s not easy because he’s a pilot but… I think we’re dealing with it just fine.”

“So… No funny business yet?” Felicity asked, voluntarily teasing her friend.

“Sex with your soulmate is more intimate than anything and although it’s very tempting to just jump them when you meet them, it’s also important not to rush things and to take the time to get to know one another perfectly. Being bonded to someone isn’t only about two bodies craving one another. It’s also about two souls coming together,” Georgia ranted, very seriously.

Felicity nodded. She understood perfectly what her friend was telling her. If she wasn’t taking the Med, and with her soulmate, she’d probably wait to get to know him more before rushing the physical side of things.
“So no crazy heated sex between the two of you yet?” She asked again, waiting for a confirmation.

Her friend nodded before adding. “Just because you don’t get to the main course just yet doesn’t mean you don’t enjoy the appetizers,” the red-headed said, blushing slightly and suddenly focusing more on her pancakes.

“G!” Felicity squealed, her eyes wide opened. “You really told me nothing over the phone! I want details now!” She demanded petulantly.

“Well… It’s different from my previous relationships, to be honest.” Georgia had dated a few guys while her soulmate had been taking the Med, considering it foolish to wait for someone who was shutting her out. “Of course, it’s different, he’s my soulmate. Everything is… More intense. I had never felt anything like this, anything that intense and I’m not only talking about the pleasure following the little funny business we allow ourselves, I’m also talking about the little things. Being with him increase everything I’m feeling, it makes everything better, brighter even stupid things like drinking coffee at six am before work or finally sitting down after a long day at the office. He truly makes my life more beautiful and I’m happier than I’ve ever been.”

Felicity felt a lump of emotions form in her throat as she listened to her friends’ words and saw the look of utter happiness on her face. Those were things she’d never ever experienced and a pang of longing tugged at her heart. Tears pricked at the corner of her eyes but she held them back. She had made her choice a long time ago, so had her soulmate.

“I’m so happy for you G,” she said reaching out for her friend’s hand. “You only deserve the best, I’m glad you got it.”

“F, you can’t imagine how it feels to finally be with him, to finally be able to touch him. I wish you’d find your soulmate too so that you can feel it yourself.”

Felicity stiffened at her words. “G don’t be that girl, please,” she asked, her voice lower than before. Her friend cocked her head. “What do you mean?”

“Don’t be that girl who just got her soulmate and is so lost in her happy bubble made of love, strawberries and marshmallows she wants everyone around her to be with their soulmate too because she can’t fathom other ways to be happy.”

“I’m not that girl Felicity,” she stated. “I’m well-aware there are about a million different ways to be happy, with your family, your friends, your job or your hobbies. All I’m saying is that having your soulmate and being with them is true happiness. They make you whole again and nothing compares to that, nothing. Soulmates are who we’re supposed to be with, they’re proof there are no coincidences in this world, only fate and it’s useless to fight against fate.”

Still against anti-soulmate’s group and the Med, I see,” Felicity noticed.

“Now more than ever,” Georgia admitted.

Felicity looked away from her, not really knowing what to reply to that. Georgia knew she was on the Med but it was a topic they both avoided like the plague, knowing it would only serve to create tensions between the two of them.

They finished eating and planned the two days they were going to spend together. Georgia was leaving on Tuesday and Felicity’s mother was supposed to arrive the same day, but later. They spent the morning dealing with the aftermath of the crash. Her rental car had been hit pretty badly and she needed to organise her papers and official documents, to make sure her insurance was covering her
and would pay for the repairs. Felicity also called her mother, to tell her what happened. Donna reacted as badly as she had expected her to and Felicity had to use everything she had in her to appease her and talk her into not coming over immediately. Georgia even helped her, saying she would watch Felicity carefully and take good care of her.

They got out for lunch in the middle of the afternoon, right after hanging up and then Felicity gave her friend a tour of Star City, showing her her favourite spot in the city. She asked for the Williams’ car, with whom she still spoke with on a daily basis, to drive them through the city, since hers was out of order. They went back to Felicity’s apartment quickly though, because the blonde still felt pretty tired. It made her feel bad, she felt like she was ruining her friend’s visit. Georgia was quick to reassure her. They did their nails together, watching whatever silly programmes were being aired. They ordered pizza for dinner and because Felicity felt a bit more rested, they went out to the movies. Once they were back home, they locked themselves in Felicity’s room and talked half of the night, about everything and anything. Georgia tried to learn more about Oliver, she was really curious about him, but Felicity brushed that one topic away every time she brought it up.

She hadn’t heard from Oliver since he had left, and she thought it was probably normal considering how they’d left things. In spite of knowing in her heart he wouldn’t text or email her, her heart kept jumping in her chest, every time she heard her phone buzz, to the point where she decided to cut the sound of the device. He didn’t contact her, but she didn’t blame him for that. She knew he wasn’t the one who had to do the first step. She knew she had to reach out to him but she honestly had no idea of how to do that. For the first time in a very long time, she didn’t know what to do or what to say. She knew she had to apologise but then what? Where would they go from there? She didn’t know. And it hurt, it really hurt, the pain seemed to be digging a bigger hole in her chest, a hole with nothing but a bitter sadness. She tossed and turned that night, unable to sleep, unable to think about anything else but him. She realised she hated fighting with him. She had already disliked when they had fought over what he had said to her mother but now, she had the confirmation. More than disliking it, she truly hated fighting with him. She loathed not knowing whether or not they’d be okay, not being able to talk to him whenever she felt like doing so. Their friendship had been so natural, seeing it in jeopardy paralysed, made her life empty. And it scared her, the depth of her feelings and attachment to him.

The following day, Georgia and she went shopping in the morning. She bought a white outfit since Tommy had invited her to a black and white charity. Then, they stopped by a salon to dye Felicity’s hair again. For a while her hair had been blonde but with her dark roots visible. She wanted to be completely blonde now, so she died her roots as well and lightened the colour of her hair making it look like pure gold. After that, they decided to try a spa Thea had recommended. They had the best of time, talking and being taken care of. When they were done pampering themselves, Felicity drove down to Emerald coast, showing the beautiful beach to her friend. They ate dinner there and went back to Felicity’s apartment. They watched a movie that night, comfortably wrapped in blankets on the couch, cups of ice-cream between their hands. Since Georgia’s flight was early in the morning they called it a night earlier than they had the previous day. Once she was alone, Felicity tried to call Oliver and when he didn’t pick up, it hurt. She called three more times, he never picked up. The fifth time, she left a messy message, asking him to call her back.

She drove Georgia back to the airport the next day and went back to her apartment. She did a little cleaning, getting the place ready to welcome her mother the following day. Oliver still hadn’t called her back and no, she wasn’t checking her phone every five minutes. She got a text from Tommy in the middle of the afternoon.

--

3:34 pm
Coming over, we need to talk.

TM

--

Uh…

--

3:36

O-okay?

FS

--

He didn’t reply to that and she sighed before typing another text.

--

3:37

Bring coffee while you're at it!

FS

--

Then, she tossed her phone away, sighing heavily. She was in for another lecture, she knew it. Half an hour later, she heard a knock at the door. She went to open it, smoothing out the rumpled edges of her dress as she was walking. On the other side was waiting a very good-looking Tommy Merlyn, wearing dark clothes, his dark hair a nice mess on top of his head.

“Tommy, hey!” She said, brushing a blonde curl away behind her ear.

He pointed an accusing finger at her. “I leave you guys alone for a second to spend some time with my soulmate and the two of you managed to get into a car accident and fight. What the hell is wrong with you?”

“To be fair, none of this was planned,” she tried to humour him.

He arched an eyebrow and took a step toward her. She didn’t let him in.

“Where’s my coffee?”

He got two steaming cups from behind his back and she took the one with her name written on it. Their fingers brushed and she had to hold back a wince when she felt like she had been burnt, just by touching him.

“Now, you can come in,” she said, stepping aside, frowning at the lingering burn she felt, starting where their hands had brushed. She looked up to see if he had noticed anything. He didn’t seem to have.

He rolled his eyes at her eagerness for coffee and she closed the door behind him, shaking her head
to stop thinking about that burn. She had probably imagined it anyway. They settled down in her kitchen, their coffees in front of them.

“So… I spoke with Oliver,” Tommy said after a second.

“And let me guess… He told you everything?”

Tommy nodded. “Why didn’t you tell us?” He asked calmly.

She could see in his eyes he wasn’t mad at her for not telling him about her problems. But just because he wasn’t mad didn’t mean he hadn’t been hurt by her attitude and her way of keeping people at arms’ length.

She shrugged. “It’s just the way I am. I deal with my problems alone…”

Tommy raised a hand to stop her. “I’d like for you to use the past tense in that sentence, please. I have a feeling you’re here to stay in Star City and I have another feeling you and I are going to remain friends for a while so let me get this straight: you’re not alone anymore. I want to be here for you the same way you are for me, especially when such serious things happen to you. And this applies to Ollie, Dig, Barry or Sara. You need to trust us a little anymore.”

Felicity’s grip tightened around her cup of coffee. “Trust isn’t something that comes easily to me.” She felt relieved when he didn’t press the issue. She knew there’d be a time in the future where he’d want to know more, especially if their friendship kept on thriving. She didn’t know what she’d do then but for now, she was happy he wasn’t asking more than she could give him.

“I can understand that but Felicity, it’s really something you need to work on, hard. What you did, hiding very important stuff from us, wasn’t okay. What if something had happened to you? We wouldn’t even have known about it!”

“I know, I’m sorry,” she said, twisting her fingers in nervousness.

“And I think it would be good if you’d just open up a little. If you don’t, I fear, either you’ll stay alone or you’ll have to deal with me checking on you every few minutes. It’ll be quite annoying, a lot worse for you than me by the way, but there’s nothing I wouldn’t do for my friends.”

Felicity chuckled at that. “Okay, okay, I’ll work on it, I promise.” She paused for a second, looking down toward her coffee. “I’m really sorry Tommy, I didn’t do it to hurt you – or Oliver or anyone for that matter. I just… It’s just the way I’m used to be.”

He nodded. “That my friend is why meeting new people is very important. The right persons help you become a better version of yourself.”

“If only Oliver could have reacted like you…” She sighed.

Tommy shook his head. “He can’t, not when it comes to you.”

She frowned. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Well, he’s the one who hired you and it’s his mother who’s giving you a hard time because of it. He’s too emotionally involved to be able to think about it the way I can.” He took a sip of his coffee before going on. “I was with him this morning. He was really upset, he thought you’d have called by now. And to be honest, I thought so too. You’re seriously disappointing me Lissy. Usually, the two of you are always talking, what’s happening?”
Felicity frowned, her confusion stronger than her embarrassment at his last words. “I called him five times last night. I even left a message – not a brilliant one, I admit it but still… I called.”

“You sure? Because he assured me you didn’t.”

“Tommy, I’m telling you I did.”

He ran a hand through his hair, sighing. “Damn…That’ll teach me to try and fix things between my friends.”

“I’ll try to call him again today, but my mother arrives tonight so… I’ll be pretty busy.”

Tommy’s eyes widened. “Oh that reminds me! Meal starts around 1 pm on Tuesday. Be on time, Laurel hates it when people are late.”

Felicity chuckled. “I hate it too so don’t worry, we’ll be on time.”

“And, I wanted to remind you of my charity on Saturday…”

“As if I could forget about it,” she said, smiling at him. Tommy had organised a charity at Star City’s swimming pool. He was raising money for children who couldn’t practice a sport outside of school or play an instrument or have any kind of extra-curricular activity because their parents didn’t have enough money to pay for them. The money would also help offering them vacation outside of Star City. “But you do know I won’t be able to give more than a symbolic dollar?”

“I know that but your boss is going to donate enough for the two of you.”

Felicity chuckled lightly. “He’s coming?” Her heart skipped a beat at the thought.

“Yes, his parents aren’t though, so you can already relax. But Isabel is, God help us. She won’t stay the whole evening though, she has an early flight back to Russia on Sunday.”

Felicity frowned. She had already noticed Tommy wasn’t too fond of Isabel but now, he wasn’t really doing anything to hide it.

“Why don’t you like her?” She asked, casually playing with her coffee cup.

Her question made him laugh. “You really don’t see why?”

“Well, I know why I don’t like her, she was a bitch to me. But what about you?”

He shrugged. “She just doesn’t fit you know? She and Ollie… They don’t fit.”

“Laurel said Oliver’s connection to his soulmate was an eight or a nine. Oliver says his connection was a three.”

Tommy rolled his eyes. “Honestly? I stopped wondering or asking questions a while ago, when I realised I wouldn’t be getting any answers. You should do just that or more important, you shouldn’t try to understand Oliver and Isabel. There’s nothing to understand, it doesn’t make any sense.”

Felicity gave him a sceptical look. “For example, they don’t have any chemistry. Unlike two other people I know…” He gave her a side look and she shook her head.

“Tommy don’t go there please!” She warned him.

He huffed back a laugh, holding his hand out in defence. “Okay, okay, I won’t. But just so you know, I still ship you guys.”
She shook her head. “You’re weird.”

“And Oliver’s contact pic in your phone is the one I sent you after the museum opening so…”

“How about we talk about something else?” She suggested hurriedly, her mind desperate to find a safer topic. “A black and white themed party? Why do boys have to wear black and girls white? It’s weird!”

“Because I say so? Last year, boys were wearing blue and girls red. It’s a habit I got from my partying years. Always find a way to identify your potential targets easily.”

Felicity shook her head and he gave her a poor smile.

“Smart, I know?”

She shook her head again, clearly not impressed and his smile widened. They ended up talking a bit more about the charity. He had been organising it once a year for four years, always picking a new location – he had already done it on a basketball field, in a theatre, a gymnasium and on a tennis court - always picking a special theme and each time had been a bigger success than the previous one. People always donated more for children and even more when it was a party thrown by Tommy Merlyn himself.

He left around two hours after coming in and he gave her a hug to tell her goodbye. A hug that she had to shorten when she felt her skin burn wherever he had held her, and that in spite of her clothes. She leaned against the door after closing it, breathing heavily through her nose. The burn wasn’t painful but it was unpleasant, uncomfortable and it unsettled her. Her bond quaked slightly behind the bars of its prison and she clenched her fists, ignoring its presence the way she did every day, but it was still harder than usual. She focused on her breathing for a few minutes, feeling the weird sensation calming down, but not leaving her body.

Reaching for her phone, she called Oliver again. She shifted her weight on her feet nervously, as she listened to the usual ring. When he didn’t pick up, she felt her heart drop in her chest. She left another message, asking him to call her back. She then got her bag and went out to get her mother at the airport.

Her mother was all bright colours, toned skin and perfectly curled hair when Felicity saw her and the sight made her really happy. It had been a while since she had last seen her mother looking that good, rocking a sexy dress and high heels like a pro. She hugged her daughter tightly, brushing her hair away from her head and chewing on her lips in worry at the sight of Felicity being hurt. She reassured her for the millionth time, telling her she was fine but it did nothing to appease her mother. She reached for her arm and didn’t let go, brushing it, squeezing her fingers from time to time, as if she was making sure she was really there. Felicity couldn’t really blame for that, considering all the things they had been through.

They drove to the Williams’ place after that and picked them up. They had wanted to meet Felicity’s mom when they had learnt she was coming and Felicity had offered to invite them to go out and eat at the restaurant, since they had been very kind to her and had lent her their car while she had been waiting to get another rental. Dinner went well and the two Smoak ladies went back to Felicity’s apartment with a smile on their lips, happy to be back together again. Donna’s smile was the brightest, Felicity could tell she was happy to see her daughter wasn’t alone in such a big city and that she had surrounded herself with good people.

Felicity proudly showed her her new apartment and her mother was really happy she had left the “tiny and closed off” place. She told her everything about the small work she had had to do and
about how her moving in had been. And if the name “Oliver” came up way too many times, she didn’t realise it. They went to bed early, knowing they had a million things to do the next day. Since Felicity had given a tour of Star City to Georgia earlier in the week, it was easy for her to give one to her mother, she knew the easiest and most practical way to show her all of her favourites spots in one go. Felicity did most of the talking during the ride, her mother listening to her carefully, her eyes taking in everything. There was something slightly off about, she barely said a word about her job and her life back in Vegas but whenever Felicity tried to ask her about it, she brushed the topic away. For a while she feared her mother was breaking again, she worried she had stopped taking the Med but she had seen her swallow a pill down in the morning. It wasn’t that, and clearly Donna didn’t want to talk about what it was that was bothering her. Felicity decided not to press the issue – for now. She certainly would before her mother left on Friday night.

The blonde felt grateful for her mother’s presence, which was a very appropriate feeling the day before Thanksgiving. She had missed her a lot, more than she had allowed herself to admit. She was still just a twenty-year-old girl after all, she was still young, it was normal to still need her mother. Having Donna with her also helped to think about something else. Oliver still hadn’t called her back and it worried her a lot. She wasn’t sleeping well, tossing and turning for hours every night, the unresolved situation between them stressing her out. She probably would have gone to see him, hadn’t she been very reluctant to come across Isabel and hadn’t she had her mother with her. She was really looking forward Tommy’s charity, to see him. She knew talking there wouldn’t be easy but if she was lucky, Isabel would be too busy socialising to bother her.

They got up early on Thanksgiving to bake a pumpkin pie. Tommy had said not to bring anything, but Donna hated going somewhere empty-handed and had taught Felicity to always bring something with her. They stopped by a flower shop on their way and bought something for Laurel as well. When they arrived, only Sara and their dad were already here.

It was Tommy who opened the door.

“Happy Thanksgiving ladies!” He greeted them with a bright and white smile on his face.

“Happy Thanksgiving Tommy,” Felicity replied, stepping in to hug him. The burn she had felt when they had touched the last time they had been together soared to life and she inhaled sharply. It went unnoticed as Laurel was coming up to introduce herself and take the flowers away from her mother’s hands, thanking her loudly. “This is my mother, Donna.”

“Are you sure she is your mother?” Tommy asked, teasing. “The two of you could be sisters.”

Felicity’s eyes widened, while Donna squealed happily, caressing her daughter’s curls. “Oh Felicity do you hear that?”

“You had to go and tell her that,” she said, glaring at Tommy.

He huffed back a laugh. “Well, what can I say, it’s the truth! I’m Tommy Merlyn and it’s a pleasure to finally meet Felicity’s mom,” he introduced himself, kissing her mother’s hand, making her giggle. Felicity rolled her eyes at him before greeting Laurel.

She chastised them for bringing a pie but Donna shushed her easily, telling her it was nothing. They moved to the living-room, where Sara and their dad were waiting for them. The blonde was wearing a black leather dress and Felicity couldn’t help but laugh at it. It didn’t really fit the occasion but Felicity hadn’t expected anything else from her. It was how Sara was, wild and uncommon, and also why being around her was always interesting. She had painted her nails and lips a dark red and when she hugged Felicity, the blonde had a hard time hugging her back, the burn that had started after hugging Tommy lingering. Then, she was introduced to Quentin Lance, Laurel and Sara’s dad and
when she shook his hand, she felt the fire started again, stronger. It truly made her skin crawl, her
blood pound in her veins with a furious desire to just go away, to put some distance between her and
all these people she was “Well, well, are you going to sail away right after the desert sailor?” Sara
 teased her, pointing at Felicity’s navy blue dress.

“Yes,” she played along. “I’m tired of this city, I want to settle down on a tropical island.”

“Don’t tell Oliver that!” Tommy interrupted them.

Oliver’s name made Donna tilt her head. “Is he coming today?” She asked.

Felicity frowned. “Why are you asking?”

Donna shrugged. “Well because you talk about him a lot. “I ate lunch with Oliver here,” “Oliver said
that”, “It reminds of that one time with Oliver”…”

Tommy chuckled at Donna. “Unfortunately, my best friend won’t be here with us today. He is
spending Thanksgiving with his family.”

Donna looked a bit disappointed to hear that and Felicity felt relieved when the bell rang. It was Iris,
Barry and JJ.

“F’licity!” The little boy yelled when he saw her.

He rushed toward her, not letting his parents the time to take his coat off of him.

“Hey JJ!”

“I’m happy to see you! Daddy says you have a bump on your head, do you want me to kiss it better?
That’s what mommy does when I fall from my tricycle.”

Felicity smiled brightly and leaned down to kiss his cheek. “You can kiss it better if you want to.”

He lightly kissed her forehead and she knew he was being careful not to hurt her. It did something to
her heart and she felt a warmth spread inside her belly, soothing the burn she had previously felt.

“Who’s this little nugget?” Donna asked.

JJ frowned. “Is she another Felicity?”

Donna chuckled and Felicity rolled her eyes. “No Junior, it’s my mother.”

“Good afternoon madam you’re very pretty,” he told Donna, holding his tiny hand out.

Donna smiled and shook his small fingers. “Good afternoon Junior, you’re very adorable.”

She squished his cheek and he giggled. Iris came to them, rocking her pale pink dress and heels, a
bright smile on her lips. Barry was right behind her and when he hugged Felicity she felt the same
burn from before came back and she had to take a step away from him. It was making her head spin
and she sat down for a second, needing some time to collect her emotions.

What the hell was happening?

At first, she had thought it had been nothing with Tommy, she had thought she had imagined it. But
obviously, she hadn’t.
“Baby you’re okay?” Donna asked. “Your cheeks are red.” Maybe the fire she was feeling was actually a fever in her blood. Donna put a hand on her forehead frowning. “You don’t have a fever though. Why don’t you go put some water on your face though? Your cheeks are really red.”

Felicity nodded, escaping to the bathroom. She splashed water on her face, happy to always only buy waterproof make-up. She felt the burn decrease slowly and she took a deep breath, to calm herself down. She felt the bond inside her head come to life and she clenched her fist when it pressed against the bars of its prison, roaring angrily, desperate to make her understand something. She shook her head, trying to shut it away. Something was wrong with her, something was very wrong. She shouldn’t be able to understand her bond, it was supposed to be completely muffled, utterly silent. With tears pricking at the corner of her eyes, she blindly reached for her bag. Now wasn’t the time for a crisis. Here wasn’t the place for a mental breakdown, so without thinking about it, she took an extra-pill. She swallowed it, relief settling inside her. She had no idea what was going on, why she felt a burn when touched by other people or why her bond was making its presence felt so often lately but she knew today wasn’t the day she was going to get any answers. Today, she was celebrating Thanksgiving with her friends. Today she was going to have a good time, she was going to enjoy herself more, just she had vowed to.

She felt the burn again when her shoulders bumped Barry’s when they both tried to get up at the same time, when she brushed Lance’s fingers when he gave her the salt or when Sara brushed her hair away to have a better look at her small earrings. It was driving her crazy slowly. Having people touching her all the time made her angry and she didn’t know where that anger was coming from. And her inability to handle a simple touch and her own anger upset her beyond words. All she wanted to do was to have a good time with her friends and her own body and mind were betraying her. She wanted to kick and scream and cry in frustration. Why was there always something to ruin her happy moments? Couldn’t she just have one day, one happy day for herself?

Apparently, the answer was no, she couldn’t.

If anyone noticed that something was off with her, nobody pointed it out. The food was delicious and the conversation happy and interesting, at least it was, when the burn was decreasing enough to allow Felicity to focus on it. It felt good to be with her most of her friends for Thanksgiving, it had been a while since she had been surrounded by so many people for this particular time of the year. She wished her other friends would be here too, Georgia, Thea, Dig, Oliver… She chased that feeling away quickly though, when her traitorous mind reminded of Oliver’s last words to her.

“I wonder what the point of this friendship is.”

Donna came to talk to her later that night, when they were back to her apartment. Felicity was lying down on her bed, wrapped up in a blanket, staring blankly at her arrow bracelet. Ever since they had been alone, the burn had disappeared, leaving her both mentally and physically exhausted. Physically, because the burn had been about her body, and mentally because it was her mind who had tried to fight it off. And now, to her biggest confusion, she felt relieved to be alone, not to be surrounded by people touching her anymore.

“Are you okay baby girl? Earlier, you seemed a little bit… tensed.”

Felicity opened her mouth to tell her she was okay but then she remembered Tommy’s words.

“I think it would be good if you’d just open up a little.”

“No, I’m not really okay. I don’t know why but… Even though I’m taking the Med, my bond is… strong, I feel it inside my head and heart and… It kind of hurts. And today, every time Sara, Lance, Tommy or Barry touched me, I felt like I had been burnt.”
Donna frowned sitting down on Felicity’s bed, concern written all over her face. “For how long has this been going on?”

“It started a few days ago, when Tommy came over.”

“Maybe you should call a doctor. You shouldn’t be able to feel your side of the bond, I know I don’t.”

Felicity chewed on her lips, worried. She twisted her fingers together nervously. “What if there’s something wrong with me?” She didn’t ask the second question that was burning the tip of her tongue, “what if there’s something wrong with him?” but it seemed that Donna got it anyway.

“If this goes on, call a doctor, okay?” She advised, squeezing her daughter’s knee.

Felicity gave her a small smile. “Did you have a good time today mom?”

“Yes,” Donna replied, her eyes shining brightly. “Your friends are really nice.”

Felicity nodded firmly. “They truly are. And what about Vegas? Are you happy there? I couldn’t help but notice you were avoiding talking about it.”

Her mother’s smile faded away. “Of course you noticed. You know me better than anyone else.”

Felicity tilted her head. “Mom?”

“It’s not how I thought it would be baby. At first, it was everything I had been dreaming of but lately… I’ve been feeling like what I thought I wanted and what I truly want are two very different things.”

“What is it that you want then?”

Donna shrugged. “I’m a forty-year-old single woman with only one child who leaves two hours away if you fly. I want to be with you baby, that’s all.”

Felicity reached for her mother’s hand, a few tears pricking at the corner of her eyes, a lump forming in her throat.

“Then we’ll try to make that happen,” she promised.

Donna left again the following day and Felicity used her time alone to rest. She didn’t try to call Oliver again, assuming he probably hadn’t called her back by lack of time but because he had been busy with his so called soulmate.

Saturday and Tommy’s party came quickly. Felicity dressed in white, putting a white bikini under her shirt. She knew they weren’t going there to swim, the chances for her to end up wet were very small but she couldn’t help but feeling nervous. She had been unable to find her white swimsuit with little cherries on it, the one she had already been wearing in high-school. She had been sure to have it, so she hadn’t bought a new one when she had gone shopping and when she had realised it was nowhere to be found, it had been too late for her to go buy another. So she’d have to do with a small bikini that didn’t cover much skin and that once belonged to her mother. She had believed her daughter would wear it one day and Felicity had taken it to make her happy, knowing she’d never wear something that didn’t cover her right side.

She was about to leave, she had just gotten her new rental car when she heard a soft knock at her door. Frowning, her heart skipped a beat when she saw who was waiting for her on the other side of
the door.

“Oliver.”

His name fell from her lips in a relieved breath. He was all dressed in black, looking as handsome as ever, although he had bags under his eyes.

“You didn’t call. You didn’t come. You didn’t even text,” he said, glaring at her.

She frowned. “I called, I left messages but you never called back. I thought you were busy with your soulmate and you’d come back in touch with me when you’d be… free again.” She said the last words quietly, looking down toward the tips of her shoes.

“I didn’t get any calls from you,” he said, surprised and confused.

“Don’t make me hack into both our phone records to prove it to you,” she said, still looking down toward her shoes, unable to cross his angry gaze.

“You don’t use computers anymore.”

She looked up and said, very seriously. “I’d do it for you.” Then she winced. “And I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to sound that dramatic.”

He huffed back a laugh and she let out a breath she hadn’t known she had been holding.

“Oliver I…” she started.

“Felicity,” he said at the same time. He bowed his head slightly. “You go first.”

“I wanted to tell you I’m sorry, for lying to you and keeping things from you. Opening up and relying on people is not something I’m good at but… I’ll try to be better from now on.”

He nodded. “As long as you don’t hide anything from me ever again, we should be fine.”

“You’re not going to be patient with me, are you?”

He shook his head, his hands coming up to take her free one. She sucked in a breath, getting herself ready to feel the burn. She didn’t. “No, I’m not and that’s because you’re important to me and I need to know when you’re not okay. So I can make it better.” His thumb rubbed over the top of her hand and still she felt no burn.

It felt weird to hear those words, and believing them was hard but there was something in his eyes, an unwavering certainty, an open honesty that told her he meant every word. Before she could process what was happening, he pulled her in for a hug, engulfing her in the warmth of his arms. She wrapped her own around his neck after a few seconds and he exhaled slowly.

“I hate fighting with you,” he admitted.

“I hate fighting with you too,” she whispered back, finally relaxing after almost a whole week and he tightened his hold on her.

“Thea’s waiting in the car, I was wondering if you wanted to go to the charity with us. I’ll drive you back.”

She chuckled at that, the sound muffled in the crook of his neck, he smelled very good she noticed, a strong and woody scent, something male but with a softness to it, a softness that was only him.
“Okay,” she accepted, holding onto him a bit tighter, content now that she had him back with her.

They made it to Star City’s swimming-pool, which had been beautifully decorated for the occasions. There were beautiful lights everywhere, bright balls, some floating around the room, some tied up to some lead weight. Waiters and waitresses were moving around the crowd with silver trays carrying sparkling flutes of champagne. Children were running, giggling happily and laughing out loud. A small heated pool had been opened especially for them and Tommy had also hired magicians and a clown to entertain them.

Thea left them right after they arrived, saying she had seen someone she knew from school. Oliver let her go, telling her to come to them once in a while before turning toward Felicity.

“Ready for another night of mundanities?” He asked.

She wasn’t. The burn was back, not nearly as intense as it had been on Thanksgiving but then the party had barely started. She knew it would increase and it did, every time someone did as much as brushing her shoulder. But she put on a brave smile on her lips and said, teasing.

“They seem to happen quite a lot around you Mister Queen. You forgot to mention that in my job description.”

He chuckled and she smiled, focusing on him and doing her best to ignore her discomfort. She had missed his company more than she was willing to admit and she wasn’t going to let one stupid little thing ruin her evening. On the bright side of things, her bond was all calm and silent but it probably was because she had taken a higher dose of the Med than usual.

They made their way around the other guests, doing small talk with some, talking about more serious business with others. They had a really interesting conversation with Walter Steele, QC’s CFO and Oliver’s father’s best friend. Felicity had run into him a few times already but had never had the pleasure to speak with him directly. He was a very nice man, with a wonderful accent and Felicity instantly liked his good manners, his politeness and clever mind. Sadly, he was unmarried and she thought it was a pity for a man like him to be alone.

Felicity excused herself for a minute at some point, feeling like she was suffocating inside the building, burning up from the inside. The noise was tiring her and she felt like she would spontaneously combust if she had to shake any more hands. Going out, she was instantly hit by the cold air of the evening. She brought the lapels of her jacket closer to her chest and she exhaled slowly, trying to calm down. The outside pool, who had yet to be emptied in spite of the time of the year, looked beautiful and Felicity couldn’t help for the summer to be here. It would be amazing to come here, to swim a bit and get a tan.

She frowned when she recognised a silhouette dancing dangerously close to the edge of the pool.

“Thea!” She called, walking toward her friend. She hadn’t come to tell them if she was okay in a while.

The brunette turned around and Felicity gasped when she saw she wasn’t wearing her coat, just a crop top that barely covered anything.

“Thea, are you crazy? Get back inside, you’re going to catch a cold!” She told her, concern filling her.

She made her way to her friend, and realised something was off in her eyes. Her pupils were dilated and she was stinking a strong and rancid smell of alcohol.
“Felicity hi!” She said giggling. “I’m happy to see you my friend,” she added as she tried to wrap her arms around Felicity’s neck. She tripped and almost fell on the ground. She dropped the flask she had been holding though, the liquid it had been containing spilled on the floor.

“Oh no. That was some pretty good stuff,” Thea whined before giggling. She bent over to get the flask back.

“Oh my god, you’re drunk!” Felicity realised, reaching out to take the flask from her.

“Of course I’m drunk. It’s the best state to be in. When I’m drunk, I forget about everything, about how my life sucks, about how my mom is full of shit…”

“Thea, give me that flask!” Felicity demanded, trying to get it while eyeing the edge of the pool.

Thea wasn’t stable on her feet and kept stumbling toward the cold water.

“She thinks you want to hook up with Ollie!” Thea giggled as if it was the most hilarious thing she had ever heard, taking another sip. “I don’t think you do but it would be nice to have you as my step-sister. I love you F’licity.”

“Thea for God’s sake, give me that bottle!” Felicity yelled, grabbing the silver flask.

“No!” Thea yanked it away from her. The movement made her trip and she fell backward in the pool.

“Fuck!” Felicity shout and without thinking about it twice, she took off her coat and dived after her friend. Drunk people couldn’t be trusted to swim alone and Thea had fallen where the pool was the deepest. Of course.

The cold water bit Felicity’s skin, the sting almost too much to bear. But she ignored it and swam toward her friend, who was struggling to keep her head above the water.

“Damn, it’s cold!” She swore. “It’s cold, I’m drowning, help!” She yelled.

“Thea shut up,” Felicity ordered, wrapping an arm around her waist. “I’ve got you.” She swam toward the edge of the pool and helped Thea grip the granite.

“My flask,” she said, once she was out, pointing at the silver object.

Felicity rolled her eyes and went to get it back, feeling the cold fill every inch of her body. So much for not swimming that night. She got the flask and they hurried out of the pool. Thea was still on the ground, shivering and chattering, her lips blue, her make-up ruined. Felicity put the flask in her back pocket and wrapped her coat around her friend’s shoulders. She was shivering and chattering herself, they needed to get in, quickly.

“Get up Thea,” she demanded, pulling at her friend’s hands.

Thea refused to move.

“Thea!” Felicity snapped, stamping her feet, her veins turning a purple colour she didn’t like at all.

When she heard her friend sob, she thought she had imagined it. “I’m so sorry, please don’t hate me.”

Thea’s turned blue eyes shining with tears to her and Felicity’s heart clenched in her chest, moved by the pain she could see in them.
“I don’t hate you Thea,” she reassured her. “Now please, get up, we need to get somewhere warm.”

The brunette let her help her up and Felicity led her toward the door. They were close to it when Oliver pulled it open. When he saw them, shivering and dripping wet, his eyes widened.

“What the hell happened?”

Felicity opened her mouth to say something but then Thea slipped from a grasp, hurrying away. “I’ll be waiting for you inside,” she said.

“Thea, don’t!” Felicity tried to hold her back but the young girl was already ten steps away.

“What happened?” Oliver asked, taking off his coat to hand it to her.

“I found Thea with a flask, she was really drunk Oliver. I tried to take it away from her but then she tripped and we fell and are you listening to me? Why are you staring at me like this?”

“What’s that?” He asked pointing at her. She looked down and froze knowing immediately what had gotten his attention.

“It’s nothing,” she said hurriedly, putting his jacket on to cover the almost eight inches long, two inches large patch of puckered skin branding her ribs.

“Felicity, it’s not nothing,” he insisted, reaching out for her.

She took a step back and a flash of pain crossed his eyes. “Oliver, we need to get back inside,” she reminded him. “Thea, she needs you…” She added, trying to walk past him. He grabbed her shoulders to stop her.

“Felicity, tell me what that is! Who did that to you? What happened?”

“It’s none of your business!” She yelled, anger mixing with the shame and pain she was feeling at the moment.

There was one major difference between Tommy and Oliver when it came to her. The first was able to give her time, he knew how not to punch. The second on the other hand… He was stubborn and demanding.

“Yes it is!” He shot back.

That angered her even more. What the hell? How dared her? “And pray tell why?”

Her tone made him snap. She saw something shift in his eyes and he said, as if it was obvious. “Because I like you Felicity, I care about you, a lot!”

She paused for a second. What? What had he just said?

“What does it have to do with anything?” She asked, shaking her head unable to process and accept his words. He probably didn’t mean them. Soon, he was going to realise what he’d said and it’d take the words back. They were just friends. He didn’t like her and he didn’t care about her a lot. He cared about her like a regular friends, because it was what they were, end of the story.

He ran a hand through his hair in frustration. “Everything,” he replied. “You’re important to me and…”

She shook her head. Again, he would take them back as soon as possible. “That doesn’t give you the
right to demand things like that from me.” She paused for a second, trying to calm down, trying to get a hold on her breathing again. “I know I promised to open up but you’re going too far,” she stated, standing her ground.

“Felicity, I…”

“No!” She cut him off, without listening to what he had been about to say. “The last person I opened up to did that to me.” She pointed at her ribs, her cheeks burning from the mixed and conflicted feelings fighting inside her heart and mind.

His eyes widened and he immediately calmed down. “I’d never hurt you, you know that, right?”

She looked away from him, and wiped at her tears. “Guess what? He said that to me too.”

He didn’t say anything for a whole minute and she stood there, cold, her heart beating wildly in her chest, pain, shame and bad memories mixing in her core. Her pain was caused by her bad memories, her shame because he had seen the ugliest part of her, her past. A part of her no one should have ever seen. And yet he had and she felt ashamed, exposed, fragile. Her mind was using her weakness at its advantage, pressing things she’d rather forget against the edge of her conscience. They were pulling her toward the darkest part of her.

But then she heard it. His voice. Soft words whispered only for her.

Then his hand. Warm and comforting only for her. He intertwined their fingers together, rubbing his thumb over her skin. The gesture, simple but powerful, pulled at something inside of her. She took a deep breath and just like that, she was out of that place filled with monsters and darkness, where she was just the shell of a young woman.

“I’m sorry.”

A lump of emotions formed in her throat and she had to fight back more tears, confusing joining in the mix of emotions swirling inside of her.

“Thea,” she reminded him, needing to focus on anything else but the last five minutes, on the scar on her skin, on the memories pressing at the edge of her mind. “We need to…”

He nodded, letting go of her hand. She immediately found herself missing the contact but didn’t dare taking it back.

“Let’s go,” was all he said.

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you guys think?  
Don’t hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/  
Don’t be afraid to come and talk to me. I don’t bite! : )
Hey guys!!!

There it is, the infamous chapter 10. Earlier than I expected it to be.

TRIGGER WARNING /!/!/!/ There will a lot of heavy themes treated in this chapter such as: torture, panic attack, PTSD and emotional and physical abuse. The physical part won't be graphically depicted but it'll be strongly implied. The best example I can come up with is the fic Burning It Down by Callistawolf (I absolutely adore this fic). For those who've read it, you know, *SPOILER ALERT* at some point Felicity is taken by a villain *ENDS OF SPOILER* and it's very clear what he's about to do to her is very much implied. You have something a bit like that here. If it's something that bothers you I STRONGLY recommend you DON'T read the passage in italics. /!/!/!/ END OF TRIGGER WARNING

About this chapter... There's nothing I want to say, other than chapter 11 will pick up right after it ends and it will be full of answers as well. I'm starting to realise 9 - 10 - 11 make a very strong and connected trio. This is my favourite part, but I won't lie when I say some parts were tough to write.

Anyway,
Happy reading!!! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 10:

“How can you see into my eyes like open door?

Leading you down into my core where I’ve become so numb

Without a soul my spirit’s sleeping somewhere cold

Until you find it there and lead it back home.”

- Evanescence ft. Paul McCoy, Bring me to life.

It was weird to go back inside, where everything was hot, almost suffocating and also noisy, just on the verge of too loud. It was weird to go back inside, among people cheerfully talking, enjoying themselves, completely oblivious to the storm raging inside of her. Because yes, there was a storm inside of her, slowly rising but already promising to be devastating.

It had started the moment they had stepped back inside. She had been hit by the heat given off by all the bodies gathered inside instantly, a sharp contrast with the coldness of her own body, who had been freezing mere seconds ago. It had made her head spin and she had almost collided with a waiter. Immediately, the burn, the very burn that had caused her to walk out in the first place, had
come back white hot and blazing. Her restrained bond had immediately stirred up, making itself known loudly, buzzing in annoyance and had it had feet, it would have stamped them exactly like a petulant child. And that was just downright crazy. Felicity had taken two pills. Two! With only one, she shouldn’t be able to feel anything, so with two, she should be all good, and for hours and yet, she was feeling everything. Why was her bond so strong? Why were her walls cracking? Why was she feeling all these things? And worse, what if the burn was caused by her side of the bond? What if it was rejecting people’s touch because they weren’t her soulmate? She knew it wasn’t possible, because she was taking the Med but… A lot of things were supposed to be impossible and yet, they kept happening.

She didn’t have time to linger on that thought for a longer while. She brushed a man’s arm as she was following Oliver and it ignited the fire running wild under her veins even more. She didn’t know why she did what she did next. She really didn’t know what pushed her to reach out for Oliver walking ahead of her, what pushed her to grab his hand and to not only hold it but also intertwine her fingers with his and hold onto him as tightly as she could.

Maybe it was because she was trying to rely more on the people around her.

Maybe it was because she was starting to trust him more than she did anyone else.

Or maybe because he was the last person who had yet to burn her.

She really didn’t know why she did it. But she did and it made him turn back, his eyebrow raised in question. She gave him a look and must have understood what she wasn’t saying because he just squeezed his fingers before resuming his walk, stopping only when they ran across Tommy.

Their friends’ eyes fell on their joined hands.

“Did I miss something?” Felicity expected Oliver to drop her hand at his comment, but he didn’t and she totally would have, hadn’t he been holding as tightly as her. “And jeez Lissy, you’re all wet! What happened to you?”

“Fell in the pool with Thea,” she explained.

Tommy’s eyes widened but before he could reply anything to the small bomb she had just dropped on him, Oliver cut him off.

“Have you seen Thea?”

He nodded. “I saw her from afar not five minutes ago. She was heading toward the ladies’ room.”

Felicity and Oliver exchanged a glance, nodding to one another. They needed to get to her, the sooner the better. Her unexpected bath surely hadn’t sobered her up and it would be best if people didn’t know Thea Queen had gotten drunk at a charity event. The newspapers would immediately tear her apart, saying she was falling into her brother’s steps and though Felicity didn’t really know what had pushed her to think alcohol would be the right answer to her problems, she knew being given a reputation of a spoiled brat was absolutely not what the young girl needed. Felicity was also pretty sure it was the kind of scandals Moira Queen wanted to avoid at all costs, and by all costs she meant not being afraid to use any means necessary to make sure people wouldn’t get the wrong idea of things. Reprimands and lectures could all wait until the next morning. Right now, Thea needed their help.

“Okay, we’re going to go find her,” Oliver decided.

“In the meantime, I’ll find you both dry clothes,” Tommy said. “And hot drinks.”
Felicity nodded. Her clothes were still soaked but she had stopped feeling cold ever since she had walked back inside the building. Her teeth had stopped chattering and her veins and nails weren’t that purple anymore, turning back to a more normal, healthier colour.

She and Oliver made their way to the ladies room. When Oliver put his hand on the door to open it, Felicity stopped him.

“What do you think you’re doing?” She asked.

“Getting to my sister,” he said as if it was obvious.

“You’re not seventeen anymore,” she reminded him. “Going into the ladies room isn’t what you do.”

He sighed annoyed but she stood her ground. “I’ll go,” she told him, pushing the door open and letting go of his hands. She instantly missed his warmth and his presence at her side but straightened her spine and gritted her teeth. Her friend needed her and in order to help her, she’d handle the burn as best as she could.

The ladies room were empty, except for two women. One was washing her hands, the other fixing her make-up.

“Thea,” she called, after greeting the two women with a small nod. “Thea, are you there?” She asked, knocking on the only closed door, from where small sniffling sounds could be heard. “Thea, it’s Felicity. Please open the door!” She insisted, knocking again, a bit louder.

The woman who had been washing her hands got her clutch back and walked out. Felicity looked at the other one, applying another layer of mascara around her eyes and gestured toward the door asking for privacy. The woman rolled her eyes at her, clearly annoyed, but got out nonetheless, slamming the door rudely behind her.

“Thea, please open the door!” Felicity asked again, getting a grip on her patience. She had always had a huge amount of patience around computers. When it had come to humans… Not so much. But Thea wasn’t just another human being, she was her friend and she was in desperate need of her help.

She reached for the handle when Thea didn’t reply to her – she had nothing to lose after all. She turned it and breathed in relief when it turned and she was able to open the door. Her heart clenched in her chest at the sight of Thea. She was sitting down on the floor, her arms wrapped around her thin legs, holding them protectively against her chest. Her face was buried between her knees, her sobs muffled by her wet clothes. She was rocking back and forth, in perfect synch with her tears. Water had dripped from both her clothes and hair which were as soaked as Felicity’s.

Kneeling down slowly, Felicity raised a hesitant hand toward her friend.

“Thea,” she whispered, scared of what might happen if she touched her, scared of the burn. The brunette didn’t react to her name. So Felicity exhaled slowly and put a hand on her shoulders, her touch light at first, firmer when she realised the burn wasn’t increasing.

“Thea,” Felicity repeated.

The brunette looked up, her blue eyes almost entirely black, confusion and pain filling them, sharpening their usually kind look. They were red and swollen from crying, stains of mascara were crossing her cheeks. Now that she was closed to her, Felicity realised Thea was shivering like a leaf at Fall, her nails, veins and lips were purple, in spite of the blonde’s coat.

“I’m not feeling well,” she hip-cupped, making Felicity frown.
It took her a few minutes to realise she wasn’t shaking because she was cold but because she was feeling sick and had been shocked, both by her unplanned bath and whatever it was that had been bothering her. Everything happened in a second after that. One moment Thea was all wrapped up around herself then Felicity blinked and her friend was throwing her coat away, bending over the toilet to empty the contents of her stomach. The blonde immediately reached out for her, catching her hair and pulling it back, her other hand patting her back to comfort her.

Thea cried some more, as a shiver ran down her spine, whispering incoherent words of apologies. Felicity tried to calm her down as best as she could, replying to all her sorrys with comforting words and encouragements.

“It’s okay,” she said. “You’re okay, everything’s going to be okay. Just take a deep breath, can you do that for me? Just breathe.”

The brunette did as she was being told, inhaling deeply, exhaling slowly. She didn’t throw up again and after a while, she stopped shaking. Felicity let out a little relieved breath when she felt her settle down and her panic decrease. Thea was still tensed though, the muscles in her shoulders hard under Felicity’s hand, her knuckles white because of her hard grip on the edge of the toilet. Felicity helped her sit back again before going up, grabbing toilet paper on her way. She wet it and then cleaned Thea’s face with it, her gestures precise and gentle. She washed away the traces of ruined make-up, revealing the big purple bags under her eyes and her very pale face. The young girl let her take care of her without saying anything, just staring at Felicity, watching her every move.

“Why are you being so nice to me?” She croaked, her voice broken by her tears.

That made Felicity pause. For a second, she was brought back to her earlier conversation with Oliver on her doorstep. It felt like it had happened forever ago, when really, it had only been barely a few hours ago.

“Because you’re important to me,” she simply answered, realising how true the words were the moment they left her lips. Thea was her friend – they got along well, hung out occasionally, texted almost every day. She was her friend and she cared about her. Simple as that.

“Can you get up?” She asked her.

The brunette nodded.

“Then let’s go,” Felicity said, getting up on her feet and then offering her a hand. Thea took it and got up and wobbly legs. “Do you want to drink some water? Clean your mouth?”

“Yes, thank you.”

They had barely made it to the sink when Oliver and Tommy walked in, startling the two girls.

“Jeez!” Felicity yelped, bringing a hand to her chest. “Don’t you knock?”

“You weren’t coming out,” Oliver explained.

“And these are for you,” Tommy added, handing them clothes. “We’ll let you change now.”

He turned around and walked out. It took Oliver some more time, which he spent staring at his sister, taking her in and making sure she was okay. He only left when he was certain he could, leaving them to put on the warm clothes. They changed quickly, Thea needing Felicity to help her as her balance still wasn’t all that great. They put their wet clothes, including the blonde’s coat in plastic bags Tommy had thought to bring up. With regret, Felicity didn’t put Oliver’s jacket back on,
wrapping it around Thea’s shoulders instead, to keep her warm.

They got out and Tommy handed them plastic cups of hot tea. Felicity gratefully accepted hers, immediately taking a sip and burning the tip of her tongue in the process. Thea declined hers at first but then her brother threw her a look and she took it, wordlessly. They finished their drinks quickly, and Felicity soon felt a pleasant feeling of warmth spread inside her body, easing down to feeling of the burn. She hadn’t been touching anyone except for Thea in nearly half-an-hour, the fire inside her was decreasing, slowly and she felt grateful for it.

“I’m sorry Tommy,” Oliver said, “but we’re going to have to leave early.”

His friend raised a hand to stop the rest of his apology. “It’s okay, I understand. How about I follow you to the entrance where these two will get their coats and bags back.”

“Already have my coat,” Felicity informed him. “I took it back before going out and…” She didn’t finish her sentence, too surprised when Thea wrapped two arms around her, holding on to her tightly, her cheek resting on her shoulders. She let out a sigh of satisfaction, which was quickly followed by a sound that suspiciously sounded like a purr.

“You make a good pillow,” she mumbled, getting comfortable and closing her eyes.

Felicity stared at Oliver who sighed. “Thea, now is not the time nor the place to sleep.”

“You’re just jealous,” she shot back. “And I’m tired,” she added, holding the blonde a little tighter.

Felicity rolled her eyes before reaching for her friend’s arm, moving it so that she’d be able to support her, without looking like she was while they walked back to the entrance.

She pulled her phone out of her bag as soon as she got it back. Oliver was supporting Thea now. The sleepier the brunette was feeling, the heavier she was and though Felicity was strong, she wasn’t that strong.

“What are you doing?” Oliver asked, motioning toward her phone with his chin.

“Calling a cab?”

He tilted his head. “Why?”

“Well, your sister needs to be put to bed, the sooner the better. Bringing me back to my place will make you do a detour and…”

“You could come with us,” he suggested. “You know Thea has her own room in my apartment, right? I’m sure she has some clothes she can lend you.”

She frowned. “Why would I come with you? You and your sister obviously need to have a family talk,” she added, lower so that no one would hear them. They were waiting for Tommy to come back, he had gone out to bring Oliver’s car to the door, since he had found himself being busy with an armful of a sister starting to sleep off the alcohol she had drunk.

“We could use a talk too,” he pointed out.

She paused, staring at him for a second. Then she whispered. “This was your plan all along, right?”

He gave her a sheepish smile. “I may or may have not planned to kidnap you.”

She arched an eyebrow. “You couldn’t have just asked?”
“It’s not a kidnapping anymore if I ask for your permission,” he stated.

“Oliver,” she warned him.

“Fine! Next time I’ll call: ‘Felicity hey, wanna do a sleepover?’”

She shook her head at him. “Well, now that you’re asking, no, I don’t think it’s a good idea,” she said.

He closed his eyes briefly, sighing. “Felicity please. Earlier, we didn’t really have time to talk properly and I’d like for us to take the time now.”

“We can take the time tomorrow, during the day.”

“But I’ve noticed it’s easier for us to talk at night.”

Tommy chose this moment to come back. “The car is here,” he said, handing the keys to Oliver.

“Felicity please,” Oliver insisted.

She hesitated before giving in. They did need that talk and she wanted to stay close to Thea, just to make sure she was really okay. “Alright,” she said and Oliver smiled brightly at her, making her smile back at him.

“Goodnight guys,” Tommy said after they were all buckled up in the car. “Feel better Speedy.”

Thea was already asleep at the back of the car, Felicity next to her to check on her and make sure she was sleeping peacefully.

“Goodnight Tommy,” Oliver and Felicity said in unison before he started driving away.

Since they had been in a hurry to get inside the car, she had avoided to hug Tommy goodbye, barely squeezing his hand meaning that the burn kept decreasing, slowly fading into the background of her mind, her bond suddenly very quiet.

The release of so many of her tensions could have lulled her to sleep. It would have been really easy to fall over the edge and let slumber take over, especially now that she was feeling warmer - except for her swimsuit, since Tommy hadn't been able to find dry one, she had taken her bikini top off but not the bottom - and more at peace. But she didn't, running her hand through Thea's hair in a soothing gesture instead, as her friend was lying almost completely on her. She listened to the quiet sound of the car driving, and watched the almost empty streets and roads of Star City at this time of night, enjoying the play of the streetlights' reflection on Thea's cheek, the moon and the stars invisible guardian from where she was.

Oliver didn't say a word during the whole car ride, she didn't either. Anticipation was making her body buzz. She knew they had a lot to talk about. She was both looking forward and repelled by the thought of their upcoming conversation. She knew he'd ask her questions, but she didn't know if she'd be able to give him the answers he wanted. But she would certainly ask him questions of her own, so maybe they'd be able to find a middle ground, a compromise of some sorts.

He parked his car in the underground parking lot of his building. Felicity unbuckled Thea, who was still sleeping soundly, and waited for Oliver to come and pick his sister up before unbuckling herself. He gave her the keys to his apartment and carried Thea while she handled the plastic bags with their wet clothes in them. She opened the door to his penthouse and wordlessly, they walked in. She took it upon herself not to let herself be distracted by the gorgeous view of the city they had from up here.
Oliver left her to put Thea to bed and she made her way to his laundry room – because yes, that was how huge his penthouse was, enough to have its own laundry room – to hang their clothes so they could dry during the night.

"Felicity?" She heard Oliver's voice calling for her.

She walked out of the laundry room and went to meet him in the hallway leading to the bedrooms. He was holding a pile of clothes in his hands.

"She sleeping?" She asked.

He nodded. "I tried to wake her up but she is too lost to be brought back. Not even a zombie Apocalypse could do it."

Felicity chuckled lightly at that. And Oliver let out a deep sigh, scratching the back of his head.

"I just wonder what has gotten into her."

The blonde frowned, crossing her arms over her chest. "You know she is not doing that okay, right?" She said, remembering clearly the bitterness she had felt in Thea during their post-shopping talk.

"I know she's under a lot of pressure. Been there, done that myself. And I don't want her to end up like me, I want more, better for her."

"Why Oliver? You're a good person."

A shadow crossed his eyes and his voice sounded suddenly tighter, as if there was a lump of emotions constricted it. "I'm not talking about who I am now, but about who I used to be."


"You know, there's only one way to prevent that from happening."

He tilted his head, inviting her to go on.

"Be there for her," she told him. "Support her when the pressure is too much for her shoulders. Take her hand when she's losing her way. Hold her when she's falling apart."

She was well-aware she wasn't telling him something he didn't already know. It didn't mean he hadn't needed to hear the words, to have someone make them real. He thanked her with his eyes, his bright blue orbs conveying more things than his words ever could.

He handed her the clothes he had been holding then, saying. "Shower then talk?"

She nodded in approval, heart thrumming happily in her chest at the thought of a warm shower. She wasn't feeling much of the cold anymore but still. Her skin needed the contact with hot water to permanently erase the stinging bite of the freezing water of the pool.

Oliver's shower was just like the rest of his place. Well-equipped, gorgeous and oh so damn expensive. She realised how hard it would be for her to get out of the shower the moment she stepped under the hot spray. The water was deliciously hitting her body, drops softly rolling down her curves close to a caress. She enjoyed for a minute before remembering he was waiting for her. She debated whether or not she should use his soap, since there wasn't anything else to use - Thea probably had left her toiletries in the bathroom adjoined to her room. She eventually gave in, really
needing to clean herself up to chase away from her skin the way of chlorine. She scrubbed herself clean, washing her hair, and then walked out of the shower, smelling woodsy but not as good as Oliver did. Not that she had paid any attention to his smell, because she hadn't. She had just happened to be wearing his jacket earlier, and she remembered it from there, nothing more. She put on the clothes he had picked for her, shaking her head when she realised he had forgone a bra. She didn't need one to sleep but if they were going to stay up and talk... Sighing, she went to take off her hair. She combed it, untying as many knots as she could. She knew it would be awful in the morning, all wild and curly because she had washed it without using her usual products and without brushing it the way she always did. She got out of the bathroom when she satisfied, mostly, with her appearance.

She didn't find Oliver in the living-room, like she had expected to and so she went looking for him. She called for him when she didn’t find him. She had a pretty good idea of where he was, his bedroom, she just didn’t want to walk in uninvited.

“Oliver?”

“In here,” he replied and she took as permission to join him.

She found him sitting down on the rug next to his bed, some sort of books on his knee. She went to sit down next to him, bumping his shoulder with hers in the process. He looked up from the photo album he had been looking at, smiling at her. She leaned down, to take a better look at the picture he had been so focused on when she had walked in. It was him, younger, with no scruff on and his hair longer.

“When I was in college, I had black raven hair, with purple streaks so if you’re staring at this picture because you’re ashamed of your former haircut you should know we all mistakes in that area when we’re young.”

He blinked, once, twice before a smile threatened to stretch his lips.

“Black raven hair, uh?” He asked.

“I had the whole goth look,” she went on, shaking her head at her questionable former tastes.

“You know I need to see a picture of you at that age now?”

“At that age? I’ll let you know it was a year and a half ago mister! I’ll also remind you that some of us aren’t as old as you are!” She said, slapping his shoulder playfully.

“How could I forget? You spend half of your time teasing me about my “advanced age”.”

“Well, you do ramble about me being messy,” she pointed out.

He shook his head at her words. “I’m never going to win that debate, am I?”

She shrugged, amused by their little banter. It had been a while since they had just one another and she’d truly missed it. She had missed him. It was weird to think barely a week ago they had had their car accident. Everything seemed so far away, especially now when it was just the two of them.

“How are you looking at this picture anyway? Is it because of Thea?” She asked, trying to decipher the look in his eyes. It was focused, solemn. There was a gravity to it, something very serious and stern. It was a side of him she rarely saw and it made her realise maybe he was staring at more than just a picture of his past-self. He was staring at his demon.
“I guess so,” he replied, closing the album and putting it back in place. “I don’t know how to tell my parents about tonight.”

Felicity bit on her lower lip. “Why?”

“I don’t want to hear them say how much of a bad brother I am or how terrible the example I set for her to follow is.”

Felicity’s heart clenched in her chest at the resigned look on his face. “You don’t believe that, do you? Because let me tell you that would be very stupid. You’re not responsible for what happened tonight. I’ve talked a little bit with Thea and what I’ve been able to gather is that she’s angry at your mother.”

Oliver chuckled bitterly. “My mother, always the cause of troubles.”

“I didn’t say that.”

“You don’t have to, I’m well-aware of how she can be. I told her about you by the way. About what happened at your apartment.”

Felicity’s eyes widened. “Why would you do that?”

“Because this has to stop. You’re staying and she needs to accept it. I made it pretty clear she had to, and I think she got the message. At least, I hope so.”

Felicity sighed, crossing her arms over her chest. “Earlier, Thea said your mother thought I wanted to hook up with you.”

Oliver chuckled, his eyes brightening slightly. “Do you?”

“What? No, you’re not my type!!” She blurted out clumsily, feeling her cheeks redden.

“Hey!” He said nudging her, pretending to be offended. “I do have an ego, you know?”

“Well, don’t count on me to boost it.”

He shook his head, disappointed. “Tsk, tsk…”

“Besides, you have a soulmate right? Isabel,” she reminded him, the name burning the tip of her tongue, a knot of ugly emotions, anger, disgust, jealousy and possessiveness tightening in her stomach, the last two ones surprising her. She really hated that woman, she knew that, but she had no reasons to be jealous of her. She really hadn’t anything Felicity wished she had.

“My father doesn’t think I’m worthy of Queen Consolidated,” Oliver explained, ignoring her comment about Isabel. “He doesn’t believe in me, he doesn’t think I have what it takes to be a good CEO, that I have what it takes to carry on the family’s legacy. This is why I’m Q. Inc’s CEO. He wants me to prove myself, to show him I’m the man he needs me to be.”

Felicity looked at him as if seeing him for the first time. She had already gathered that being a Queen was way harder than it seemed to be. She just hadn’t realised how hard it actually was. And hearing Oliver talk about his father, about how he thought so little of him made her question the kind of love and affection he had received during his childhood. Had his family always been like that? Or had they changed when he had grown up? It didn’t really matter at this moment, because if the sad look in his eyes meant anything, they probably hadn’t been good at parenting him for a long while.
Unable to stand the tortured look in his eyes, she reached for his hand, intertwining her tiny fingers with his much longer ones. She knew it wasn’t much, but if there was one thing she had learnt since she’d met him it was that physical contact always made things better.

He brought their joined hands to his knee, staring at them for a while. She could see he was battling with himself, she could feel tension tightening his shoulders from where their arms were connected. He was thinking, weighing the pros and the cons for something, she didn’t know what. Eventually, he made up his mind and said.

“Marrying Isabel is just one of these things I have to do to prove myself.”

She froze at his words, her grip loosening up around his hand. “What?”

“I can’t really tell you more about it… But I just wanted you to know that.”

She stared at him, blinking and… Speechless. Oliver Queen had made her speechless, bravo! With just a few words, he had completely frozen her mind and brain, making her unable to form a coherent sentence.

What? The? Fuck?

“She isn’t your soulmate?” She asked. “Is this some kind of arranged marriage?”

He didn’t reply to her questions but the look in his eyes was the answers she needed. She frowned.

“Does Thea know?”

“What does it have to do with anything?”

“Does she know?” She insisted.

He nodded, looking unsure.

“What about your soulmate?”

A shadow crossed his eyes. “She’s gone, out of my life and never coming back.”

She paused for a second, remembering the words he had grunted during his nightmare.

*Please don’t go. I love you.*

A dreadful feeling flooded her. “Is she dead?” She asked, her voice low, her tone cautious.

He shrugged. “How would I know? She’s on the Med.”

She felt like a ton of concrete had been poured down on her. Running a hand through her drying hair, the dreadful not leaving her, a shiver running down her spine. Something was off, something was really off. “And you wonder why your sister’s drinking her ass off at parties?”

“What?” He asked, his eyes widening, his tone slightly angry.

“She is carrying a needle of the Med in her bag because her soulmate lives in the city and she’s so afraid to meet him, every time they almost run into one another, she takes a dose, to keep him away from her and the messed-up life she thinks she has. How do you think seeing her brother marrying a woman because his parents are still letting their lives be ruled by middle-aged methods makes her feel?”
“She doesn’t have anything to do with this.”

“But this is her life, her world. She probably thinks she’s next on the list.”

“We all have to make our own choices, take our responsibilities. I realised I needed to be the man my father wants me to be. Thea will be free to do as she wants when the time comes.”

“You should make sure that’s true. And then, you should make sure she knows it.”

He nodded at her words and she looked away from him, needing to escape his eyes. She couldn’t believe what she had just heard. Isabel wasn’t Oliver’s soulmate – that actually, she could believe and it also explained why Moira was kind of afraid of her, her son wasn’t bonded to anyone – and he was marrying her, not because he loved her but because his father needed him to, for some reasons he couldn’t tell her about.

This was huge.

So, so, huge.

“Does anyone else know?”

He shook his head. “Just you.”

“Not even Tommy.”

“He wouldn’t understand.”

“What makes you think I do?”

“The fact that you’re still here?”

He pressed her fingers slightly and she looked down toward their hands, taking in the sharp contrast of their differences. She was small and soft, he was toned and firm.

“Why tell me Oliver?” She asked again, turning again to meet his eyes.

“I don’t want to lie to you. Remember the trust I was talking about the other day?”

She nodded, the memory of their fight stinging.

“It goes both ways,” he said softly. “I have to give as much as I take.”

“I don’t know if I can do that,” she whispered, a lump of emotions forming in her throat.

“Just answer my questions,” he replied, tightening his hold on her. “I promise not to push.”

She nodded, taking a deep breath to clear her head. “Okay.”

“Why didn’t you call the police, after the break-in in your apartment?”

She shrugged. “Same reason I was scared to go to the hospital. It always brings back bad memories. And I’ve grown up knowing better than to trust the cops and since I was suspecting your mother to be behind everything, I thought it would be best to just… Stand my ground.”

“What kind of bad memories does it bring back?”

“The kind that prevents you from sleeping at night,” she replied, looking away from his eyes. She
wasn’t seeing any pity in them, only compassion but still. She looked away.

“The kind that leaves a mark.”

She froze and he went on.

“I won’t pretend I didn’t see what I saw tonight Felicity,” he stated simply and she tensed up immediately, the scarred skin of her body starting to tingle.

“You weren’t meant to see it,” she replied, bringing her knees up to her chest, unconsciously using them to shield herself. If he noticed it, he didn’t say anything about it.

“Felicity… Who did this?”

“He was my boyfriend in college,” she said, still refusing to meet his eyes. “Computer genius, decent soccer player. Turned out he was also a psycho.”

“Felicity, I…”

“Don’t say you’re sorry, it’s not your fault,” she interrupted him.

He groaned and bumped his head into hers lightly, his lips brushing her hair. She closed her eyes, relaxing under his touch to her biggest surprise and she wondered, not for the first time since she had met him, if his ability to always be able to soothe her down was a superpower.

“Tell me he’s in prison now?” He asked, his tone harsher.

“He should stay there for the rest of his life.”

He pressed a real kiss to the top of her hair. “Good.”

She waited for another question to come, but no words fell from his lips. True to his words, he wasn’t pushing. And true to her words, she had opened up a bit. Their conversation didn’t end there, and if she was being honest with herself, she’d admit she’d known it wouldn’t stop. Felicity got the photo album from his hands and started flipping the pages, asking him questions about some pictures. They let go of each other’s hand but their fingers kept brushing as they turned the pages of the album together. They talked and talked, Oliver’s stories, giving them many and many topics to talk about and Felicity was reminded how easy it was to just be with him. The conversation always flew naturally, they were relaxed, comfortable with teasing, and not afraid to disagree with the other. But there was something more now, something that wasn’t there before. Maybe it was because of the red wine he had gone to get them. Maybe it was because they’d laid out some truths. Or maybe it was just because of the night. She didn’t know and didn’t care. She was feeling happier and more at peace than she had in days and it was the only thing that mattered.

“That one was taken after I fished my first salmon with my grandfather,” he told her, pointing at a picture where he was flashing the camera a smile with missing teeth, holding a fishing rod and a salmon proudly.

“You were such a cute little boy,” she said, smiling at his slightly rosy pink that just wanted to be squished tenderly.

He huffed back a laugh. “Are you saying I’m not cute anymore?”

“You’re handsome now, that’s not the same thing.” She said, although she knew it was the wine that made her speak so bluntly.
“You’re not so bad yourself Miss Smoak.” His sentence was meant to be another round of their usual teasing and banter but his tone was very serious. He was looking into her eyes, his blue ones darker than they had been at the beginning of their conversation.

“And that is the wine talking,” she teased, trying to ease down the sudden tension in the room, feeling a blush creep up her skin the longer he looked at her with that look on his face. “Tell me more about that day,” she asked, pointing at the picture.

“My grand-parents owned a bungalow near Emerald Bay, like Tahoe. My parents used to send me there to spend the summer, because sometimes they were just too busy with the company, you know?”

Felicity nodded then chuckled. “Emerald Bay, Emerald Coast… I’m starting to see a pattern to all of this, Mr Queen?”

“I didn’t name those place.”

“But you obviously love them both.”

He shrugged, smiling. “What can I say? I love green.”

“So is that why you picked a green tank top from your sister’s closet?” She asked, fisting the fabric of the top he had given her.

He shook his head. “Honestly? I just grabbed what came to me first.”

“I’m going to act as if I believe you!” She said, as he took another sip of wine.

“I went through my sister’s underwear drawer for you, indulge me.”

She huffed back a laugh and he hid his blush in his glass of wine, taking another sip. Her eyes flickered to his lips when he pinched them slightly, to chase the taste of the dark red liquid. For a split second, she wondered what would happen if she leaned forward just slightly and then pressed… She shook her head before she could finish that very dangerous thought.

“You okay?”

“Yeah, just…” She chuckled nervously, suddenly feeling like she was suffocating, her strained bond roaring back to life. She waited for the burn to come, it didn’t. Instead, she felt waves of mixed emotions flood her veins. Oliver was too close to her, his eyes were looking at her a way she was fairly sure they shouldn’t be, his smile and dimples were just too perfect, his lips looked too kissable and wow, she really needed to take a step back. Actually, she needed to take several steps back. She was feeling overwhelmed by him, by his presence, his warmth next to her, his scent on her skin.

“Felicity?”

“It’s just the wine, I think it’s getting to my head,” she said hurriedly.

He lips curled up slightly. “Light-weight.”

She got on her feet, her head spinning but she managed to hide it from him by anchoring her feet more firmly into the ground. “How about we call it a night?”

He looked disappointed and she glanced at the clock on his bedside table. She gasped when she saw it was past four in the morning.
“That would probably be best,” he said, getting up as well, their glasses and the empty bottle in his hands.

They walked out of his room and stopped in front of the door of the guestroom she was going to sleep in. Without knowing how, Felicity found her back pressed against the closed door, her hands holding onto the handle, Oliver standing in front of her. He wasn’t close enough to her for her to feel oppressed but he still was close enough for her too feel the heat coming off his chest. It was his eyes’ turn to flicker to her lips and without thinking, she rose up on her toes and pressed a kiss to his cheek, sparing them both the awkwardness that would have come with a drunk mistake.

“Goodnight Oliver,” she said, giving him a small smile.

He blinked, before gaining back his composure.

“Goodnight Felicity,” he said, squeezing her hand.

Felicity walked in what would be her room for the night, closing the door behind her. She undid the bed quickly, before slipping under the covers and comforter. The sheet smelled good, something that reminded her of Oliver and she thought it was no coincidence, since he probably used the same washing powder. The pillow was soft under her ear and she reached for another one and hugged it to her chest tightly, a deep sleep quickly taking over her mind.

She woke up to the sound of the rain against the window, the soft lopping of the water music to her hears. It pulled her out of sleep gently. Her eyes fluttered open, blinded by the cold grey light of a November's day. She turned around, reaching for her phone blindly. It was dying so she turned it off after checking the time. It was past ten in the morning. She turned around, burying her head in the pillow she had been cuddling before sleeping, sighing contently. Her environment was unfamiliar and usually, it would have worried her but not this time. She knew where she was, safe. She realised it was the first time she was sleeping at a friend's place and the thought made her laugh. As a child, she hadn't really been the girl invited to slumber parties, the other girls thinking she was too weird because she'd rather read than play skipping rope. Back in high-school, her mother had needed her presence with her every night and in college, she had either slept in the dorms or in the small apartment she'd shared with her mother. She smiled when she heard noises coming from the kitchen.

Kicking the sheets and the comforter away, she got up and made her way to the kitchen, pulling the lapels of her jackets over her chest to protect her from the chilly air of the morning. She was greeted by the sight of her boss with a serious case of bed hair, wearing a white tee and grey sweatpants, hanging low on his hips. His muscles arms were tossing the food cooking in the pan skilfully, his tee lifting up slightly every time he pulled the pan up and shook it to make sure his omelette wasn't sticking to the fond, exposing inches of perfectly toned skin. His lips were pursed in concentration, the skin around the mole at the corner of his mouth, stretched and she had to force herself to look somewhere else, anywhere else, to stop a very dangerous train of thoughts threatening to cross her brain.

"Hey there," he greeted her, his voice slightly rough from the lack of use and just perfect.

She felt herself blush from head to toe. She knew Oliver was a very handsome man, she had said so herself the day before. And she was around him every day. So she knew how good-looking he was, wearing tailor made Italian suits and French shoes. But nothing had prepared her for the sight of him casually cooking breakfast in his kitchen on a Sunday morning. He wasn't just handsome anymore, no, he was more, he was sexy and she was very affected by all his sexiness. She was young, yes, but she was still a hot-blooded woman, sensitive to attractive males. And Oliver was a very, very attractive piece of man that she could only handle with the right amount of caffeine in her system.
"Hey!" She replied, her voice strangled. "Get a grip Smoak," she chastised herself. "It's just your friend and boss."

She made her way to a stool and sat on it, truly appreciating the support of the piece of furniture.

"Did you sleep well?" He asked her, toning down the fire under the pan.

She nodded. She may have not slept a lot, she had slept well and she felt more rested than she had in days. And she was honest enough to admit it was because things were okay between them. She didn't know how, but in a few months, he had made himself necessary to her well-being. It scared her mind a little but her heart didn't care, butterflies bursting in her stomach instead when he smiled at her.

"Yep. You?"

"Perfect!"

"Thea's still sleeping?" She asked, her feet moving toward him without asking for her brain's permission, stopping only there were standing next to each other and she could rest her cheek on his shoulder, watching the golden omelette with cheese on top of it cooking.

"I don't think she'll wake before another hour or two. You hungry?"

Her stomach grumbled loudly in response.

"I'll take that as a yes," he said, his blue eyes amuse, his lips curled up. "Coffee is ready, you know where the mugs are."

She nodded and poured them both a cup of coffee, it helped that she knew how he took his.

"Any headache?" He asked, setting the omelette on the table, with bacon and bowl of fruits while she brought their coffees and orange juice.

She shook her head. "Nope, I'm all good."

He cut the omelette, giving them a slice and she tasted it immediately, in spite of his warning, burning the tip of her tongue. He watched her anxiously, waiting for her verdict. A smile stretched her lips and she said.

"So you can cook breakfast."

He let out a small, relieved breath. "I'm glad you think so."

"If one day you're looking for a roommate, give me a call. I mean seriously, this place is amazing. The shower is magical, the sight on the city gorgeous and you can cook..."

Oliver chuckled, shaking his head. "That kind of arrangement would benefit you. What about me? What do I win?"

"You mean aside from my wits, charming personality and adorkableness?"

"Yes, aside from all that."

She paused for a second, looking for a smart answer. "I always pay my rent in time and I come with DVDs and books. Lots and lots of DVDs and books."
She could see her answers wasn’t really satisfying. “With my help, you can win “Who wants to be a millionaire?”

“I’m already a billionaire,” he deadpanned, turning around to grab something.

That’s when she noticed the small tattoo on his arm, a shattered circle. Sara had the same, at the exact same spot but since she had several other tattoos, Felicity hadn’t thought to ask her about it. “What’s that?” She asked, pointing at it with her fork.

He looked down at the tattoo, a shadow crossing his eyes. She had hit a sensitive string apparently. “The symbol of the anti-soulmate’s group I used to be a part of.”

Her eyes widened. “You have it tattooed on your body?”

“We all used to. Tommy and Laurel got it removed a long time ago.”

She tilted her head, sensing something was off with him. “And why didn’t you?”

He hesitated before replying. “Because I don’t want to forget that part of my life, what it cost me.”

She frowned. He sounded so serious…. “Why did it cost you?”

He looked down toward his plate, running away from her eyes, something he rarely did. Oliver spoke with his eyes and understood a lot about people with them as well. He only walked away when he wanted to hide something. What was it this time, she didn’t know.

“Can we keep that conversation for another day?” He asked her.

“Sure,” she agreed, quickly looking for something to say that would cheer him up.

After a few minutes of her talking about nothing and everything, babbling about she didn’t know what and incorporating jokes to the mix, he relaxed, his eyes coming back to hers, his lips stretched. They finished eating together, Felicity picking fruits from his bowl, earning a “so you can eat healthily” from Oliver.

“Of course Oliver, fruits are sugary. Unlike your damn vegetables.”

They cleared the table when they were done, doing the dishes together, Felicity nudging Oliver all the while, arguing he was invading her personal space. She had drunk a lot of coffee, but she still needed a reasonable distance between all his sexiness and her incredibly normal self. He left her to take a shower then and she went to get her clothes from the previous day back. They were dried so she put them on, leaving the clothes she had slept in a basket in the laundry room. When Oliver was done with his shower, he drove her back to her apartment, leaving Thea a note telling her he’d be back soon, in case she woke up while he was gone.

He parked in her parking lot, turning the ignition off.

“You okay?” She asked.

He had been silent during the whole car ride.

“Yeah, just preparing myself for a very unpleasant conversation.”

“Be nice with Thea. I think she needs it. Nice but firm,” she quickly added, because the young girl did get drunk at a charity, organised by a friend on top of everything.
“Maybe you should have stayed,” Oliver joked.

She shook her head. “It’s a conversation I don’t belong in.”

He nodded. “I know.” He paused for a while, his fingers running over the wheel before saying. “Felicity, about what I told you last night, about me and Isabel...”

“I can’t tell anyone? I’d figured that much already.”

He let out a small breath of air. “Good. Thank you.”

“Don’t worry Oliver, your secret is safe with me,” she insisted, covering his hand with her. “But I just have one question.”

“Go ahead.”

“Are you happy?”

He took his time to answer her, his blue eyes locking with hers.

“Yes.”

She gave him a satisfied nod before walking out. “See you tomorrow,” she said.

“See you tomorrow,” he replied, waving his hand.

The next day at Q. Inc was awful. The burn came back whenever people touched her. Well, that wasn’t entirely true. Some people burnt her, like Diggle, a few scientists working in the company, some didn’t, like Curtis. She didn’t understand the logic behind the pain she was in, because yes, now it was painful while it had just been bothering a few days ago, but after two days of a white-hot burn scorching her skin, she couldn’t bring herself to care. She became very good at avoiding touching people as much as possible and thankfully no one noticed anything. The weirdest part of it all was Oliver, whose touch didn’t burn her and even alleviated the pain, making the burn disappear. She consciously chose not to think about why. It wasn’t a box she wanted to open, knowing it would just blow up at her face if she did.

It angered her, to have her bond torturing her that way, to somehow have her own body and mind failing her. Except it wasn’t just her bond which was failing her. It was also science. Something had to be wrong with the Med. The little blue pill she was taking every day had to be malfunctioning; it was the only logical explanation to what she was going through. She was so frustrated, she just wanted for her bond to be gone, it was all she had wanted for the last four years and it was still here, now even stronger than her.

She set up an appointment with a doctor in town, who clearly wasn’t a specialist of the Med but was kind enough to give her a colleague’s number who, he assured her, was one of the best in town when it came to soulmates and strained bond. Unfortunately, that specialist was a very busy man with a busy schedule. But oddly enough, they got her an appointment for the following week after she described her “symptoms”. She didn’t know what to make of it, but surely it wasn’t good? Why taking her in emergency if it wasn’t, well, an emergency?

She found herself earlier than usual at the gym, punching repeatedly a boxing bag, beads of sweat rolling down her neck, dampening her hair. She hit the bag, again and again, pushing her body further than she usually did, enjoying the burn in her muscles, revelling in the sound of her punches, letting a bit of the frustration and anger from the past few days go with each movements.
“Someone’s here early I see,” a voice said from behind her.

Felicity immediately tensed up, recognising the voice. Sara. Clenching her eyes shut, she turned around, her brain desperate to find a reason not to hug her or give her a kiss on the cheek to say hello.

“You okay Lissy?” She asked her. Tommy’s nickname had been adopted by most of their friends, except Oliver, for some reasons. She got why he didn’t use it at work, but there was nothing wrong with using outside of it.

“Yeah, I’m perfect!” She replied quickly. “Just have a lot going on on my mind,” she explained, pointing at her head. She took off her gloves, throwing them haphazardly on her bag. She reached for a towel, wiping her face with it.

“You know,” Sara said. “We still have to go out for our drink.”

Felicity froze at her words. “Yes, that’s true,” she agreed, trying to hide the panic blossoming inside of her, the thought of going out in crowded places enough to make her heart skip a beat in her chest.

“It could do you some good, help you clear your head a little. Especially after that car accident you had or that fall in the pool at Tommy’s charity.”

Felicity winced. “So you heard about that?”

Sara smiled at her. “How about we go out on Friday night? Just you and me and the city to conquer!” She said, smirking playfully, her eyes sparkling dangerously.

Felicity scratched the back of her head. “I don’t really know,” she said, evasively.

“Oh come on! You need to go out more Felicity! Your best friend in town is your boss and that’s so sad.”

Felicity shook her head, as she tried to protest. “Oliver’s not my best friend…”

Sara frowned. “You’re telling me if I take your phone, I won’t mostly see mails from him in your inbox and at least five new texts from him?”

“You won’t see anything, you don’t know my code.”

“Zero – five – zero – nine, the day you arrived in Star City. And met me, Iris. And your boss/best friend. No wonder why Tommy ships you guys.” She shook her head, sighing.

Felicity felt herself blush. “Can we talk about something else, please?” She asked, reaching for her sport’s bottle and taking a gulp of fresh water.

“Sure. Friday night we go out. I know the perfect spot, something not too crazy for your first time in a night-club. You’ll love it.

“Sara…”

“Felicity,” her friend cut her off. “I don’t want to offend you but you really look like you could use some fun. And who knows, maybe we’ll find you a cute guy to hook up with!”

Felicity, who had brought her sport’s bottle to her lips again, choked on her water and started coughing, once, twice. She felt her cheeks redden, tears prickle at the corner of her eyes, her throat was burning.
“Is that really necessary?” She managed to enunciate.

“Not really,” Sara replied, patting her back, the burn spiking up in Felicity’s body. “But after what you’ve been through lately, you deserve to get laid.”

“I’m a virgin,” Felicity blurted out.

Sara’s eyes widened. “Seriously?”

Felicity felt herself blush and she looked down toward her sneakers.

“I mean, wow, I didn’t see that one coming.” Still Felicity didn’t look up. “Hey Felicity, there’s nothing wrong with being a virgin, okay? It’s totally fine.”

The blonde shifted her balance on her feet uncomfortably. “Yeah?” She said, her voice unsure, suddenly feeling really shy. Sara was so beautiful, so confident in who she was and in her body. She was her own boss, and having as much fun as she wanted, living a free life fitting perfectly the free mind she had. She felt so lame compared to her.

“Of course. And it’s okay to want your first time to be more special than a one-night stand, in an unknown place with a stranger you’ll never see again in your life.”

“How was yours?” Felicity asked curiously.

They had both sat down on a bench, towels wrapped around their necks.

“Crappy. My boyfriend at the time didn’t really know what he was doing and in the end I had to take the matter in my own hands if you see what I mean. I dumped him right after that.”

“You dumped him for not being good in bed?”

Sara laughed at that. “I’ll let you know, it’s a very good reason to dump someone. But I actually dumped him because he was a liar. He had this reputation to be a guy with a lot of experience and… In the end, he was a virgin, just like me. I didn’t want to be with someone unable to accept who he was.”

Felicity nodded.

“Anyway,” Sara went on. “My second time was much better. I orgasmed twice, hard and felt sore for days…”

Felicity chuckled. She was a virgin yes, but she wasn’t a prude. “The guy knew what he was doing that time?”

“It was a girl actually. And she had a wicked tongue.”

Felicity huffed back a laugh and Sara winked at her.

“So, about Friday?”

Felicity hesitated. On the one hand, she really wanted to go out with Sara, have fun, maybe get drunk and dance in the middle of the dance-floor. She wanted to meet new people, to laugh at silly jokes, to play stupid games. But on the other hand, she didn’t know if she’d be able to bear the pain caused by the burn. What was the point of going out if what was waiting for her was pain? But maybe if she took a higher dose of the Med, three pills instead of one or two, just for one night, she’d be able to handle it. She knew taking a higher dosage of the Med could damage the bond, rather
seriously but it wasn’t like she was going to need it someday. And even if she were to meet her soulmate one day, one time taking a higher dose of the Med wouldn’t hurt.

“Okay,” she accepted, already looking forward to that night out.

Friday came quicker than she thought. Before she could blink, Felicity found herself at Q. Inc, going over the reports of the week thoroughly, the weekend only half an hour away. She was interrupted from her reading by Oliver coming to sit down on her desk, careful of not disrupting any files or pens.

“Felicity,” he said.

“Hmm,” she replied, a highlighter between her lips, her finger tracing the different columns of the chart she was studying. She was highlighting the most important things in it, so when Oliver went through it, he could go straight to what was important.

“Are you doing anything tonight?”

That made her pause. She took the highlighter out of her mouth. “Yes, actually, I am. I’m going out with Sara.”

He blinked. “You’re going out with Sara?”

She nodded.

“You didn’t tell me,” he stated, his tone casual, the look in his eyes… Not so much.

She frowned. “Was I supposed to?”

He shook his head, his shoulders going limp. “No, I mean, you have a right to have a life outside of Q. Inc and our friendship, I mean, it’s not like I’m expecting you to tell me everything. You’re free to do whatever you want and not tell me about it.”

“Thank you for that precision,” she said.

“So where are you going?” He asked, clearing his throat.

“Sara talked about a club named *Poison*, does that a ring bell?” She asked, getting up and circling her desk to put the file she had been working on back in the box it belonged in.

He winced, scratching the back of his head sheepishly. “The owner, Max Fueller, and I are acquaintances. We were in high-school together, he’s a dick.”

Felicity nodded, closing the box. Oliver took it and brought it back to his office, still talking.

“How are you going to get in? And get drinks? Last time, I checked you were underage.”

Felicity turned her head toward Diggle, her eyes wide open. The man just shrugged. “You know how he is,” he mouthed.

She shook her head. Diggle wasn’t wrong. She knew Oliver was a bit protective of her and it bothered her. She didn’t need him to protect her, she could take care of herself. Yes, she had promised to open up and she had, it didn’t mean she was going to change who she was, which was a rather strong and independent young woman.

“Don’t worry about that Oliver,” she said leaning down against his office’s door. “Sara is going to
get us ready for the night. And once she’s done, no one will dare question our age.”

And on these words, she turned around, going back to her own business.

She went back home after work and took a long and hot shower, washing her hair. She was putting on her bathrobe when Sara arrived. She had come to her place with her bike, but they’d call a cab to go to the club. They got ready together, doing each other’s hair and helping out with each other’s make-up. They had a lot of fun, it was the first time they were hanging out outside of the coffee-shop or the boxing gym and Felicity really liked discovering a new side to her friend. Sara was easy to be around. She was fun and strong-headed and she wasn’t afraid to speak her mind. Conversations with her were never boring, because she was just so unpredictable, it was almost impossible to know how she was going to react, if she was going to like or dislike something, approve or disapprove. There was something about her, an aura of confidence mixed with mystery and strength Felicity admired greatly. Sara was the woman who wore ripped jeans and Doc Martens as well as she wore heels and short dresses. She was the woman who enjoyed riding a bike and going out as much as she loved baking pastries and serving coffee. She was the girl who listened to all kinds of metal music but still dances on electro music in night-clubs. And tonight, she was taking Felicity with her on one of her nightly adventures and the blonde was thrilled beyond words. Excitement was filling her veins, making her body buzz in impatience. She wanted to be out there already and see for herself what the world of the night had to offer.

When they arrived at the club, they handed over their jackets and bags to the man in charge of the dressing-room. Felicity shivered when she was hit by the cold air of the club’s hallway. She couldn’t wear a dress with cut-outs, for obvious reasons but there was nothing wrong with backless dresses and the one she was wearing exposed at least half of her back.

“You ready?” Sara asked, winking at her.

Felicity nodded. She had taken three pills of the Med. Her bond was completely anesthetized and earlier, when Sara had touched her, she hadn’t felt any burn. She was ready.

She could already feel the beat of the music under her feet, it was echoing against the walls loudly and her heart matched his rhythm to whatever it was the DJ was playing.

“Let’s go then,” Sara said, dragging her along.

A security guy opened a door and Felicity’s eyes were blinded by a kaleidoscope of lights. Sara tugged at her hand and they started climbing down a spiralling staircase. Felicity grabbed the metal rail with her free hand, her head spinning, her senses being assaulted by too many information.

People were dancing in the middle of the crowded dance-floor, bodies rubbing against one another, jumping together, hands thrown in the air. The music was loud, very loud and Felicity thought she recognised a summer hit being mixed with basic electro tuning. The beat was so strong, it was making the staircase tremble under her feet. Or maybe it was because of all the people climbing it up and down, she didn’t know. There were so many people, the two girls actually had to stop going down in the middle of the stairs, waiting for the path to be cleared.

Felicity took advantage of the opportunity to watch with a deep of fascination the different light effects, swaying her hips to the rhythm of the music. Smoke fell on the crowd and another kaleidoscope of lights starters, fluorescent green, bright blue and blinding red melting together, flickering, disappearing and coming back in perfect synch with the rhythm of the music.

They eventually made it downstairs and Sara immediately headed for the bar. She ordered two drinks for them, something slightly softer for Felicity, for which the blonde was grateful. She didn’t want to
be drunk after just one drink.

“To our night out!” Sara said, raising her glass.

“To our night out,” Felicity repeated, not regretting her decision to go with her friend in the slightest way.

They clinked their glasses together before gulping their drinks down in one-go. The alcohol burnt Felicity’s throat, and she winced at the taste. It wasn’t bad, but it was strong, much stronger than the champagne she had drunk at parties or the red wine Oliver had made her taste. She had never been much of a drinker, even when she’d attended a few parties while in college. A warm ball formed in her stomach and she revelled in the feeling. She had been careful when she had lived without her mother, and when they’d moved back in together again, she’d fallen back in her old habits of being the responsible one between the two of them, not drinking too much just in case her mother would need her. Tonight, no one was waiting for her at home, no one needed her to look after them. So she was going to enjoy herself and have a blast.

“How was it?” Sara asked, smirking at the look on her face.

“Good,” she said, chuckling. The DJ started playing another song and Sara yelped happily.

“Oh my god, I love this song! Come on Felicity!”

Sara dragged her toward the dance-floor, Felicity’s protests having been drowned by the cheers of the crowd. She wasn’t much of a dancer, and she was afraid to look stupid or ridiculously if she started to move and…

“Relax,” Sara screamed near her hair. “This is fun,” she added, already swaying her hips, her blonde hair bouncing on her shoulders with her movements.

The music was even louder now that they were on the dance-floor, in the middle of the crowd. It was so loud, Felicity could feel the beat echo in her bones. It would take some time getting used to it but she already found herself liking it.

“Come on Felicity!” Sara encouraged her, grabbing her hands. “Dance!”

So she danced. She intertwined her fingers with her friend’s and she let her take the lead, guide her movements. She swayed her hips to the rhythm of the music, bouncing on her feet, strands of blonde curls falling from her up-do the faster she moved. She let go of Sara’s hands at some point, letting them fall on her body as she danced and danced with her friend, meddling with the crowd, free of the burn, her bond silent.

“Damn,” Sara said, fanning herself with her hands. “What a night Smoak!” Her cheeks were red, her hair a slight mess.

Felicity chuckled, out of breath but happy, so, so happy. They went back to the bar and ordered two more drinks, talking as they drank them. Felicity was most definitely buzzed now. She was giggling stupidly at everything Sara was telling her and she was feeling more relaxed than she had in days. And she felt hot, so so hot, her cheeks were on fire, her blood was burning in her veins.

Sara was telling her the story of a very memorable game of beer pong when Felicity realised someone was observing them. Actually no, it wasn’t that. The guy was watching her friend, literally devouring her with his eyes but Sara couldn’t see him, since she was turning her back on him.

“Don’t turn around,” Felicity warned her, feeling playful. “But there’s a hot blonde whose eyes are
Sara’s eyes sparkled. “Oh really,” she said, turning slightly to face the barman, offering her profile to the blonde who had been watching her. “You’re right Lissy, he’s hot.” She asked the barman to give the man whatever it was he was drinking and she cockily raised her glass toward the blonde’s when the barman served him.

Sara sighed contently, turning to face Felicity again. “Well, I took the first step. Now whether I’m going home alone or not is up to him.”

Felicity stared at her with her eyes wide opened. “Do you often do that? Go home with some random guy?”

“Random guy, random girl, I’m not picky. But I never bring them to my home. I always go to their place, makes it easier to leave in the morning.”

Felicity nodded. “What about your soulmate?” She asked.

Sara snorted. “That’s the question isn’t it?” She shrugged. “I’m twenty-five and not ready to settle down. I’m taking the Med, she’s not suffering from me sleeping with other people, so yeah. Everything’s cool.”

They were interrupted by the blonde guy, who came to ask Sara if she wanted to dance. “Whatever happens, I’m not leaving before you do Lissy,” she whispered as the guy was dragging her away. “And Felicity don’t freak out, but there is a guy coming your way. He looks cute!” She quickly added.

Felicity froze, her hand clenching around her empty glass. But then, she reminded herself she was here to have fun and interacting with a guy, doing some mild-flirting could be considered as such, right?

“Hey,” a male voice said from behind her. She turned around, a smile plastered on her face.

“Hey,” she replied. He was tall and slim, wearing a suit but having taken off his tie and suit jacket. He had rolled his sleeves up, exposing toned skin but his forearms were lacking strong and firm muscles, which apparently had become one of her standards. His eyes weren’t blue but a dark brown, almost black and his cheeks were closely shaved. He was handsome, there was no denying it but he wasn’t her type. And what was wrong with her, she didn’t even have a type!

“I’m a regular here but it’s the first time I see you,” he told her, his voice low, his accent foreigner.

“It’s probably because it’s the first time I’m here,” she replied, smiling.

“Really? I knew something was brightening up the place tonight, it’s probably you.”

Her usual self would have probably rolled her eyes at him, at his crappy pick-up lines but she just smiled, shaking her head.

“What are you drinking?” He asked her then, taking a step closer to her.

She told him what she had been drinking and he ordered them drinks and they started talking. He was openly flirting with her and she was trying to reply, though things were much more innocent in her head. His name was Marco, he was Italian and working in the financial world. In spite of Felicity’s protests, he got them new drinks. And she hadn’t finished hers when he invited her to dance. She accepted, giggling and he led them to the dance-floor.
Felicity’s mind was pleasantly buzzed and though at first it felt a bit weird to dance with a guy, it hadn’t happened to her in a while – she wasn’t counting Tommy and Oliver, they were her friends – but alcohol helped her relax and she soon found herself relaxing and grinding against Marco, one of his hands caressing the skin of her back, which was plastered to his chest, his other one holding hers tightly. They danced together for a while. Her feet were hurting, protesting it was too much. Her heart was beating to the rhythm of the music and her blood was boiling in her veins, turning her cheeks and skin a bright pink.

At some point, he made her swirl and she ended up in his arms, his hands falling low on her back, where her skin was covered with fabric. He trailed his fingers up, reaching her smooth and exposed skin. He leaned down toward her and pressed his lips to hers, taking her by surprise. She closed her eyes, trying to relax. The last guy she had kissed had been her boyfriend in college and…

“Soon you’ll be mine.”

She heard his voice in her head, clear as if he was next to her. Her heart skipped a beat in her chest as she started panicking. Marco was still kissing her, she had his tongue shoved down her throat and she found herself not liking it at all. Without her realising it, he had moved them away from the dancefloor and his hands were touching her everywhere, her exposed back, her covered butt, hips, waistline and then her ribs…

“I’m just giving you my mark.”

Suddenly, she felt her bond roared to life, blazing anger filling her veins as her skin started to burn everywhere Marco was touching her. She yelped and pushed him away from her. She felt him take a step back, the white hot pain she was feeling blinding her.

“What the hell?” She heard him say, before she tumbled over and fell on her butt, her mind slipping away from her body, being dragged in the darkest part of her memory.

“She was still tied up to the bed when she woke up, both her legs and hands handcuffed to the metallic rails of the piece of furniture.

Blood had dried around the wound on her ribs, around his mark that he had carved on her skin. The wound was burning and throbbing, the tender skin cut, raw and so, so sensitive, even the chilly air of the room was hurting her.

She didn’t know exactly for how long he had been holding her hostage, for how long he had been torturing her but she could guess it had been a while. Her bond was buzzing, and she could feel her skin tingle where her soulmark used to be, meaning she hadn’t taken the Med in a while. She knew it took a few days off for the effects to wear off, and it hadn’t been a few days since he had taken her, if she trusted her level of thirst and hunger. But her connection to her soulmate had always been stronger. If she could last a little while longer, maybe her bond would break free and…

And what?

Nothing.

Her heart sunk in her chest.

Her soulmate didn’t want her, didn’t love her. He didn’t care about her and wouldn’t come for her. And even if he wanted to, he wouldn’t be able to. No one knew where she was, not even her. She was all alone in this and could only count on herself.

She tried to move, but cried out in pain, the gag in her mouth muffling the sound, when she realised
how sore her wrists and ankles were. She had cut her flesh open when she had struggled to free herself, and she could feel the dried blood rub against the metallic handcuffs, sharp pain coming off the scarred skin.

She felt something move next to her and she quickly closed her eyes, pretending to be asleep.

“I know you’re awake baby,” he said.

She heard a lamp being turned on but her eyes remained close. His hand caressed her cheek and she hissed, her eyes opening against her will. She saw his face then, close to hers and she turned her head away. He grabbed her chin and brought her eyes back to his.

“You’re bearing my mark now,” he whispered softly, his lips pressing a kiss to hers. Bile rose up in her throat, disgust filled her and her heart started beating like a manic, fear kicking in her veins. She noticed he wasn’t wearing a shirt and she saw his soulmark, a black spot on his stomach.

“The wound has stopped bleeding,” he added, his hands coming to where he had cut her open, not touching her. “Now, we can move on to the next step.”

“Felicity? Felicity, are you okay?”

She could hear Sara’s voice but she couldn’t see her. He was the only thing she could see because she was still in that damn room, tied up to a cold bald, a gag in her mouth preventing her from saying anything.

“Felicity?”

She felt a hand shake her shoulder and when the burn running in her blood spike up, she cried out in pain, crawling away from her friend.

“Please don’t touch me, it hurts.”

She heard a phone buzz and while Sara picked up, she wrapped herself in a ball, making herself as small as possible, rocking back and forth, tears running down her cheeks. Her ribs were on fire, her scar hurting.

“You’re bearing my mark now.”

“Ollie? Thanks for calling me back so quickly, I need your help! […] It’s Felicity! Something’s wrong with her, I don’t know what to do! Please, Ollie! […] Yes, we’re still at the club. […] In the bathroom!”

She tried to reach out for Felicity but the blonde just crawled further away, hissing in pain.

“Ollie, she really isn’t okay!” […] “I don’t know what happened! […] Okay, see you soon!”

“Now we can move on to the next step,” he said and Felicity’s heart pound in her chest. Blood rushed to her ears and she started moving again when he reached for something behind him. Her eyes widened when she saw it was a pair of scissors and she started protesting, yelling, crying, begging, no sounds coming out from her mouth since he had gagged her.

“Sh, sh,” he tried to appease her, stroking her forehead, pushing away a few strands of hair. “No more hurting you baby. I’m sorry, getting the mark hurt but it was the only way. Now, we’re getting to the fun part. To the part where you become mine for eternity.”
More tears rolled down Felicity’s cheeks when she understood what he was implying, what it was that he wanted to do to her. Panic, fear and horror meddled inside of her and she shivered, violently.

He moved away from her and brought the scissors to her chest, cutting her bra off of her and brushing the useless pieces of fabric away from her breast, exposing her skin to the chilly air of the room. Panic filled her veins and she started trashng, struggling, as he bend over her and started cutting her jeans as well, whispering mad words of possessiveness, telling her all the wicked things he wanted to do to her.

Her bond was becoming crazy, was being driven mad by his actions. It was kicking and punching the walls of its prison in a desperate attempt to get out, to get to its other half, to call for help. Felicity was kicking and struggling just as much, not caring about the pain or the soreness in her muscles, knowing that she needed to keep fighting, knowing that she wouldn’t make it easy for him, that she’d fight until the end.

But then she heard a bursting noise and then the one word that meant salvation.

“FBI!”

“Felicity!”

She opened her eyes and saw Oliver rush in the bathroom, reaching for her, until Sara stopped him.

“Don’t touch her,” she warned him.

Felicity wanted to protest, to say it was okay but the words got caught in her throat. She was still gagged, her wrists and ankles were still tied up to the bed. She was still in that room, struggling, fighting.

“What happened?” Oliver demanded, his tone harsh.

“I don’t know, I left her for a short while and then she was with that guy and things didn’t seem to be okay so I came back to her and I found her like that. I took her to the bathroom but then she started pulling away from me, saying not to touch her.”

“A guy? What guy?” He said, his tone angry.

“I don’t know, just some dude in the club…”

Oliver shook his head, ignoring her and kneeled in front of Felicity, keeping a reasonable distance between the two of them. She could see him, where she hadn’t been able to see Sara earlier. She knew she was getting out of the nightmare but panic was still twisting her stomach, bad memories were still haunting her, his voice was still in her ears, making her want to throw up.

“I’m going to make you mine.”

“Felicity, did he hurt you?”

“You have my mark now all we need to do is come together.”

She clenched her eyes shut, trying to shut his voice out. She tried to take a deep breath but the air got caught in her throat.

“Felicity, it’s really important, did he hurt you?”

“We’re going to be bonded soon baby, don’t worry. I’ll take care of you.”
She opened her eyes, seeking Oliver’s blue ones, focusing on him and solely on him. Her boss, her friend. The man who had held her when she had needed it the most, the man whose touch always eased the pain of the burn.

“It’s not him,” she whispered and he frowned before understanding what she was saying. He instantly reached for her hand but stopped himself.

“Is it okay if I touch you?”

She nodded. She needed him to touch her, to take her in his arms and shield her from the outside world, to shut down the monster’s voice in her head.

Slowly, he took a hold of her hand and she let out a little breath of relief when she felt some of the tensions inside her immediately melt away. She reached for his other hand and he dragged her toward him, taking her in his arms. She let go of his hands to wrap hers around his neck, burying her face in the crook of his neck, his familiar scent cocooning her. He closed his arms around her, engulfing her in his arms and it was only when she stopped shaking that she realised she had been trembling like a leaf in autumn.

He pressed a kiss to her temple before sliding a hand under her knees and getting on his feet, carrying her bridal style. She kept her face in the crook of his neck, holding on to him tightly, as she would hold onto a lifeline.

“I’ve got her Sara, let’s go!”

They got out of the bathroom, where the sounds and noises coming from the night club were muffled and back to the main room. Felicity kept her eyes shut and her entire focus on Oliver, his warmth, his strong arms carrying her, the steady beat of his hear she could feel against her skin, louder than the sound of the music.

Going out of the club, getting her things back – Oliver never let go of her – happened quickly, really quickly. Soon enough, they were outside, the cold air of the night biting her skin, torrent of water fall from the sky. Everything happened in a blur after that, so quickly it made Felicity’s head spin: getting to Oliver’s car, saying goodbye to Sara, letting go of Oliver, the drive through Star City’s street… Before she knew it, he was helping her unbuckle her seatbelt and get out of the car. He shut her door closed then and without asking whether she could walk or not, he lifted her up in his arms again and hurried them inside his building, so they wouldn’t get wet.

“It’s not my place,” she pointed out. Her voice sounded weird to her own ears but alas there was nothing she could do about it. She was feeling a bit better, the burn had vanished, her bond was silent again. But only a fragile dam kept waves of memories at bay. She knew she was in for a sleepless night, she knew she was in for days of fear and internal struggle.

“Your bed’s too small for two,” he replied, opening the door to his apartment.

He walked in and closed the door, leaning against it for a while. He left them in the dark, allowing himself, and herself too, to process everything that had happened. They stood there in his entryway, listening to the sound of the rain lapping loudly on the rooftop of the building, hitting the windows relentlessly. Felicity’s breathing and heartbeat had both evened out a while ago and she snuggled closer to Oliver, knowing he was the cause of it. He was the one making her feel safe. He pressed a kiss to her temple before saying.

“Shower?”
She nodded, and he took her to the bathroom. He set her down on the counter, starting the shower. He left then, and came back a while after, with clothes.

“I’ll be right outside,” he simply told her and she nodded, taking off her shoes.

The moment he closed the door, everything came back to hit her, hard.

Marco’s hands all over her body, his tongue in her mouth, his taste on her lips.

She shuddered and got under the hot spray, holding her sides tightly.

Then Marco’s hands were replaced by his hands and a sob wrecked her body, so loud and strong, she brought a hand to herself to muffle her cries.

Marco’s hands and lips had reminded her of his hands and his lips on her. Of how he had kissed her when they had been together, of how he had touched her when she didn’t know what kind of monster he was. And then, it had triggered the worst memory of her life.

His hands hurting her, cutting her open. His hands roaming over her, touching her, stripping her of her clothes, his words torturing her mind, soughing the most terrible things against her skin.

“I’m going to make you mine.”

She shuddered at the memory of his words, squeezing her legs together tightly as more tears rolled down her cheeks, her lungs swelling up in her chest. She hiccupped, lacking air. She had been saved that night, truly saved from something far worse than the pink and puckered wound on her ribs.

Blindly, she reached for Oliver’s soap and poured a generous dose in her hands before scrubbing her skin vigorously, washing every part of her body, once, twice, chasing away the feel of his hands on her. She rubbed and scrubbed her skin, sometimes even scratching it with her nails until it was red and raw. Then she reached for shampoo, poured some in her hands as well and started massaging her scalp, hard enough for it to hurt. She rinsed her body then, and got out on wobbly legs. Her skin was on fire but at least she couldn’t feel his hands on her anymore. It hurt when she dried herself with the soft towels but she kept her tears at bay. She was done crying.

She put underwear on first when her skin wasn’t damped anymore, then a tank top. Her eyes caught the reflection of her scar in the mirror.

“You’re bearing my mark now.”

Anger flared up in her chest and she fisted her hands, glaring at the scarred skin, a permanent reminder of that night, of what he had done to her, of what he had been about to do to her.

Gone. She wanted it gone so bad it hurt.

She tucked the tank top under her breasts, staring at the scar. Then, she traced its outline with the tips of her fingers before she started rubbing it furiously, wishing she could just tear it from her skin. But she couldn’t, it was here to stay forever. Just like he had wanted to.

“We’ll bear it for eternity.”

She heard the door open before she actually felt him circle his arms around her, taking a hold of her hands and pulling them away from her scar.

“Felicity stop,” he whispered in her ear. She struggled against him and he let her get away from him,
not wanting to overwhelm her with his presence but he didn’t let go of her hands.

“I just want it to be gone,” she broke down. “I can still feel him. His hands, his touch,” she explained, pointing at her skin. She normally would have felt bad, for exposing so much of herself, for letting him see just how broken she was exactly. But she was too far gone to care.

He held out a hand, reaching for her but she took a step back. “Please don’t. I don’t want any more hands on me.”

He nodded, something shifting in his blue eyes, but she was too on edge to understand what it was. “Okay,” he agreed. “No hands.”

He took a step toward her and a breath got caught in her throat at the serious look she saw in his eyes. Slowly, he lowered himself down in front of her and shifted uncomfortably, twisting her fingers together, not understanding what he was doing. Then, she felt his breath, hot and trembling, ghosting over her sensitive skin. She tensed up immediately until she felt his lips brush against her scar in a soft kiss. Blood rushed to her ears and she let out a small breath. Her legs shook but she kept herself up, his lips traveling somewhere else on her scar, his touch still soft, so tender it brought tears to her eyes. He traced the outline of the ugly mark with his lips, pulling at something inside her as he did so.

“What are you doing?” She whispered, her heart pounding in her chest.

“Kissing it better,” he replied, his eyes not looking up, remaining solely focused on his task. He pressed small kisses again, making sure his scruff wouldn’t rasp against her sensitive skin. The gesture was so affectionate, it felt like a caress, a caress which reached her soul.

She shut her eyes closed, a new range of emotions bursting in her chest. Fondness replaced her panic. Affection, her fear. Love, her anger. The dam that had been holding her emotions at bay broke and she was flooded with memories. But they weren’t the memories of that fateful night. No they were older memories, the memories of a time where she wasn’t alone. They were memories branded by a black arrow-shaped mark and she recognised what his lips on her skin for what they really were.

A soulmate’s touch.

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you guys think?  
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M  
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/  
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)
Hey guys!!!!

I'll try to keep this note short, in order to not delay the chapter any further :)

First thing first, I wanted to thank you all for the support and the incredible response this story is getting! There are over 1000 comments and kudos, it's crazy and makes me so incredibly happy so really THANK YOU!! You guys rock! Also thank you for patiently waiting for me and for the support - whether it was on Twitter, Tumblr or in the comment section... You guys have been really good to me, I don't deserve you. I'm so sorry it has taken me so long to update. I made an announcement on Twitter at the beginning of the week, real life has been crazy lately and I haven't had enough time to write. But I'll be on vacation on Wednesday, meaning I'll have time to write again, so don't worry :)

This chapter is... Well it's really about Felicity. I really hope you'll like it *crosses fingers* And don't worry about the ending, chapter 12 will pick up right where we're going to leave her in chapter 11 meaning that if you feel like something is missing then you'll probably get the answer in chapter 12!

Happy reading!!! :D

Chapter 11:

“But when you touch me like this
And you hold me like that
I just have to admit
That it's all coming back to me.”

- Celine Dion, *It's all coming back to me*

The first memory which came back to Felicity was one when she was six years old. Someone had pushed her in the school's playground and she had fallen on the ground, scratching her knees on the asphalt. She had tried to be a brave little girl but in the end she had cried a little, because the cuts were large enough to cover her entire right knee and the disinfectant had stung on the raw, angry red skin. But then she had felt something hold her from the inside. It had surprised her at first and she had been a little scared but then she had felt warmth spread inside her making her toes curl up in her small shoes and it had comforted the same way a hug would have. She had realised later it was not something that had held her but a someone and said someone was her soulmate. It was the day she became aware she was never truly alone, there was a buzzing in the back of her mind and heart
connecting her to her soulmate.

The second memory was a painful one as well, but it was a different kind of pain. It wasn’t physical but emotional. It was the memory of a day, a few weeks after her daddy had dropped her at her grand-mother’s place after picking her up at school. He hadn’t even bothered getting out of the car, letting her untangle herself from her seatbelt alone. He had driven away without even looking back before she could shut the door properly and had never come back. They had been painting boxes at school for Father’s day but Felicity had had no father to give the box to. It had made her really sad, especially when her teacher had suggested she gave the box to someone else. Who else was she supposed to give a box painted for Father’s day to? Felicity had been about to cry when she had felt something pull at her and for a second, she hadn’t been in her classroom, but in a playground, a little boy with dark hair talking animatedly to her, telling her a joke she couldn’t remember anymore but that had made her laugh. It was the day she realised her connection to her soulmate was stronger than others.

She was much older in the third memory. It was the memory of that day on the basketball field where she had had to win all her games, in order to get an acceptable grade in PE. It had been an awful day. Her teammates hadn’t been really nice to her or helpful because they were too afraid of Mandy Miller, who hated Felicity with everything she had and had decided that the nerdy bag of bones wouldn’t get to shoot a basket of the day. Felicity had been pretty desperate, she had been well aware she needed a good grade in physical education but she was just so lame and clumsy, she had known she wouldn’t make it without help. It had hurt to admit it to herself, because she wasn’t one to beg for help, but that day, she would have done anything for a little hand. And then it had hit her: her soulmate loved basketball. She had seen him play more than once. She had been the one to initiate contact with him that day, drawing both strength and motivation from him. It was the day she realised together they could achieve great things.

More memories flooded Felicity’s mind, seeping in all her senses, sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing, taking over the control of her body. They weren’t always in chronological order, going back and forth between the different moments of her life. One time she was fifteen, burying her grandmother and he was partying, hard. Then she was seven, building her first computer and he was playing with a small giggling girl with pigtails. She was being drowned in memories, memories of her rubbing the mark on her hipbone to meet him, memories of their connection bringing them together in spite of their will, not caring about futile things such as distance and time. She was overwhelmed by their common past coming back to her and she was stunned by its raw intensity, its gut wrenching beauty. Now that she had been deprived of their connection for so long, she could truly realise how special it had been. Even in their darkest moments, even when she had felt about giving up on everything, even when he had been tangling up with other girls, they had been together.

Having finally been heard, her bond roared triumphantly from behind the walls holding it captive. Finally, Felicity was listening. Finally, she was starting to understand. She felt like a fool for not figuring it out earlier. All the signs had been there, quivering, waiting for her, and she hadn’t picked them up – but how could she have known there was something to pick up in the first place? How could she have known that the man in front of her, the man who had made a place for himself in every aspect of her life, as her boss, as her friend, was her soulmate? How could she have guessed? But here they were, the evidence of their profound attachment to one another, an entanglement of their souls so deep it had survived years of separation, and thrived in spite of the medication she had been taking.

She had craved the things he had. She had known Star City before even setting a foot in town. She had felt at home in his home, had become friends with his friends, had started caring for his family and for those he cared about. She had fallen in love with all his favourite spots in the city, she had known how the seaside restaurant would look like although she had never been there before. She
had known things about him, little insignificant things to the eyes of the world but so important, oh so meaningful to their eyes. She had been able to fall asleep in his arms and she hadn’t been able to sleep when they had fought. He had kept her nightmares at bay while she had gotten him out of his own.

It felt like it lasted for eternity. Memories kept washing through her in strong and steady waves. Some were so powerful she was drowning in them, and some were so small, she felt like she was floating peacefully. She remembered everything, even the smallest things, the small details of a day she had forgotten a long time ago. And they were all connected to her soulmate. They all brought her back to him. She was pulled by the tide, taken away by the streams, following the path of an arrow looking like the sign of infinity. Even the shape of their soulmark was leading her right back to him. To his city. She would have laughed at it, had she been able to. But she wasn't. Because if it felt like it eternity, it was really a whole second. One perfect second where she had gotten a taste of forever. Where nothing, not their problems, not the way they'd hurt one another, absolutely nothing else but them, had mattered.

And then, the second was over and she was brought back to her senses, to her body buzzing with a myriad of emotions, to his lips pressing small kisses against the scarred skin covering her ribs. She closed her eyes, savouring the contact of his lips against her. One single tear rolled down her cheek, as he kissed her softly, right where she was hurting. Her body. Her soul. His gentleness pulled at something inside of her and she felt her heart skip a beat, before starting again, stronger, steadier. Panic, fear, all the negative emotions that had been torturing her, faded, chased away by his gentleness. Chased away by a soulmate's touch. Her soulmate. His touch. Her hand, with a volition of its own, shot up and her fingers tangled in his hair, keeping him right there, prolonging the contact between the two of them.

Until suddenly it was too much. Too many things bubbled up in her chest. The bliss of the reveal, of the recognition was brushed aside as love, confusion, affection, wonder and surprise meddled inside of her heart and mind, ready to burst out, words she knew she couldn't say threatening to fall from her lips. She took a deep breath and opened her eyes, only to see Oliver, Oliver, still kneeling down in front of her, his arms along his sides, just like she had asked him to.

Oliver Queen was her soulmate.

Of course he was, it was so obvious now that she thought about it, now that she knew.

She disentangled her hand from his hair and slowly, lowered herself down. She wrapped her arms around his neck, bringing him closer to her, her face finding its rightful place in the crook of his neck. She fit perfectly in his arms and the simple statement was enough to form a lump in her throat. His arms didn't make their way around her waist to hold her, still doubtful she could handle hands on her body but she felt them flex at his sides, itching to comfort her, to touch her. She wanted to tell him it was okay, she knew he was the last person on earth who would ever lay a hand on her in order to hurt her. She wanted to tell him she knew. But she couldn't, not now and maybe not ever.

She hugged him for a while, how long, she didn’t know. It could have been a minute or a whole hour, she lost track of time the moment the warmth radiating off his chest reached her much cooler one, warming her caged heart up. She breathed him in, slowly, his scent like a balm over her wounds, soothing her ragged emotions, calming her down. She hugged him until he felt confident enough to hug her back, his strong arms wrapping around her petite waist. She hugged him until she felt her knees burn and shake in protest against the position they were in. She hugged him until her own arms started to feel heavy around his neck and loosen up their tight hold on him.

That was his cue to move. The moment her arms started slipping away, he moved. One of his own
fell down, and wrapped around her knees before turning her sideways just as he lifted her up. She probably should have been amazed by his display of strength, he was carrying and moving her as if she weighed nothing, but she was too lost in him to bring herself to care. He walked them out of the bathroom and led them to his bedroom, keeping silent. He carefully deposited her on his bed, brushing away from her eyes a damp strand of hair. He leaned down to kiss her forehead before walking out again. A few minutes later she heard the sound of water running and guessed he was taking his own shower.

Goosebumps spread on her legs when the cold air of his room hit her skin, now deprived of his warmth as its personal radiator, so she quickly undid the bed, and buried herself under the covers. She found his pillow, the one smelling just like him and rested her cheek on it, making sure her body wouldn't invade his side of the bed. She waited for him, not even trying to close her eyes. She knew she wouldn't be able to fall asleep alone.

She felt much better now, thanks to him, it seemed her panic attack from earlier had happened a while ago. But she knew it was a fragile balance and she needed to fortify the barriers of her mind to protect her from the dark memories before she could consider falling asleep alone. She knew she needed Oliver for that and she hated it. He was not the problem, she was. She felt like she was using him, now that she knew the truth and he still didn't. But she couldn't tell him. It was too soon, the realisation too fresh, too raw.

Oliver Queen was her soulmate.

Her bond thrummed happily behind the bars of its prison at the thought. She swore she could almost picture it doing a happy dance in its cell. It had been heard and was now hoping to be released.

No. She couldn't, not now. She needed time, just a little time to think things through properly.

He had gotten her out of her thoughts when he came back from the bathroom, his hair damp, wearing sweatpants hanging loosely from his hips and a white tee. He was holding a brush and the pants he had gotten her from Thea's closet. He wordlessly handed her both items to her and exited the room once more, either to do something or just to give her some privacy. She got out of bed and put on the pants quickly, before brushing her hair and doing it in a loose French braid.

She got back under the covers and waited. He came back soon after and switched off the light in the room. They were left in semi-darkness, as streaks of moonlight were coming in through the window. Only the sound of the rain hitting the rooftop of his building could be heard as he padded to bed. He joined her and she moved slightly to let him settle down comfortably on his side. He opened his arms and she didn’t hesitate before snuggling against him. She knew she shouldn’t, she knew it was too intimate, just like him kissing her scar was, but she didn’t care. She didn’t care at all. She was so on edge, she was well-aware the smallest thing could make her fall over right back in her nightmare and if being held by Oliver could help her anchoring her mind into this world then so be it. She’d deal with the consequences later.

She laid her head on his chest listening to the steady beat of his heart, the heart which was supposedly beating in perfect synch with hers, one of her hands coming up to rest next to her face. One of his arms wrapped around her, pulling her impossibly closer and went to rest against her ribs. He stopped himself, knowing what lied under the thin fabric of her shirt.

“Is it okay if I touch you?”

His voice broke the silence that had fallen between them. It was rough from the lack of use and it also seemed to the blonde, there was something else, some kind of emotions tightening his vocal cords.
“Yes,” she whispered back, her fingers starting to draw meaningless patterns on his chest. She felt unable to lie still, her body buzzing with both anticipation and nervousness. This was a lot, almost too much and yet she was happy to be there, to be with him.

His hand fell on her ribs, squeezing them gently before he relaxed next to her. It seemed as if he wasn’t able to lie still himself because his own fingers started tracing the lines of the scar his lips had already learnt earlier.

“What happened at the club?” He asked after another moment of silence.

She didn’t tense up at his question. His presence and warmth were enough to remind her that everything was over and she was safe, though it did make her uncomfortable. What had happened earlier? She didn’t really know herself. One minute she had been having fun, more and less and the next one everything had gone to hell.

“I had a panic attack,” she said, her voice small, almost shy.

He remained silent, waiting for her to go on, not pressuring her with questions, for which she was grateful because she could feel he had plenty. She knew she would, if a friend had called her in the middle of the night to come over to a club and take care of another friend.

“There was this guy. We were flirting and I let him buy me a drink or two, I don’t really remember. He moved us to the dance-floor and it was fun at first, you know? Dancing, not caring about anything.” The more she spoke, the more memories came back, flooding her mind. She remembered the bright lights blazing in her eyes, the loud music played by the DJ. The patterns she was drawing over his chest stopped being so meaningless, her nervousness making her hyper-aware of everything around her, even his slightest intake of air.

“And then?”

She shrugged, twisting her legs together, not knowing how to get the words out. She knew the Med was still keeping them apart but she also knew it wasn’t doing its job properly. She had felt a pull toward him and it was now pretty obvious to her he had as well. His protectiveness, his pushy behaviour, his possessiveness and sort-of-jealousy whenever she was concerned. It all made sense. Now how was she supposed to tell him she had kissed some other guy at a party? She knew the most rational part of him wouldn’t care. But the unconscious one, the one feeling the pull, even a weak one, would. It would care an awful lot.

“He kissed me and I kissed him back and before I could realise what was happening he had moved us and…” She hesitated for a second, waiting for him to react. His breathing remained even but his fingers did drift away from her scar and flexed around her hip.

“And?” He insisted.

“It brought back bad memories and I –,” she hesitated again, her voice getting caught in her throat by the memories of hands and lips that didn’t belong to her soulmate. She shifted slightly against Oliver, trying to put some distance between them and he accommodated her by shifting on his side, while she remained on her back, staring at the ceiling.

“And I panicked,” she confessed softly.

She paused then, playing with the hem of her shirt, her eyes glued to the ceiling as she made up her mind. She fisted the tank top the words out before she could bring them back in.

“His name was Cooper and he was my boyfriend.”
She felt him stiffen immediately. “Felicity you don’t have to…”

“But I want to,” she cut him off. “If you want to hear it, that is.”

She had never told the story to anyone. Her mother had been there to witness it all, Georgia too - she was Felicity's best friend and Donna had called her for moral support. She had talked to her psychologist but then again, she hadn't told her the whole thing, not really, since she had already known most of it. She had never fully said what happened to anyone and had never intended to. As usual, she had wanted to keep it all to herself, to bear that burden only on her shoulders. But there she was, lying only a few breaths away from a soulmate she had thought had been lost to her forever. She didn't know where they stood, she didn't know what to do with the revelation she had had earlier. But if she didn't tell him, she would never tell anyone. And she had promised him to open up, to share her burdens.

Still, this was huge and she waited anxiously for his answer.

"Okay," he said, reaching for the hand playing with the hem of her shirt and holding it tight.

She let out a small breath to gather her strength. "His name was Cooper and he was my boyfriend," she repeated, opening a box she had sworn to keep shut a long time ago. "I met him at the beginning of my third year of college and back then I was a very different person.” She closed her eyes, a blurred image of the girl she used to be dancing behind her closed lids. “Black raven hair, purple streaks, cargo pants and leather jackets, I had the whole Goth look," she shook her head in disapproval at the memory of how she had looked, starting to play with her braid. "I wasn't really popular in high-school, you know? And things didn't really get better in college. People were nicer, sure, but I wasn't really close to anyone. I didn’t know how to make friends."

"I can't believe it," Oliver said in disbelief. She couldn't see him, but she had no trouble imagining the surprised look on his face.

"It's true," she assured him. "I haven't always been like this," she pointed at herself, twisting her braid between her hands. "When I met Cooper, I didn't really know what to do. It was the first time someone had been remotely interested in me and I couldn't help but believe this was some kind of a joke, that if I let myself believe maybe he was sincere, he'd prove me he was fooling me just for the fun of it right after I gave in. So I held back. I tried to push him away, but he wouldn't have any of it. He kept coming back, sitting down next to me in class, offering me small presents, and by presents I don't mean the usual flowers and chocolate normal people use, but nerdy stuff. Things he knew I'd love, about my favourite comics or TV shows.” She chewed on her lower lip, feeling like a fool for falling for him. She knew it wasn't her fault, he had done everything to get in her pants, so to speak. She knew she wasn’t to blame for yielding.

"He wormed his way into my heart and before I knew it, I was thinking more and more about him." She paused for a second, mixed feelings blossoming in her heart at the thought of the feelings she had once had for Cooper. They left a bitter taste in her mouth and she swallowed hard. "It felt nice," she explained. "To be wanted and to have someone who cared about me." She hadn't told him a lot about her family, her father leaving, her mother being depressed and heart-broken after that but she knew she’d let enough details out for him to understand she had been an adult far before being turning eighteen.

"We eventually started dating," she went on.

"What about your soulmate?" He asked, his thumb rubbing her knuckles.

She did her best not to react to his question. She exhaled slowly, her heart picking up in her chest as
she looked for an appropriate answer. "He wasn't in the picture." She felt him move next to her and
she waited for a minute to pass before getting back to her story. "It was nice, really, really nice
actually. It was the first time I was in a relationship with someone and it felt good. I was still a bit
guarded around him, yes, I was waiting for the other shoe to drop but when it didn't, I started to open
up more. He wasn't just my boyfriend, he was my best friend too. We were the same you know, both
nerdy, both good with computers. We hacked a lot together, challenging one another. He pushed me
to be better, stronger and to speak my mind more."

"The two of you were close?" Oliver asked.

She shrugged. "As close as two people who aren't soulmates can be, I guess. I wasn't in love with
him but I cared about him, a lot. I trusted him and I guess that's why it was so easy for him to..." The
words died on her lips.

"Felicity," Oliver said, his fingers squeezing hers.

"It happened during the summer between our third and fourth year. We had been together for a bit
more than six months and though we had been intimate we had never..." The words stuck to her
tongue and she felt herself blush. How was she supposed to tell him this? She shifted uncomfortably,
not knowing how to say the words.

"The two of you had never had sex?" Oliver asked, rather bluntly, reading her mind as usual.

Her cheeks reddened even more and she bit on her lips. "I did try to go further but he always stopped
me, sometimes with good reasons, some other times arguing we should not rush into things, saying
he wanted to be sure I wouldn't regret it later."

"You had never...?"

"Like I said, he was my first boyfriend," she cut him off immediately, not wanting to discuss that
with him.

"It's okay," he nodded, his thumb moving to her palm, rubbing soothing circles against the tender
skin until she relaxed a little.

"He never talked about his soulmate, you know? It was taboo between us actually. I never
mentioned mine, he never brought his up." She paused, taking a deep breath, knowing she was
going to the hardest part of the story. She shifted once more and Oliver, being very careful with her
and listening to every signal, pulled at her hand to bring her back into his arms. She was nestled
against his chest, the top of her head safely tucked under his chin. He had brought one of his arms
under his head, and the other was gently lying on her waist.

"I learnt afterwards she died in a car accident a few years prior and it broke his mind. He didn't take
the Med and... Well. I don't have to tell you what it did to him." She knew she didn't have to explain
what had happened to Cooper after his soulmate had died. Everyone knew what happened to those
who lost their soulmate to death and didn't take the Med. At best, they were broken and for most of
them never spoke a word again. But at worst, the loss drove people crazy, the desperation pushing
them to do anything, even the most unspeakable things, to get what they had lost back.

"It pushed him over the edge?" Oliver questioned, his voice tightened by something. Fear?
Apprehension of what was coming? She didn't know for sure and she couldn't see his eyes in the
semi-darkness of his room.

"Yes," she felt tears pricked at the corner of her eyes, flashes of the mad look in his eyes crossing
her mind. "The FBI was already after him. He had kidnapped another girl before and..." She bit on her lips. "She didn't make it, he killed her when he realised she wasn't what he needed."

Oliver moved his head to be able to look at her but she didn't look up to meet his eyes. She remained solely focused on the fabric of his shirt, knowing if she faced his emotions directly, she would break. And she couldn't afford to.

"What do you mean? What did he need?" His tone was more urgent than it had previously been, as if she was communicating him her own anxiousness as they were getting close to the real horror of the story, to the most sordid details.

"Cooper was not his real name. He used his skills with computers and tech in general to build himself a brand new identity. And he was good, so good and smart actually, he managed to escape the FBI without needing to hide himself in some lost places in the middle of nowhere," she paused, remembering the day it had all been explained to her, remembering the faces of the federal agents in her hospital room. "He did not just create a new identity for himself, he became Cooper. He was Cooper and just like everyone else on this earth, he thought Cooper needed a soulmate."

She could pinpoint the exact moment he understood what she was trying to tell him. His hand on her waist flexed slightly, gripping her more firmly. "Don't tell me he..."

"He killed the girl because after he was done with her, he realised they weren't bonded."

"And he tried to...?"

He sounded angry and disgusted. He was still lying next to her but she felt his breathing speed up, and if she moved closer, she would feel his heart pounding loudly in his chest. She could only imagine the myriad of negative emotions probably assaulting him, not only because he was her soulmate but also because he was her friend and cared about her. And she knew everything he was feeling was directed at Cooper, at what his twisted mind had made him do to her, and to that poor girl as well.

"Yes, yes, he did," she confirmed, her voice wavered, failing her for the first time ever since their conversation had started. Her mind was full of images of Cooper, of his hooded eyes. Her skin and lips tingled as she remembered his hands on her, the kisses he had stolen from her.

"We're going to be bonded soon baby, don't worry. I'll take care of you."

She clenched her eyes shut, fisting the fabric of Oliver's tee. She knew she was about to cry, the emotional impact left by this traumatic experience too much for her, too painful. He leaned down, his lips brushing her hair before he pressed firmer kisses on her forehead and temples, everywhere within his reach.

"Felicity..." he started to say.

"I don't remember what happened with exactitude. How he drugged me, how he took me to that place," she shivered, remembering the darkness and the coldness of the basement he had held her captive in. "But I do recall what happened after I woke up the first time. I remember him. I remember the pain. And how it started again I woke up the second time, throbbing and blazing at the same time. It's like he carved the memories of that day in my mind, the same way he carved his mark on my skin." She felt Oliver stiffened besides her but she paid him no mind. The dam in her mind had broken and the words were flowing out of her mouth freely now, completely uncensored. "It's his mark I bear on my ribs," she said. "And the bastard made sure it was big, just like a mark grows when you're around your real soulmate. I can't not see it, not matter how much I want to."
"Felicity please, tell me he didn't..." He didn't finish his sentence but she didn't need him to. She knew what he was asking. Had he tried to make her his? Had he destroyed every single part of her?

"The Feds arrived before he could get to the "fun part"," she winced at the words, tears rolling down her cheeks, because of what had happened and what could have. He could have gone further, he could have had her against her will. He could have killed her.

Hearing that didn't make Oliver relax. If anything he tensed up even more, his hand on her waist flexing again.

"Felicity," he said, his voice breaking, his anger still present but nothing compared to his pain. He was hurting for her and it made her heart clench in her chest, a breath getting stuck in her throat. She moved closed to him, wrapping her arms around him, letting him do the same with her.

"Sometimes I feel like he still has me, like I'll never get out of that room," she cried against him and she felt his hands squeeze her waist, his lips pressing an awkward kiss against the side of her head, one that fell on top of her ear, brushing her metallic piercing.

"Shh," Oliver soothed her down tenderly, his hand patting her back, rubbing up and down her spine in an attempt to steady her, to stop the trembles of her body. She hadn't even realised she had been shivering. “He never had you Felicity, and he never will. You’re not an object or a property, you’re a person, a strong and beautiful person whose true soulmate is out there, somewhere.” The thought brought more tears to her eyes. God, he had no idea how true his words were. “You’re out of that room. You’re walking out that room every single day, when you get up, when you go to work, when you brush your hair or when you put on a bright pink dress. You’re walking out of that room every time you choose life over the darkness he’s tried to drag you in. I honestly have no idea where you find the strength to do so but… I’m in awe of you.”

She pinched her lips together, her face finding its place again in the crook of his neck, his familiar scent filling her nose, invading her senses. “Thank you for trusting me enough to tell me the truth,” he whispered and she nodded against him, holding him a bit tighter, unwilling to let go.

“No, thank you.”

“For what?”

“For being my friend,” she told him.

He chuckled at her words. “But that Miss Smoak, is the easy part.”

She woke up in a much different position than the one she had fallen asleep in. She had moved away from Oliver during the night, and she was now as far away from him as possible, lying on her stomach – her favourite position to sleep in, one arm wrapped around a pillow, cuddling it. Oliver was still on his back, and the only connection between them was their hands, holding. One fragile single thread, and oh, wasn’t that the story of their life?

She turned her head to face Oliver. He was still sleeping soundly, and he looked much more relaxed than he did when he was awake. She watched silently, careful not to wake him. She knew he had waited for her to fall asleep first, fighting his own tiredness to stay with her and make sure she wasn’t being dragged by a nightmare, and he deserved to rest now.

She turned his head to face Oliver. He was still sleeping soundly, and he looked much more relaxed than he did when he was awake. She watched silently, careful not to wake him. She knew he had waited for her to fall asleep first, fighting his own tiredness to stay with her and make sure she wasn’t being dragged by a nightmare, and he deserved to rest now.

She watched him sleep, her own eyes still heavy and in desperate need to close again but she fought that urge back. Everything that had happened the night before was slowly coming back to her. The panic attack. The soulmate’s touch. Their talk.
He was her soulmate. Oliver Queen was her soulmate.

Objectively, she knew she should tell him the truth. She knew she should tell him she was his soulmate and he was hers. But she was scared of the consequences, of what would follow. Unpleasant conversations would need to happen and she didn’t know if she could handle them. Oliver had just called her strong, but he had no idea how untrue that statement was. She wasn’t strong enough for them, she had never known how to be. Now that her memories had come back to her, she realised she had never been the strong one in their relationship. He had been. Laurel’s words echoed in her mind.

“He said he couldn’t cut their bond, that she needed him.”

He had been there for her, whenever she had needed him to. And that was what made his betrayal even more painful, his close entanglement with other women so awful. How could someone help her and hurt her in one of the worst ways possible? Hadn’t he realised it had hurt her when he had been sleeping his way around Star City? Hadn’t he realised it had been disrespectful? That it had felt like a slap across her face?

She still didn’t know if he had been aware of his mother’s plan to pay her off. When he had mentioned his soulmate after he had told her he was marrying Isabel because it was what his parents expected of him, he had said “she’s gone, out of my life and never coming back”. It had sounded harsh and pretty permanent to her. What if he had said that because he knew she wasn’t coming back? Because it was part of their deal? What if he didn’t want her to come back?

But what if Moira had acted behind his back – it was possible after all, it was totally her style – what would he think of her then? Would he see her as a gold-digger? A cold-hearted and interested young woman who had ran away from him when she had been given the right amount of money? Would their friendship, their partnership survive that? What would become of them once the truth was out? Would they be strong enough to face the storm together? Or would the tempest tear them apart? Would she lose him to the truth? What if he didn’t understand her motivations? What if he hated her because of what she had done? She knew he liked her and cared about her, but the girl he knew was Felicity his friend, his EA. Would he like Felicity his soulmate the same way? She was scared of what she would find out.

And what about Moira? Felicity understood now where her hatred was coming from, why she had been so adamant she left quickly and without looking back. She hadn’t been afraid she and Oliver would hook-up together, she had been afraid they would fall for one another. And maybe she had called her a gold-digger because she truly thought she was one. After all, she had accepted the money she had been offered four years ago, even her felt like one from time to time. She had had her reasons to accept the deal, yes, but it didn’t change the fact that she had indeed accepted to be paid off.

And what about Isabel? She had probably sided with Moira, which led Felicity to think there was more to the arranged marriage between Oliver and Isabel than just him proving to his parents he could be the son they wanted him to be. What if there was more at stake than just Oliver’s worth? What if there was money, a business deal running deeper? Did Oliver know about it? He had admitted there was more to the story than what he had told her, but what had he meant by that? And what about Isabel’s soulmate? Why would she agree to marry Oliver? Who was the real gold-digger in all of this? And what about her? Where did she fit into this? Was it even safe for her to tell Oliver that she knew? His mother had already hired someone to break into her apartment to scare her off, and Felicity still wasn’t sure she hadn’t been the one behind their car crash? Who knew what she would do if she heard Felicity knew? Oliver would never let her get hurt but Moira had already proven an accident could easily happen…
Her mind was a swirling mess of questions and interrogations but she knew now wasn’t time to think about possible answers. She would get back to everything when she would feel better, and more importantly, when the very man she had been running from for the last four years wouldn’t be fast asleep next to her.

That was when it hit her.

He had kissed her the night before. Not on the lips, like lovers did, but on a far more personal place where she was concerned. And they had slept together, again not like lovers did, but still. They had shared a bed, and had held hands throughout the night. It hit her all of a sudden and it freaked her out a bit, enough for her to sit down, carefully letting go of his hands so he wouldn’t wake up.

The loud buzzing of his phone vibrating against his bedside table echoed in the silent room, making her jump in surprise and Oliver bolt awake. He blindly reached for the device and answered sleepily, his voice rough and his hair ruffled.

“Oliver Queen! […] What? No! I mean, I don’t know! What time is it? […] I’m sorry. […] Yes, I understand.” He turned his head toward Felicity and mouthed the word “mother”. She shifted uncomfortably and gestured toward the door, signalling him she was going out. He shook his head, holding her hand to keep her there. “Okay, I got it. […] Yes mother, I’m taking this seriously. […] Walter is here as well? […] Okay, I’ll be right here. […] Okay, see ya.”

He tossed his phone away, rubbing his face with his hands.

“You okay?” Felicity asked, tilting her head. She felt suddenly awkward. She hadn’t minded being in his bedroom with him the night before, she had been too far gone in her own mind to care, but now that she was feeling better, that she had had time to think, she felt conscious, almost uncomfortable. It was really intimate and crossing at least half a dozen lines friends shouldn’t… Well, crossed.

“Forgot about a business lunch with my parents and some board members of QC.”

Her eyes went wide and guilt coloured her cheeks a bright red. “Shouldn’t you be hurrying to get there?”

He nodded. “I should. But first,” he turned to face her properly, his blue eyes filled nothing but sweet concern. “How are you feeling?”

She bit on her lips, looking down at the comforter. “Much better, thank you.”

“I’m glad,” he assured her. His eyes met hers and she gave him a small smile, tucking a strand of hair which had fallen from her braid behind her ear.

“Oliver, your lunch!” She reminded him, urgency clear in her tone.

Her voice snapped him out of his thoughts. “Yeah, right, let’s go! I’ll drive you back to your place.” She got up but stopped moving when she saw the disappointed look on his face.

“What?” She asked.

“I’m sorry, if I could cancel that lunch I would…”

She shook her head, raising a finger to stop him right here and there. “Are you kidding me? If anyone has to be sorry, it’s me. I’m the one who got you late for your very important lunch business and the more time we spend talking about it, the later you’re going to be. So off you go, hop in the
shower! And don’t think about driving me back, I’ll take a cab.”

He frowned but went into the bathroom anyway. Felicity worriedly bit on her lips. She felt like one of those girls, or boys for that matter, after a one-night stand who were trying their best to get as far away as possible, as quickly as possible, from the person they had share an intimate moment – and she didn’t mean intimate in the sweet way of two people coming together but intimate because of the physical proximity which was kind of unavoidable while performing the sexual act and wow great, Felicity was rambling in her head now. She sighed, her point being, she felt awkward, it really looked like she was trying to get as far away from Oliver as possible and she didn’t want to make things look like this, because it wasn’t how she felt. Yes, she wanted to put some distance between them, so that she could think about their “soulmate” problem but she wasn’t freaking out about what had happened between them the night before. They had just shared a bed, it wasn’t like they had done anything wrong! And yes, some kissing may have been involved but it had mostly been to comfort her, make her feel better.

Shaking her head, she decided to get ready as well, knowing if she busied herself, she’d stop thinking and being awkward. She did the bed quickly, opened the window to clean the air of the room and then walked out, padding to Thea’s room. She borrowed some clothes, knowing she would clean them during the weekend and brought them back to Oliver at Q. Inc, on Monday. She got dressed quickly, deciding to take a shower at her own apartment. She put her shoes from the previous day back on, and went to get her clothes from the previous day back in the laundry room, where Oliver had put them after deposited her on his bed.

She was all done and ready when he got out of the bathroom, wearing suit pants and a white tee, his hair slightly damp.

“Are you sure you don’t want me to drive you?” He insisted.

She nodded. “Yes! I don’t want you to be later at your lunch. By the way, why didn’t you tell me about it at work?”

He shrugged. “It’s one these unofficial meals, where we all promise we’re not going to talk about the companies when really, it’s the only thing we do.”

“Sounds boring.”

He nodded, pouting and she could see in his eyes he really didn’t want to go. “Aren’t you going to help me escape this?”

“And give your mother another reason to hate my guts? No, thank you, I’ll pass.”

He chuckled at her words. “Yeah, right. Not my best idea.” He paused before saying, his tone suddenly more cautious, more serious. “Are you going to be okay?”

It was a delicate question to answer. She knew the night had stirred up really bad memories for her, the panic attack had been the most intense she had had in a very, very long time. But she also knew that opening up about it and more importantly, letting him, her soulmate, hold her had done her some real good. She still wasn’t okay, and she didn’t know when she would be but she knew the day where she’d have completely left the darkness behind her was coming. She had felt her soulmate’s touch and although it had been brief, one single stolen night she had allowed herself, she knew it had been intense enough to change a few things inside her.

“Yes, I will,” she said softly, reaching for his hand. “Thank you for being there for me.”
“It’s what friends are made for,” he told her.

She nodded, pinching her lips together to hold back a smile. They made their way to the door, stopping in the threshold.

“Give me a call when you’re home, or if you need anything…”

She nodded. “I will,” she promised, letting go of his hand and closing the lapels of her jacket over her chest. It smelt like smoke and sweat, reminding her of the party from the night before. “Goodbye Oliver, talk to you later.”

“Goodbye Felicity.”

She gave him a small nod, smiling softly before walking away, her heart suddenly feeling heavy in her chest, her bond starting to protest.

“Felicity,” he called her back.

She turned around, her hands gripping her clutch tightly. “Yes?”

“We’re okay, right? I mean, we’re cool?”

She retraced her steps, coming back to him. She rose on her toes and kissed his cheek. “The coolest,” she affirmed.

And then she left, this time without him calling her back. She felt weird when she sat down in the cab she had hailed. Her bond, which had been silent until now, was now buzzing in annoyance. She still didn’t know why it was so loud while being on the Med, though she could guess it was because she had been close to her soulmate, but at least now she understood what it was saying, what it wanted. Too bad, it wasn’t what she wanted. She opened her clutch and gulped down without water her daily dose of the Med.

“Where to Miss?” The cab driver asked.

“Star City’s sweet coffee please,” she asked.

She really needed a huge dose of caffeine if she wanted to make it through the day. She had slept well but it had all been pretty exhausting and now that she was alone the tensions she had unconsciously piled up in her body - some about Cooper, some about Oliver - were starting to loosen. She needed some coffee to bring some energy back into her muscles. She was also hoping to catch Sara. She owed her an explanation about what had happened at the club. She didn’t know what she was going to tell her, but she knew she would come up with something.

She paid for her fare and got out of the cab, crossing the street to reach the coffee-shop. The place was crowded, but it wasn’t that surprising. It was lunch-time after all. Sara was standing behind the counter, with bags under her eyes. Iris was nowhere to be seen, but Felicity remembered she had asked for a few days off in order to take care of JJ who had caught the flue. She remembered then she had promised to visit him during the afternoon.

The moment Sara spotted her, she motioned toward one of the other waitress, asking her to replace her before making her way to Felicity.

“Lissy!” She said, pulling her in for a tight hug. Felicity felt the burn rise under the skin but she gritted her teeth and bore with it. “How are you doing? You got me really worried yesterday!”
“Better, much better, thank you,” she replied, hugging Sara back before pulling away.

“Are you sure? I was so, so worried, I left right after you. What happened?”

“You mind if we talk about it around a cup of coffee?” Felicity suggested.

The blonde shook her head. “Nope but I can’t take a break for more than twenty minutes. Things are kind of crazy here, as you can see.”

Felicity nodded and soon enough, the two young women were sitting down with steaming cups of coffee in front of them.

“So what happened yesterday?” Sara asked. “You looked pretty shaken.”

Felicity took a sip of her coffee before saying. “It’s a long story but… I’m on the Med, just like you and sometimes, I react badly to other people’s touch. Last night was just one of those nights.”

Sara’s eyes widened. “You? You’re taking the Med?”

Felicity nodded. “It hasn’t been very efficient lately, I’ve set up an appointment with a specialist for next week.”

Sara blinked. “You’re taking the Med?”

Felicity nodded again, frowning. “Why do you sound so surprised?”

Sara shook her head, putting her cup of coffee back on the table in front of them. “I don’t know. You just don’t seem like the type who’d take the Med, I guess…”

Felicity tilted her head. “Since when is there a “type”?”

Sara chuckled nervously. “There isn’t actually, it’s just… I don’t know, you’re Felicity.”

“Hey! What’s that supposed to mean?”

Sara shrugged. “Nothing, I guess.” She paused then said. “Okay let’s rephrase it, you’re just the kind of girl I could totally picture posting sickeningly sweet pictures with your soulmate on Instagram. And before you say it’s weird, I’d have to ask you to check the last pictures you posted on your account, with Thea, Tommy or Oliver. If you can be that funny and sweet with your friends, I can only imagine what it would be with your dear soulmate.”

“I don’t post sweet pictures,” Felicity protested, blushing slightly.

“Should we talk of that picture of you, Ollie and Dig while you were lunching at Big Belly Burger the other day or…?”

Felicity cleared her throat, chuckling as her cheeks turned even redder. “Okay, you may have a point here.”

“Of course!” Sara said, faking an offended expression. “So… Why are you taking the Med?”

“I’d rather not talk about that,” Felicity told her. “It’s not something I like to talk about, it’s… complicated.”

Sara nodded. “I understand, but if one day you need to, you know I’m here, and I won’t judge. I’d be in no place since I’m taking it as well.”
Felicity nodded. “True.”

“And what about Oliver?” Sara asked then, her tone casual. “Does he know you’re taking the Med?”

Felicity shook her head. “No, he doesn’t.”

Sara frowned. “Then what does he think happen last night?”

“It’s… It’s complicated.”

Sara arched an eyebrow. “Oh really? Complicated seems to happen a lot around you Miss Smoak.”

Felicity shrugged, looking down toward her cup of coffee, desperately looking for a way to orientate the conversation toward a safer topic. She didn’t have to in the end. One of the waitresses working for Sara tripped and fell while she was carrying a tray meaning that the blond had to shorten her break to go back and help her employees. Felicity finished her coffee alone, then texted Iris to warn her she was going to come by soon and that if JJ or she needed anything, she would be happy to bring it. She ended up buying Chicken soup and noodles from a small Chinese restaurant near their house, both were JJ’s favourites.

The little boy was bed resting when she arrived but he did smile at her when she brought him food. She helped him eat some, with Iris watching and encouraging her boy. When he had eaten half of the soup, they left so he could rest and went back to the kitchen. Iris made them a quick lunch – Felicity’s coffee had helped wakening her up and she had then realised she was starving – and they ate together, the brunette asking Felicity about her night out. She remained pretty vague, saying she had had to leave because she had felt bad, which wasn’t technically a lie. Felicity liked Iris a lot, she was a brave young woman who had had her fair share of struggles but she didn’t want too many people to know about her and what had happened at the club. She knew she could count on Oliver and Sara’s discretion and though she had promised she’d open up more, she wasn’t going to start telling everything about her life to everyone.

She went home then when she was done, quickly texting Oliver to tell him she had made it back safely. The moment she closed her front door, she lied against it, sliding down slowly. Everything hit her hard. Now that she was alone, without anyone to keep her busy, and occupy her thoughts her mind went straight back to all the things that had happened, all the things she had discovered. The memories struck immediately. One second, she was still thinking about JJ and the next one, her body was buzzing in anticipation, and she felt like every nerve ending in her body had been electrified. Her brain was overdriving, her cheeks reddening because of how hard and fast it was processing the last fourteen hours.

Her soulmate.

Oliver was her soulmate.

Her eyes hadn’t seen his soulmark but her body had recognised his touch and her brain had done the math.

She took her head between her hands, wishing for it to not be true, for it to be just a joke, wishing for once to be wrong. She wasn’t.

His family had the means to pay her off. From what she had gathered about Moira Queen in the short period of time she had known her, she could easily see why she would deem her, the poor daughter of a depressed cocktail waitress, as unsuitable for her son. Her being Oliver’s soulmate also explained why Moira hated her so much now and why she felt so threatened by her. Oliver’s past
with the anti-soulmate group and his former behaviour with women fit what she had seen as a teenager. All the pieces of the puzzle were falling together and she was left with no other choice but to accept it the way it was.

Oliver Queen was her soulmate.

Now what?

She got up, taking off her heels and tossing them aside. She dropped her clutch on a shelf, not paying any attention when it fell on the floor. She stripped from her clothes as she made her way to the bathroom. She was on auto-pilot, her brain solely focused on Oliver, her mind filled with so many questions she was afraid it would burst. She didn’t really know what she was feeling, it was somewhere between confusion and understanding, numbness and love, fear and hope.

She needed to tell Oliver the truth. She knew most of the things that were torturing her mind would stop if they just sat down and had an open-hearted conversation about their past and feelings. The only problem? She didn’t know what she was feeling. She was an emotional mess, jumping from one emotion to the other within seconds. She had spent a lot of time being mad at her soulmate, for the way he had acted and now, she had a very hard time reconciling this person with Oliver, the man she had gotten to know ever since she had moved to Star City, who was someone she cared about deeply. She was aware they needed to talk, he deserved to know the truth but in the meantime, she didn’t feel she could tell him.

She stopped walking when she reached the bathroom. She stood in the middle of the room for a second, looking at her body, still clasped in the underwear she had borrowed from Thea. She stared at her reflection, at her hipbone where her soulmark used to be, at the ugly scar on her ribs, the four birds on her collarbone. She stared at herself, hoping to get a glimpse of what was in her soul.

“What’s holding you back Felicity?” She asked out loud, needing to voice her problems and struggles. “What are you afraid of?”

Her hand fell on her hipbone and she drew the outline of her soulmark, remembering perfectly the stark contrast of its blackness on her white skin when it had been there. The answer to her questions flew easily then. A mad man had tried to own her once. He had even carved his own mark on her skin with a knife. He had tortured and broken her in every way a person could be. And every day, she was fighting to get her independence back, to belong to herself again. In the end she was asking herself the same question people who were taking the Med were asking themselves: did she want to belong to someone? Or did she want to be free to make her own choice?

But was the choice real? Or was it just an illusion? Considering their strong connection, she knew there would never be anyone else for her to fall in love with. But what if she opened up her heart and took a risk? What if he broke it the same way her father had broken her mother’s? Oliver had always been a man who enjoyed woman’s company. He was apparently faithful to Isabel now, but it was mainly because it was what his parents expected of him. He was trying to please them. She wasn’t what his parents wanted for him, on the contrary. She was just Felicity, the girl his mother had had to pay off so that she wouldn’t be a part of his life. What would happen if he had to choose between her and his family? Would he choose her? She wanted to say yes, because of their bond and connection and because it was the twenty-first century and arranged marriages were kind of outdated, at least in the US. But what if he didn’t? What if he chose his family over her the same way she had chosen hers over him? What if she had lost him forever the day she had cut their bond? She didn’t want to expose her heart only to have it destroyed.

Shaking her head, she brushed her teeth quickly, did her hair and then went back into her room and put on her pajamas. She was tempted to just run away and leave everything behind. It would be an
easy way out, and she knew she could disappear without leaving a trace. But she also knew she
couldn’t go without leaving a part of her behind as well and that was why she didn’t succumb to the
temptation. And she had to think about her strained bond and the burn. Her doctor’s appointment on
Monday made leaving town even more out of question. She needed to figure things out on the bond
front before making any decisions.

Monday came slowly. Felicity had been left alone with her thoughts all weekend and it had almost
driven her crazy. She felt relieved when her clock rang early on Monday morning. She was happy to
go to work. It would occupy her, keep her thoughts from drifting. It was strange because she was
going to spend the day with her soulmate but it didn’t bother her since when she and Oliver were in
full business mode, nothing could distract them.

She thought it would be weird to see him, not only because he was her soulmate now but also
because they had shared a very intimate moment during the weekend. She thought things would be
“You kissed me on Friday night while I was breaking into your arms” kind of awkward. But them
being them, things went as smoothly as possible. They had a lot of work to do and it made it easy for
her to get lost into the job.

The part of Q. Inc which was mainly a subsidiary branch of QC’s applied sciences was doing just
fine and there wasn’t much work to do with it. No, what kept them busy was the second project
Oliver gotten himself into, the one his parents didn’t really know about, the one he had hired Curtis
for. This project was growing more and more; Oliver had hired two more people to assist Curtis and
they had made some major progress on two projects, one of them being the creation of an everlasting
power source, a battery with enough power to last a lifetime. At least, that’s what Curtis was aiming
at.

“You’re new reports sound very promising,” Oliver told Felicity. They were sitting in the conference
room, going over reports and data.

“Yes, very!” Felicity replied enthusiastically. “Honestly? This guy is a genius,” she explained,
rereading his report for the umpteenth time. “He’s applying the principle of cogeneration to the
power cell, it’s amazing.”

Oliver frowned. “I know we already talked about that cogeneration thingy but would you mind…?”

“Going over it again?” She guessed.

He nodded and she smiled, glancing at her watch. She needed to leave work early if she didn’t want
to be late at her doctor’s appointment. She still had some time ahead of her though.

“Cogeneration is the use of waste heat given off by electricity production. Ray Palmer had been
using it with Palmer Tech’s toward in New-York for a couple of months already and he’s been
helping the city by given away the extra-energy.”

Oliver tilted his head. “Ray Palmer? Why does this name ring a bell?”

“Because he is on your parents’ guest lists for their little party before New Year’s Eve?” Felicity
suggested.

“Yeah, right that’s it! By the way, you’re still coming?”

She sighed. “It’s not like I really have the choice, do I?”

“Everything will be okay, don’t worry,” he told her, giving her a small smile.
She just shrugged before focusing back on the report before her. “These results are truly amazing. You can be proud of yourself Oliver. This side project of yours is really turning into something big.”

“I’m glad, but it’s really important our projects for QC remain our priority. The company really needs us to be at our best.”

Felicity nodded. Sometimes, she had a feeling Oliver preferred working on his side project than on whatever it was his parents had asked him to work on. But then, he would remind her of what was really important. QC.

“Sure, you remember you have a meeting with the head of Applied Sciences tomorrow?”

He nodded. “I almost never forget about my meetings,” he reminded her.

“I like that you add the word “almost”. Otherwise, I’d have to wonder why you keep me around exactly.”

“Because my days would be sad without you?” He suggested.

She shook her head. “Are you using flattery because you want to ask me something?”

He chuckled. “If I wanted to ask you something, I’d be doing the cute thing with my eyes.”

“You’re doing it right now,” she objected.

“No, I’m not. It’s just my natural charm,” he added, his blue eyes sparkling brightly.

She rolled her eyes at him before focusing back on their work. They were almost done with the reports when she realised what time it was and that she really needed to go. She got up and Oliver frowned when he saw her.

“Where are you going?”

“I have a doctor’s appointment. I told you about it the other day, remember?”

Realisation came down upon him and his blue eyes widened. “Yeah, of course, I remember.” He slapped his forehead. “I’m so sorry I forgot. Is everything okay? I know I forgot about your appointment but I’m pretty sure you didn’t tell me why you were going to see a doctor.”

Felicity shifted on her feet uncomfortably. Indeed, she hadn’t told him she was going to see a soulmate’s specialist. She was even less likely going to tell him now. “It’s just a regular check-up,” she said, shrugging. “Everything’s fine, don’t worry,” she added, walking away so he wouldn’t see her face. She was a good liar, but not so much where he was concerned. She started to put on her coat and she heard him follow her.

“I’ll see you tomorrow then,” he said. “Tommy is coming to have lunch with us.”

She nodded, moving her ponytail from where it had gotten stuck in her collar. “I know. He texted me at least fifteen times to make sure I hadn’t forgotten.”

“Yeah me too,” Oliver said. “I wonder what’s going on with him.”

Felicity shrugged, wrapping her scarf around her neck and reaching for her bag. “I guess we’ll know everything about it tomorrow.”

“Yeah. See you tomorrow then.”
“See you,” she said, stepping inside the elevator. “Curtis wanted to see you before the day ends, don’t forget to come by before you leave for your dinner at the Allen’s,” she told him as the doors were closing.

He nodded and she barely had the time to wave her hand at him before the doors were completely closed.

She hurried to her car, not wanting to be late. She drove skilfully through Star City, trying her best not to lose her temper as she got stuck into the traffic. She let out a small breath when she parked. She was almost fifteen minutes early, exactly how she had wanted to be. She got out of her car and walked inside the hospital. She still wasn’t feeling comfortable in a place like this. Walking inside white hallways and smelling the usual smell of disinfectant and bleach always brought back bad memories. Memories of a time where she had been transported to a different hospital, shivering and in shock, her side disfigured. She paused in front of a sign, looking for the right department direction.

She made her way to the reception desk. A nurse was sitting behind a computer and typing very quickly. She immediately noticed Felicity though and a smile spread on her lips as she said.

“Good afternoon Miss, how can I help you?”

“Good afternoon, I have an appointment at five fifty with Doctor Lazarev.”

“Right, let me check the schedule…” Her eyes went back to her computer and she pressed a few keystrokes before saying. “Miss Smoak?”

Felicity nodded. “That would be me.”

“Okay, I’m going to ask you to wait for Doctor Lazarev in the waiting room and to fill this preliminary questionnaire. Please bring it back to me as soon as you’re done.” she added, handing Felicity a piece of paper.

She took it from her. “I will, thank you very much,” she said before making her way to the waiting room.

She sat down, nodding politely at the already present people. She got a pen out of her bag and started reading. There were all very basic questions and she had replied to all of them soon enough. She went to give the questionnaire back to the nurse and sat back down on her seat, her phone in hand, her Candy Crush app opened.

“5:37 pm

Any plans for tonight?

TQ”

--

“5:38

Doctor’s appt.

FS”

--

“5:38
BTW lost at CC bc of you.

FS”

“5:39

You sick?

#SorryNotSorry, I still have to catch up with you.

TQ”

That text actually made Felicity smile and she was typing a reply when her phone buzzed between her hands.

“5:39

Shopping tmrw?

TQ”

“5:41

Nope, I’m fine.

Kay, need a dress for your parents’ party.

FS”

“5:42

Pick me up at school? Have to study with friends for a test then I’m free.

TQ”

“5:44

Deal, see you tmrw!

FS”

Felicity locked her phone then and looked around her, paying attention for the first time to her surroundings. The waiting room was like a lot of waiting rooms, equipped with toys for babies to play with, chairs and magazines. She watched the advertisements on the wall but quickly turned her head away, one was about the importance of protection during mate haze induced sex to avoid
undesired pregnancies. She got the book she had packed out of her bag and started to read doing her best not to think about that poster. It wasn’t like she was ever going to experience a mate haze, right?

She was halfway through her book when the nurse called her name. She followed her to the doctor’s office, which looked exactly how a doctor’s office should look like.

“Sit right here,” the nurse said, “Doctor Lazarev should be here soon.”

“Thank you,” Felicity said, taking a seat.

The nurse left then, not without shooting her another bright smile. Felicity waited again, shifting uncomfortably again when time kept on stretching and the doctor still wasn’t arriving. Her stomach rumbled, reminding her she hadn’t eaten anything since lunch. The sound echoed in the otherwise silent office and she had to bite her cheek to hold back a laugh. Finally, she heard the door being pulled open and she turned in her seat. A man in his mid-forties walked inside the room, his steps determined and fast.

She got up and held out a hand for him to shake.

“Felicity Smoak,” she introduced herself.

“Doctor Lazarev, glad to meet you,” he replied, shaking her hand.

The burn roared to life in her body and the doctor didn’t miss her small wince of displeasure.

“It burns doesn’t it?” He asked, sitting down and motioning for her to do the same.

She nodded, sitting back down.

“For how long has it been burning?” He asked, skimming at the questionnaire she had filled earlier.

“Wow, straight to the point,” she couldn’t help but notice, putting a strand of her hair back behind her ear.

Doctor Lazarev smiled at her and it showed his dimples. “I know my patients can wait a lot sometimes so once we’re in my office, I try to make it up to them.”

Felicity chuckled. “That’s very nice of you. And to answer your question, it started burning a few days before Thanksgiving.”

He hummed, typing down something. “I see you’ve been taking the Med for four years?”

“Yes, it’ll be five years in March,” she added, wanting to be perfectly precise on everything, to be sure they understood one another properly.

“Okay, and your pre-bonding connection level was 8.8. That’s very high.”

Felicity felt herself blush, though she didn’t know why. “Yeah, I know…”

“I see you’ve answered yes to the question “Have you met your soulmate yet?” so I’m assuming you know why you’re burning then?”

She shook her head. “I only figured out who my soulmate is this weekend. And so no, I don’t know why I’m burning every time someone’s touching me.”

“Alright, we’ll get to that in a second, I just have one last question to ask you,” he paused for a short
second. “Does everyone’s touch burn?”

Felicity took her time to reply to that question, she needed to think about it, to recall all the moments she had been touched during the past few days. Her mother and Curtis hadn’t burnt but Thea, Sara, Tommy and John all had.

“Almost everyone,” she told him, confident in her reply.

“What about bonded women?”

Felicity didn’t know about every bonded women, mainly because she didn’t always know if the woman she was interacting with was bonded, but she did know Laurel’s touch hadn’t burnt her whereas Sara’s, who wasn’t bonded, had.

“I think they don’t,” she told him.

“It’s completely normal,” he told her, smiling reassuringly. “My question was really oriented, I was expecting that kind of answer,”

She let out a small relieved breath when she heard his words. After spending so many days worrying about the burn, it actually felt really good to be told it was “normal”. Sure, it didn’t fix the problem but it meant at least that nothing was wrong.

“So about the burn?” She asked again.

“The burn, right,” he paused for a second, adjusting his glasses on his nose. “You’re burning because you’ve been around your soulmate for a while long enough for you to start the bonding process.”


“The Med would work and prevent that from happening if your number was under 7.4. Unfortunately, the Med isn’t as efficient as people are being told, especially for high numbers like yours. In the questionnaire, you said your bond was never completely quiet. You could still feel it, that it was still talking to you, trying to communicate with you. That’s because of your high number.”

Felicity bit on her lips, fearing she was understanding where he was going with this. “So in concrete terms, what are you saying?” She asked, her throat tight.

“I’m saying extended proximity can start the bonding process of the people with the highest numbers, even when they’re on the Med.”

Damn. Exactly what she had thought he’d say. “So we’re starting to bond,” she stated confusion and panic filling her chest, her heart skipping a beat.

No. No. No. This couldn’t be happening.

He shook his head. “Yes and no. Sexual intercourse are necessary for soulmates to actually bond, I’m sure you’re aware of that.” She nodded immediately and he went on. “But usually, before soulmates get to that part, they try to know each other better, they spend some time together.”

“Yeah, that’s what my friend Georgia and her soulmate are doing,” she mentioned without thinking.

“Rightfully so. The bond is not only physical, it’s also emotional. And at the beginning of the process, the bond is strengthening. Growing stronger. And this is why you’re burning when you’re
being touched by other people. Your body only wants your soulmate’s touch.”

“When you say the bond is growing stronger, do you mean the connection strengthen as well?”

“Yes, usually the number goes up of one or two levels meaning that an 8.8 like yours is heading straight to a 10.”

A 10? A 10?!

WHAT?

“But… But…” She tried to protest, her words failing her, her hands falling flat on her thighs. “That’s the highest number,” she said, her voice so small, almost shy, she wasn’t even sure the doctor could hear her.

Doctor Lazarev nodded, giving her a sympathetic smile. “This is why you’ve had to take extra pills lately. The dosage isn’t working for your bond anymore, it has grown too much and your number has changed. I have to say, it’s the first time in my career I’m encountering such a high number. It’s actually why I wanted to meet you as soon as possible, I’m really concerned with your bond.”

She tilted her head. “Why?”

“There is a reason why the Med doesn’t work perfectly well on people with such high numbers.” He paused and she motioned for him to go on. “The reason is quite simple: some things are just meant to be. They cannot be strained, at least not forever.”

Felicity just stared at him for a short while, her head spinning. She had been given so many information, her brain had a hard time processing everything. She was feeling overwhelmed by what she had been just told. Oliver and she had already started bonding? What about Oliver? Could he feel it?

“What about my soulmate?”

“What do you mean?”

“What does he feel? Is his side affected? Does he feel it growing stronger?”

Doctor Lazarev stared at her for a few seconds, considering his next words carefully. “He has to feel something, but I can’t know for sure the exact extent of what he’s feeling.” She gave him a look and he understood that she needed more. He leaned down toward her. “If you allow me a childish comparison, maybe I can explain things better to you.”

“I’m listening.”

A fond smile stretched his lips. “My daughters are in a Rapunzel phase and this is where the analogy comes from. I’ve had to use it a few times already, that’s why it’s coming so easily to me.” He cleared his throat before going on. “Your side of the bond is Rapunzel, your soulmate’s is Flynn Rider and the tower is that phase where soulmates aren’t bonded. Rapunzel and Flynn can see one another, interact and sometimes, she can throw her hair at him and they’re close enough to touch but not to connect entirely. Are you following me?”

She nodded.

“When you take the Med, you’re cutting Rapunzel’s hair and taking her voice away from her. She can no longer reach out to Flynn, she can no longer speak with him or touch him, they’re completely
isolated from one another.”

“But they can still see each other, right?” She objected.

“Rapunzel can see him perfectly from her point of view, yes, but it’s harder for him since he’s stuck on the ground. His eyes are meeting concrete. Do you understand?”

Felicity chuckled. She wasn’t amused at all, her laughter was close to bitter but she was understanding him perfectly. “Your analogy is perfect, have you considered sharing it with your colleagues?”

He gave her a small smile. “A few times already, yes.”

“And where does the burn fit in that analogy of yours?”

He sighed. “It doesn’t, I’m afraid. You’re burning because your body is craving your soulmate’s touch. You’re affected by all men, because your soulmate is a man himself and feels threatened by everyone who look remotely like him. Exceptions being made of the men bonded to other men.”

“And what about women?” She asked.

“Well, you’re affected by non-bonded women because of your sexuality. You are attracted by both genders.”

Felicity felt herself blush. “I’ve never really thought about it… I mean, with women.”

“Oh don’t worry, it’s okay. Most people never think about it because we’re all naturally attracted to the people who are the same gender as our soulmate, and yet, our bond always feels territory around non-bonded and sexually active people.”

“What if I take a higher dosage of the Med? The proper dosage for a 10 and not a 8.8? Would the burn stop? Would the bonding stop?”

“It should work, but I’m afraid it won’t be permanent unless you get away from your soulmate too. And I don’t recommend you do that either. I truly meant it earlier when I said some things weren’t meant to be strained. As cheesy as it sounds, some people are just meant to be together.”

“I didn’t say I was going to do it,” she hurriedly replied, “I was simply asking a question,” she added, knowing she sounded a bit too defensive but not caring.

He paused. “Theoretically, it should work. But not permanently.” She chewed on her lips, her arms crossed over her chest. “Felicity, the connection you have is a precious gift, one that should be cherished not tamed. I don’t think you realise how rare it actually is. I’ve been studying soulmates ever since I graduated from high-school. It’s the first time I meet someone whose connection is a 10, or at least is going to be one.”

She frowned. “You said my number was a ten,” she pointed out.

He shook his head. “No, I said you were aiming toward a ten. You might not be there quite yet. Moreover the evolution isn’t a stable one and definitely not the same for everyone. Maybe you’ll just be able to reach a 9.5 or 9.6, we can’t know for sure.”

“And what about people being born a 10?” She asked.

He pinched his lips together, his fingers intertwined in front him. “That’s a really interesting
question.” He considered his next words carefully before saying. “People cannot be born a 10, it’s a myth. A very popular one, I’ll give you that,” he added when she opened her mouth to protest, “but it’s still a myth. Being born a 10 already doesn’t leave room for growth.”

Felicity leaned back down in her chair, feeling dazed. He had told her so many things, he had given her so much to think about, she was completely lost, she didn’t know where to start. Her shoulders went limp when she realised the true importance of everything she had just learnt. She felt like all her energy had been sucked up from her body as one question rose in her mind:

What was she going to do?

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)

Chapter 12 - I was wrong

Chapter Notes

Hey guys!!

Here's my new baby! I know it's been a while since I've last updated but... This chapter is insanely long and it takes time to write chapters that long and even more time to read them all over again and make sure they're okay. Anyway, thank you for putting up with me and the long wait, you guys are the best :D Also I wanted to thank for the support and all the kudos and comments this story is getting. It's as insanely huge as my chapters - which is saying something, I think.

Now about this chapter... I don't have a lot to say about it except that I think this is the most fitting song I've ever picked. And some scenes made me really emotional when I wrote them (because of that damn song) and that NEVER happens. I get emotional when I think about them, not when I write. Oh! And please do read the notes at the end of the chapter, I don't want to spoil it so I'm keeping some information for the end notes.

Happy reading!! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 12:

“Our love was in the hall

All packed in boxes

And I saw

What it was

That I had done

To you

I was wrong”

- Sleeperstar, I was wrong

Felicity had been through a lot of things during her twenty years of life on earth. She had had her fair-share of life-shattering moments. The first one being when her father had left her and broken her mother’s heart and the last being when Cooper had abducted her and held her captive for twelve
uninterrupted hours. Life and trials had shaped her into someone who could take care of herself alone and wasn’t easily surprised or scared. Until that moment in Doctor’s Lazarev office.

Firstly, she realised she had taken the news of Oliver being her soulmate fairly well. Once she had connected all the dots, once she had put together the pieces of the puzzle’s frame – she still had to gather the pieces to fill it – denying it or trying to fight it had seemed pointless. Things were the way they were, he was her soulmate and there was nothing she could about it. So she had accepted the truth pretty easily, knowing she’d figure things out like she always did, knowing she’d find her way out of this mess. But now, Doctor Lazarev had pretty much told her there was no escaping that truth. There was no way out for her, at least not one that was permanent.

To say it scared the hell out of her would be an understatement.

“Felicity, I’d like to take a blood sample if that’s okay with you and see where your number is at.”

Doctor’s Lazarev’s voice got her of her thoughts. He was looking at her from behind his glasses, his eyes gentle on her. Swallowing back the lump of emotions in her throat, she nodded.

“Do you know the procedure?” He asked her as she got up and followed him toward the exam table in the back of his office.

“Yes,” she replied, her voice shaking a little. Not only was she feeling terrible after what he had told her but she also deeply hated needles. She hated anything that could damage her skin.

“Are you okay?” He asked her, concern filling his eyes.

She didn’t reply immediately as they both settled down and she rolled up one of her sleeves, to expose her arm.

“Yeah,” she said evasively. “Just trying to process everything you told me,” she added.

He gave her an understanding nod, a small sympathising smile stretching his lips. “I know it can be a lot,” he said, strapping a rope around her arm before cleaning the area he was going to pierce with his needle. It was a small needle, the rational part of Felicity’s mind tried to reassure her. But it was a needle nonetheless, the very irrational part of her mind always there to worry her more than necessary.

“You should try to relax a bit,” he advised her kindly, when he approached the needle from her arm.

She took a deep breath and exhaled slowly, doing as she had been told. The needle pierced her skin and she chewed on her lip at the short but sharp pain that came with it. It was another gift from Cooper. She was scared of pointy objects, for example she had a hard time using a knife which didn’t have a round tip. Doctor Lazarev filled a small tube with her blood before cleaning the tiny hole in her skin and covering it with a small band aid. He walked away from her when he was done then, stopping in front of the table all his instruments were lying on. He put a bit of her blood in a small square device, pressed a few buttons before turning around her again.

“We should have the results in a few minutes,” he informed her.

She nodded, perfectly remembering the doctor who had performed the same thing for her in Vegas when she had been fourteen years old and in desperate need of a dose of the Med. The device beeped loudly after a few minutes and Doctor Lazarev turned around, checking the results.

“So?” She asked, her heard pounding in her chest.
“9.4,” he told her, his eyes wide opened.

Blood rushed to her ears and she felt her shoulders going limp.

9.4. As close to her former 8.8 as 10.

“For how long have you been close to your soulmate?” Doctor Lazerev asked her.

“We met in September,” she supplied.

“Plus 0.6 in the course of three months,” he said, calculating quickly. “That’s…” He seemed to be at a loss for words. “That’s incredible.”

She shook her head, not needing to hear how incredible or amazing her number was. “But taking the higher dosage of the Med will stop the burning, right? And slow down the bonding process?”

He frowned. “Yes, but I don’t recommend you do that.” He strolled to her and sat back down on his stool. “Felicity, your bond is very strong. And the stronger a bond is, the stronger it fights against the Med. But just like when humans fight, it can be injured. Sometimes severely. I know a couple, their number is 8.9 now but it used to be 7.8. One of them took the Med for a few years and when they finally found themselves they were unable to bond completely. They came here for help but the strained bond had been too damaged and there was no fixing it. Now, there is no telling it’s going to happen to you, but I do think you need to be informed of what the worst case scenario can be before you make any decision.”

Felicity chewed on her lower lip worriedly. “My soulmate and I have a really complicated history Doctor and I don’t know if we are what’s best for each other.”

“I have a device which says differently.”

“With all due respect doctor, a number, no matter how high it is, is just a number. I’m a real person with a complicated past, and so is my soulmate.”

Doctor Lazerev paused for a second, staring at her intently. “Felicity, I don’t think I’m the doctor you need.”

She tilted her head. “Excuse me?”

“Have you considered seeing a soulmate’s counsellor?”

Felicity snorted. “I’ve had my fair share of therapy sessions, thank you very much.”

He tilted his head slightly, the look on his face slightly reproving. “It could do you and your soulmate some good.”

“Is that what you recommended that couple you spoke of earlier do?”

He nodded. “That and stay together. To give life and nature a chance to fix what chemicals and science had destroyed. And honestly? I don’t want to have to give you that advice.”

“Have you already?” She shot back quickly.

He shook his head. “No. Right now, I’m only advising you to talk with your soulmate. Communication and honesty are the keys to success in a relationship.”

Felicity arched an eyebrow. “You sure you aren’t a soulmate’s counsellor yourself?”
“My wife actually,” he corrected her.

She chuckled slightly. “Maybe you were right when you said some things were meant to be.”

“I’ve been wrong about a lot of things in my life but this is not one of them. Talk to him Felicity.”

She nodded absent-mindedly and then they proceeded to go back to his desk. She paid him, thanked him for his time and all his precious advice before leaving. The moment the door to his office was closed behind her, she felt all her fears coming back to hit her, hard. She hurried out of the hospital, the sound of her heels on the lino floor following her, reminding her of where she was and what she had been told. She got into her car quickly, and pulled out of the parking lot, her hands trembling around the wheels.

“I’m saying extended proximity can start the bonding process of the people with the highest numbers, even when they’re on the Med.”

“They came here for help but the strained bond had been too damaged and there was no fixing it.”

“Some things are just meant to be.”

She hit the wheel out of frustration, angry tears rolling down her cheeks, leaving a trail of fire on their path down her skin. She felt her heart swell exponentially in her chest as if it was fucking done with everything and was now seeking a way out of the confinement of her ribcage. But just like there was no way out for her, there was no way out for it. She was stuck in this whole mess, in all over her head and sadly, all over her heart as well.

She didn’t know how she made it back to her place. Her tears, steaming and salty, were blinding her and her hands were clenched so tightly around her wheel, it was a miracle she managed to turn it. But she did it and when she was done, she got out of her car, slamming the door so violently, she heard the window tremble. The cold air of a December evening hit her, but did nothing to tone down the fire in her veins. It only made it boil under her skin and she impatiently locked her car. She walked away then, the angry sound of her heels echoing loudly in the night that had taken over Star City. She tripped on a crack in the pavement and tumbled over, scratching her hands and knees on the floor, her tights ruined.

Blood rushed to her ears as she held back a scream.

“Well isn’t that fucking great?” She said, through gritted teeth, taking off her shoes, since one of her heels was broken. She pulled herself up again, grateful that no one had been around to witness her encounter with the dirty asphalt.

Straightening her spine, she walked inside her building, wiping at her tears trying to get a hold of the swirl of emotions twisting her insides. She held no illusions about what she had to do now. She knew she needed to tell Oliver the truth, about her, about them. She needed to lay everything out, bare for him to see. But it scared her, it scared her so much it made her head spin and bile rise up in her throat. Because the man in front of her had nothing to do with the boy she had once been connected to. Would he understand her? Why she had done what she had? Would he still look at her the same after she told him she had accepted his family’s money? It scared her, she couldn’t see anything good coming out of that conversation. But it was time for her to have courage, and to face things as bravely as she could.

She reached for her phone, her hands shaking badly. She unlocked it, succeeding after three attempts, her fingers sliding up her screen. All she had to do was call him, ask him to meet her. It was quite simple.
Except she couldn’t do it.

She didn’t know how to do it. How to get the words out. The only thing she had ever been good at was running.

Running from her soulmate, running from Vegas, from Boston even from her own mother.

She could run now if she wanted to. Disappear into the night. It would be easy, so easy. Way easier than facing him.

She locked her screen again, her decision made. Without thinking about it twice, not giving herself a chance to change her mind, she rushed into her guest room, pulling her suitcase from under the bed, her hands still shaking badly. Coming back to her bedroom, she put it open on her bed. She started rummaging through her closet, throwing things haphazardly into it. Clothes, books, toiletries… She blindly piled them up in her suitcase, a torrent of tears flowing down her cheeks.

Away. She needed to get away, as quickly as possible.

But in her haste, she elbowed her jewellery box. It fell on the floor and her jewels were scattered on the floor.

“Damn it,” she cursed, kneeling down to put everything back in place.

Her heart clenched painfully in her chest when she grabbed her arrow bracelet. She paused, forgetting about everything, from her suitcase to her rumpled clothes inside of it as her mind focused entirely on the sparkling bracelet she was holding between her hands, the small arrow she had held on for most part of the last four years. She had bought it right after she had started taking the Med, on an impulse. She hadn’t thought about it too much back then, assuming she had done it just so that she’d have a little reminder of what could have been but would never be.

She played with it for a few seconds, her thumb rubbing over the arrowhead tenderly. It calmed her down a little, the flow of tears diminishing considerably, allowing her to see things more clearly, both literally and figuratively. Her soulmark had been erased by the pill from her skin, her mate banished from her soul by the chemicals, but she had been the one letting that happen. It had been her decision to take the Med. She had had her reasons, he and his family had pushed her to do it, but in the end it had been her choice. She had swallowed the damn pill down. And yet the day right after she had purchased an item reminding her of him. She had held on their mark for the past four years. She knew in her heart, she had never truly been able to let go and forget. And now she was on the verge of running again. But how could she run away from him again? The man she knew now had nothing to do with the boy she had been connected to.

She closed her eyes for a second, her eyelids fluttering. She thought about Oliver’s eyes, a perfect blue reminding her of the sea. She thought about his smile, warmer than the sun and always able to force a smile out of her. She thought about his arms, strong enough to hold her in a tight embrace which seemed like it had been made for her only and in a way, it had. She thought about his way of rubbing his fingers when he was nervous, his annoying habit to go on tangents about sports or his general tendency to take control of everything, as if he was a CEO even without his suit on. It reminded her of his dedication to his company, to the well-being of his employees or to his family’s legacy, all of these qualities which made her admire him more. She thought about how protective of Thea he was, of how much he cared about his friends. About her too. She could almost feel his lips on her forehead again, against her temple, in her hair, the raspy touch of his stubble following the softness of his kisses. She remembered his warmth, his hard chest pressing against her curves.

She hadn’t been able to completely let go of him when he had hurt her in the past.
How was she supposed to run away from him now that she’d seen the most beautiful parts of him?

And what about the other friends she had made in Star City? Thea, Sara, Iris, Tommy. What about them? Running away from Oliver meant running away from them as well. She didn’t want that. She didn’t want to lose the life she had built for herself in the city. She had nestled in there and she was happy, truly.

She had no idea how she was going to tell Oliver the truth but she knew now running was out of question. She simply couldn’t lose everything again.

She quickly put her bracelet on before getting on her feet again. She strolled toward her suitcase and emptied it slowly, carefully putting her things back in place, making sure her clothes were properly folded, her books perfectly aligned. Once she was done, she collapsed on her bed, near her empty suitcase.

She didn’t know how she was going to tell Oliver about them. Surely, blurting it out wasn’t the right way, but then, was there a right way to tell someone you were their long lost soulmate? She highly doubted it. But she knew, she needed to be cautious, to announce it properly, again if there even was a proper way to make such an announcement. She didn’t know how their conversation would go. She could guess they’d both have a lot of questions and the answers would probably bring either a lot of screaming and yelling or a lot of tears. Maybe it would bring both and the idea was quite repelling. They were going to fight, it was inevitable and the thought made her feel sick. She hated it when they fought. And what about his family? How would Moira react? She was probably going to be super angry.

Felicity frowned, sitting back on her bed, the thought of Moira bringing something else back to her memory.

James Wilde the mediator the Queens had sent her to get her to give up on her soulmate’s rights in exchange of money and a place for her mother in a soulmate’s clinic. He had made her sign a contract back then, a contract which precisely stated the terms of their agreement. What if she decided to terminate it?

Jumping on her feet, she rushed to the living-room and wildly opened the drawer where she kept all her important papers, bills and other stuff. She rummaged through it for quite a while before finally finding what she was looking for. She sat down on the floor, her back to the sideboard and went over the contract. It seemed quite simple, from the look of it but Felicity was no idiot. She knew, from her experience with computers that sometimes even the smallest and simplest piece could actually turn out being the most complex one.

Running a hand through her hair, she sighed. She needed help on this, the help of a professional, preferably. Chewing on her lower lip worriedly, it took her about two seconds to remember there was someone she could contact. Heading back to her room, the contract still in her hands, she reached for her phone.

She dialled Tommy’s number and waited for him to answer, still torturing her lower lip between her teeth.

“Lissy, hey!” He happily greeted her after picking up. The sincere cheerfulness in his voice made her crack a smile. How could she have thought about leaving a city where she had friends who obviously cared about her?

“Hey Tommy! I hope I’m not bothering you.”
She heard some noises on his side of the line then nothing. “No, you’re not bothering me at all, just got home from work. Had some late paperwork to do,” he quickly explained. “But then I guess you know what it is.”

She nodded. “Yeah, I’m your best friend’s EA, remember?”

He chuckled slightly. “How could I forget? Are we still on for tomorrow’s lunch?” He asked her, his voice strained, almost worried.

“Yeah sure, everything okay?”

“Yes, just thought you were calling to cancel.”

She shook her head, although he couldn’t see her. “No, that’s not why I’m calling. I actually could use some help,” she started, “juridical help.”

“What is it?” He asked her, his tone suddenly more serious.

“Well, to sum up things briefly, sometime ago I signed a contract with a mediator from the SID and I was wondering about how to terminate the contract. Do you think Laurel could do something to help? Or recommend someone?”

Tommy hummed thoughtfully before replying. “I don’t know. I mean, soulmate’s trials are not Laurel’s speciality but it doesn’t mean she can’t help with the contract. I’ll ask her tonight and get back in touch with you, is that okay?”

“Yeah, that’s perfect. Thank you,” she quickly added.

“But what about you Lissy? Are you okay? Are things alright with your soulmate?”

She bit on her lip nervously. “It’s complicated, I’m trying to sort things out.”

“Well, I’ll do my best to help you,” he promised her.

“Thank you Tommy, I truly appreciate it.”

“That’s what friends are made for. I’ll see you tomorrow then?”

“Yes,” she said enthusiastically. “See you tomorrow. Bye Tommy!”

“Bye Lissy.”

Felicity took several deep breaths after hanging up. There was nothing else she could do now, except wait for Tommy to get back to her. She raised up the contract, to see it better. It was just a few sheets of paper and dark ink and yet these two things combined had never looked so threatening. Sighing, she put it away, knowing there was nothing else she could do. She went to take a long and hot shower, staying under the spray far longer than usual, ate a quick dinner and headed to bed early, knowing she’d need a good night of sleep if she wanted to be able to handle another day feeling the burn anytime someone who wasn’t her soulmate touched her.

Their next morning at Q. Inc started with a meeting with some QC’s business partners, who were by extension Q. Inc’s. The reunion lasted for about two hours and a half and they talked about money, profits and investments, so much it made Felicity want to gouge her eyes out – there was a reason why she’d chosen to study computers and not get an MBA. But still, she stood quietly next to Oliver and took down notes, as she was supposed to. When they were done, she spent her time organizing
them for him.

It was only when Oliver cleared his throat that she realised he was sitting in front of her, half of his body resting on her desk, his fingers intertwined and resting on his knee. Her throat went dry immediately, because he just had to look ridiculously gorgeous, and the fact that she knew now he was her soulmate did not make him less attractive to her. Quite the opposite actually. She had never really lingered on how good-looking he was, because it would have been very inappropriate and unprofessional, considering how they were both friends and colleagues but now things were different. She was allowed to appreciate all his handsome maleness.

“JJ is wondering how “F’licity” is doing?” He told her, his head tilted slightly.

She frowned in confusion. “What?”

“Yesterday. Dinner at the Allen’s. JJ asked about you.”

She exhaled, her shoulders falling slightly. “Oh right, your dinner. Well, I’m fine, very fine actually, never been finer!”

It was Oliver’s turn to frown. “You sure?”

She nodded. “Yeah, why wouldn’t I be?” She asked then, her fingers brushing the strokes of her keyboard.

He shrugged. “What about your doctor’s appointment.”

She tensed up, her fingers freezing above her keyboard. She opened her mouth but found herself unable to say anything, his bright blue eyes having her pinned in her chair.

“Felicity?” He insisted, and when she heard the concern in her voice she relaxed slightly and pulled her fingers away from her computer.

“It was just a regular check-up. But the doctor still took some blood from me,” she added, showing him her arm where her vein was still blue.

He took a hold of it, his eyes caught by her arrow bracelet for a second before they focused on the blue mark on her skin. The bruise was small, it would completely be gone in a couple of days. Oliver stroked the skin there and she couldn’t help but giggle. He arched an eyebrow at her.

“I’m ticklish,” she explained.

A smile stretched on his lips before he said. “I think you’ll make it out just fine, Miss Smoak.”

“Doctor Queen, I do believe you’re right,” she agreed, smiling back at him – because how was she supposed to resist his dimples?

“Really Ollie?” A third voice said, coming from the elevator. “Playing the doctor’s fantasy at work, with your EA? I thought you knew better.”

Oliver immediately dropped Felicity’s arm, while she turned as red as a tomato. They both got up to welcome Tommy, who was grinning at them widely.

“You’re here early Tommy,” Oliver said, coming up to hug him.

“Well, I’m sorry,” he replied, hugging his best friend back. “Had I known I’d be interrupting something, I would have arrived right on time.”
He turned toward Felicity then and hugged her too. The burn came back, ignited by his touch but she clenched her teeth and bore with it. Knowing what was causing it made it easier for her to deal with it but still, it was a very unpleasant feeling, close to pain.

“You aren’t interrupting anything,” she quickly explained, before pulling back.

“Sure thing,” he said, winking at her playfully before becoming serious again. “I spoke with Laurel. She said you could come by her office tonight if you wanted to.”

“Why?” Oliver asked, turning to face Felicity.

She hadn’t expected Tommy to bring things up in front of Oliver and she found herself frozen in place. “Uh…” She paused for a second, straightening her spine. Time to stand her ground. “I need Laurel’s help on something, a contract I signed a long time ago. But I won’t be able to come by tonight,” she quickly added for Tommy. “I have plans with Thea already.”

He gave her a reassuring smile. “No problem, you can come by tomorrow night, Laurel won’t mind.”

Felicity nodded, smiling back at him. “Thank you.”

“What kind of contract?” Oliver insisted and his tenacity made Felicity want to bang her head against the wall.

Tommy looked at Felicity, letting her decide what she wanted to reveal, or not reveal in the particular case. She felt gratitude burst inside her heart, thankful for him being such a respectful friend.

“It’s nothing important,” she lied. “I’ll tell you more about it when I know more myself,” she said, and that really wasn’t a lie.

He watched her cautiously for another minute before saying. “Okay.”

Her eyes went wide. “Okay?” She repeated and he frowned in confusion. “Just okay? You aren’t going to push and insist and drive me crazy with your questions?”

He shook his head. “You just said you’d tell me more about it when you know more yourself. I believe you.”

A breath got caught in her throat at his words and she felt warmth spread inside her belly. She smiled at him brightly – how could she not? – and she heard Tommy sigh. “You two are really something,” he whispered, shaking his head.

She felt herself blush again and Oliver was prompt to orientate the conversation toward a safer topic. “Should we go to lunch already?” He asked.

Felicity checked her watch. They still had ten more minutes to go before their lunch break officially started. “You’re the boss,” she reminded him. “But to be honest, I’m almost done with the notes from this morning, so if I could just…”

He interrupted her, guessing what she was going to ask and gently said. “Go.”

She made her way back to her desk and quickly finished what she had been doing, Tommy and Oliver’s voices in the background. She didn’t listen to whatever it was they were saying, because she was pretty sure it was about the latest game of basketball but she found it nice to hear them laugh while she was working. Oddly enough, it was soothing.
She printed her notes and brought them to Oliver’s office. She put on her coat and wrapped her scarf around her neck before joining Tommy and Oliver. They stopped talking when she arrived.

“All done and ready,” she told them.

“Ah… We men always have to wait for you women,” Tommy deplored, faking a dramatic tone.

She rolled her eyes at him before turning toward Oliver. “Dig?”

“Went to get the car,” he informed her.

She chewed down on her lips. She didn’t like the wealth and opulence that came with the Queen name. It really something she wasn’t used to. She thought it was extravagant to have a driver taking them wherever they wanted because they were all very capable of driving themselves. Heck, Oliver was always doing it outside of his work hours! But she knew it would be ridiculous and not very environment friendly to take several cars to go to the same restaurant so she just relaxed and followed them silently to the black Bentley that probably cost more than her apartment. And she was barely exaggerating.

The ride was spent mostly in silence. Oliver was sitting next to Diggle, while Felicity and Tommy were in the back of the car. There was most definitely something odd with the black-haired man. He wasn’t his usual light-hearted self. His smiles were strained and he was fidgeting in his seat, taping his foot on the car’s padded mat. He was stressed, that much was obvious but his nervousness was rubbing off on Felicity. She couldn’t help but wonder what was worrying him. Tommy had been such a good friend to her, ever since they had met. He was her white-knight in shining armour and she didn’t want him to be anything but utterly fine and happy.

Tommy was the one inviting them apparently, although Felicity knew she’d insist on sharing with him at the end of the meal, and he had booked them a table in a small but famous restaurant within the city. The place was cosy and well-decorated, with wine red leathered seats and dimmed orange lights.

When they arrived, the waitress gulped when she recognised both Oliver and Tommy. Since she had started working with Oliver, Felicity had gone out for lunch with the two of them quite often and almost all the time, waiters and waitresses reacted that way to their presence. Felicity had long guessed it was bound to happen when the two incredibly handsome heirs of two multi-billions dollars company went somewhere. She always felt weird when she was out with them. They were just them, tall and confident, and she was next to them, small and geeky. She felt out of place, like she didn’t really belong. She knew it was just an impression, because they were all friends but she also knew how it looked like in the eye of the world. More often than not, she realised people stared oddly at her with their eyes always seeming to ask “who are you and what are you doing here?”

They sat down, Felicity safely tucked between Oliver and Tommy, Dig in front of her. He filled them in about how his son was doing while they ate their appetizers. Tommy barely spoke a word, still looking super nervous. The waitress came back to take their orders and that’s when Oliver, who had noticed something was up with his best friend, chose to confront him.

“What’s up with you Tommy?” He asked.

Tommy cleared his throat, before leaning down toward his coat. He got a small box out of his pocket and Felicity’s eyes widened when she recognised the familiar mint-green box from Tiffany. He opened the box and showed its content to her. It was a ring, a gorgeous ring with a platinum band and a sparkling diamond.
“What do you think?” He asked nervously.

She frowned. “I think Laurel won’t be too happy with this turn of events. I actually think she’ll be furious and maybe she’ll try to murder me, and damn that’s a scary thought! She’s a lawyer, she probably knows how the police investigates and the best ways to dispose of a corpse and…”

“Felicity!” Oliver cut her off, his hand landing on hers and pressing it softly while she heard Dig huff back a laugh and saw Tommy give her a look. “I think Tommy was simply talking about the ring.”

Oh right. The ring. With the sparkling diamond. Sparkling brightly even with the dimmed lights of the restaurant.

“Why are you asking me?” She questioned nervously. “Oliver’s your best friend, you should be talking about all of this,” she pointed at the ring, “with him.”

Tommy shook his head. “I need a woman’s opinion on this. Besides, Oliver wasn’t capable of picking a ring for Isabel himself, his mother was the one to do it so he doesn’t really have his say in the matter.”

“Hey, watch it Tommy!” Oliver warned him, sounding offended.

Felicity nodded slowly, swallowing hard. “Well, I don’t have much experience in the whole proposing thing but I do think it’s a beautiful ring and that it will look even more beautiful on Laurel’s finger,” she said, hoping her words would erase her little rambling from their memories.

“I want to ask Laurel to marry me,” he confessed, handing the box to Oliver so that he could have a better look at the ring.

“Well, that much was obvious,” Felicity teased him and Oliver nudged her. She rolled her eyes at him before focusing on Tommy again. “Is that why you’re all nervous? You have to know she’s going to say yes, right?”

He gave her a nod, but the nervousness didn’t leave his eyes, though there also was excitement shining in them. “I know but… It’s the only proposal she’s ever going to have and I want it to be perfect, unforgettable. I want it to be something she’ll remember for the rest of her life, I want it to be a memory we’ll share with our children with tears in our eyes and fondness in our voices.”

Felicity felt a lump form in her throat at the sheer honesty she could feel in Tommy’s voice. She had never heard him sound so unsure, he was always so confident and sure of what he wanted and what he was doing… There was something immensely sweet with him looking so fragile.

“You don’t have to worry buddy,” Oliver said. “The two of you are so ridiculously in love, I know whatever you do, it’ll be the best moment of her life.”

“Do you have any idea of when and more importantly how you’d like to do it?” Dig asked.

“Yeah, I’d love to ask her on New Year’s Eve. I already have a very good idea of what I’d love to do and… I’ll need your help guys.”

Felicity and Oliver stared at one another, nodding, before turning again to face Tommy. “You can count us in,” Oliver assured him, handing the ring back to him.

Tommy let out a small relieved breath and was quick to put the box back in his pocket. “Thank you,” he said.
“That’s what friends are made for,” Felicity reminded him, repeating the exact words he had spoken to her the previous night. “Now, I know I’m not an expert in the whole soulmate thing either but how exactly are you hiding this from her?” She asked. “I mean, bonded soulmates share thoughts and emotions. How can she not be suspecting anything?”

Tommy and Dig exchanged a knowing look. “We could try to explain it to you but,” Tommy started.

“But you can’t really understand it as long as you aren’t bonded with your soulmate,” Dig finished. “Isn’t that right Oliver?”

“Right,” he said, his voice wavering. Felicity knew why. He couldn’t know what they were talking about since he wasn’t bonded to his soulmate aka her. He was spared from having to talk further about bonds and soulmates by the waitress, who was coming back with their orders.

They spent the rest of the meal discussing Tommy’s proposal ideas before making their way back to Q. Inc. Tommy left them there to go back to his own office. Oliver and Felicity immediately put themselves back to work. They had barely gotten started when Curtis came in to steal Felicity from Oliver, needing help with something on his project. She was a bit reluctant to go with him at first but then Oliver nearly pushed her inside the elevator while Curtis dragged her after him and she decided to let herself be pushed around. Thankfully, he didn’t make her work on a computer, he just needed someone to go over his preliminary calculations. When she was done, Felicity went back to the executive floor, her mind full of ones, zeros, xs and ys.

She was greeted by the voices of Oliver and Thea, talking.

“Shouldn’t you be at school?” She heard Oliver ask.

“My history teacher was absent, so I thought I’d come here early and do my homework while waiting for Felicity. Where is she by the way?”

“Right behind you,” Felicity said, a small smile on her lips.

Thea turned around then and strolled toward her, her arms opened for a hug. Felicity let herself be hugged, rather tightly, in spite of the burn. It wasn’t really intense around the brunette, probably because she was family.

“I know I’m here early, but I promise I won’t bother you,” Thea wooed, stepping away from Felicity. “Any of you,” she quickly added, glancing at her brother, seeking his approval. There was something odd with him, he was… well it was hard for Felicity to put a name on what was wrong with him, but if she were to try, she’d say he was… Stiff. Which was weird because he had been perfectly relaxed when she had left. Has something happened while she had been gone?

He stared at his little sister for a long while before exhaling slightly. “Stay put and don’t disturb Felicity.” On those words, pronounced with a tone sharper than she’d ever heard, he started retreating toward his office.

Felicity tilted her head. “Uh… Oliver? We have to go over a few reports,” she reminded him.

He turned again, his lips pinched tightly. “Not today, I have other things to do. Something came up, it’s about our Russian facilities and…” The rest of his sentence died on his lips. “I have to take care of it.”

“Okay,” she said, still frowning.

He walked back inside his office and closed the Venetian blinds suspended to the glass doors of his
office. It was the first time he was closing them, in the few months they had been working together. Shaking her head, astonished by his weird behaviour, Felicity went back to her desk, Thea watching her carefully.

“What’s wrong with him?” She asked.

She shrugged. “No idea,” she said, her voice small. “He seemed fine when I left to help Curtis.”

“He was arguing with Isabel over the phone when I came in,” the young Queen said, dragging a chair so that she could settle at a corner of Felicity’s desk. It was big enough for the both of them to use it without bothering each other.

The name of the woman engaged to her soulmate made Felicity’s blood boil in her veins and her bond snarled unhappily. At least, she thought it snarled, it was hard to say since it was still strained by the daily dose of the Med she was taking. She hadn’t gone to buy the stronger pills, hence the burn when she had touched both Tommy, Dig and Thea. Her usual dosage still did a pretty good job at keeping her separated from Oliver. Well, in a way, since she was burning except when he touched her. But she was at least sure he didn’t suspect anything about them and that was perfectly fine with her. The only different thing now was that her bond was communicating more openly with her. Or she was understanding it better since she knew the truth. She honestly didn’t know which reasons she loved best.

Felicity occupied herself by responding to all his emails and by setting down the meetings they had previously talked about. She was often interrupted by Thea, who got her to help her with her algebra’s homework. Felicity didn’t mind it much, especially because just like her brother, Thea seemed to get things when she explained them. Maybe she had missed her vocation after all and should have become a teacher.

Oliver still hadn’t reopened his office’s blinds when it was time for them to leave Q. Inc. Felicity and Thea stared at one another not knowing whether or not they should go talk to him. They turned toward Dig for advice who encouraged them to at least try.

“Lead the way,” Thea said, motioning toward Oliver’s closed door. “Not in the mood to deal with my grumpy brother now.”

Felicity took a deep breath before knocking at the door.

“Come in,” Oliver allowed.

She did as she had been told. He was sitting behind his desk, papers scattered in front of him. He had loosened up his tie around his neck and rolled up his sleeves. She had never seen him look so rumpled at work and if she was entirely honest with herself, she’d admit it was really working for him. And her.

“You okay?” She asked.

“Yeah… No, it’s complicated.”

She took a cautious step toward him. “Want to talk about it?”

He shook his head. “I can’t, family business. What did you want?”

She nodded, straightening up and stepping away from him. “Just to tell you we were heading off. Dig’s staying though.”
“Right, okay. Tell him to go to, I’m going to be here for a while and I don’t want him to go home too late.”

She frowned. “Are you sure you don’t need help?”

“I’m 100% sure you can’t help me,” he replied and it hurt a bit. She knew it wasn’t his fault, that there were things he couldn’t share but still. The rejection stung.

“Okay then, we’re leaving. See you tomorrow.”

“Yeah right,” he said, already going back to the papers in front of him.

She walked out and closed the door. She told Dig what Oliver had said and the three of them left together. Felicity and Thea walked in silence to the blonde’s car. They hadn’t seen one another ever since the charity organised by Tommy where the young Queen had gotten drunk. They had talked through texts a few times already but they still hadn’t talked about what had happened. Felicity didn’t particularly want to bring it up, she wasn’t Thea’s mother or sister. But if her friend wanted to talk about it then she wouldn’t push her away as well. And judging from the way she was suddenly all tensed up and fidgeting, Thea very much wanted to talk about it.

They got in Felicity’s car and the blonde pulled out, Thea messing with the radio until she found a station playing songs which reminded Felicity of her night out in the club with Sara. It reminded her of the good parts of that evening, the dancing and the drinking, not the bad parts and that’s why it didn’t bother her to listen to them.

“Lissy,” Thea said after five minutes of watching Felicity driving.

“Yes?” The blonde replied, turning her head to look at her. She looked so small in her car seat, with her legs crossed and her traditional beanie on top of her head. That girl was always wearing either a beanie or a cap, it was quite fascinating.

“I realise now I haven’t really apologized for my behaviour’s at Tommy’s charity the other day…” She started and Felicity mentally high-fived herself. She was becoming really good at reading the Queens children and she wondered to what extent her bond with Oliver was involved in that.

“You don’t have to apologize to me,” Felicity was quick to reassure her.

“Well, that’s not true. My behaviour that night affected you as well.”

Felicity let out a small breath. “Honestly Thea, the only thing affecting me, worrying me, is you. I just want you to be okay and I think we can both agree you were not that night.”

The brunette nodded and Felicity glanced quickly at her. Her jaw was clenched, her fingers white because she was holding on her seatbelt too tightly. “I got into another fight with my mother and I drank because I wanted to… I wanted to piss her off.” She paused for a second then, looking for the right words to explain herself. “You might have noticed my mother is someone who loves being in control. She wants things to go her way and her way only.”

Felicity chuckled bitterly. “Don’t I know about that?” She whispered, not only thinking about Moira’s behaviour ever since she had started working for Oliver but also her behaviour when she had been sixteen and Moira had daintily deemed her unsuitable for her son.

“Well, a drunk me is not something she can control,” Thea stated bluntly.

“But you do realise you’re hurting yourself in the process, right?” Felicity asked her and Thea
nodded.

“That’s what Ollie told me the next day.” She sighed and Felicity felt sorry for Thea. Her mother may have been hard to handle when she had been younger but she’d never done anything she knew would hurt on purpose. Sure she could have taken the Med on her own volition, but she had been too broken to do so. Felicity didn’t know Moira personally but she sure as hell didn’t look like a broken woman.

“What were you arguing about?” She asked.

“About her controlling problem mostly, and the fact that she’s still handling my SID’s account.”

Felicity tilted her head. “I thought you didn’t want to meet your soulmate, to know who he was. You said you didn’t want to be with him.”

Thea shrugged. “For his own sake,” she reminded her. “But then a friend of mine pointed out he had a voice in the matter. It was as much his call as it is mine.”

Felicity felt pride burst in her chest and a bright smile spread on her lips.

“There’s no need to look so smug,” Thea told her rather dryly but when Felicity glanced at her, she saw she was holding back a smile.

“What happened with your mother?” Felicity asked then.

Thea shrugged. “She refused to give me the passwords to my account,” she shook her head. “God, I can’t wait to turn eighteen. Then, she won’t have any other choice but to hand them to me.”

“Then what? You’ll go after your soulmate? What if he doesn’t have a SID’s account?”

Thea shrugged. “I’ll give a final goodbye to my mother dearest nonetheless and be on my merry way. She’ll probably freeze my trust funds but who needs so much money to live anyway?”

Felicity didn’t know if she was kidding or dead serious. She looked really serious and it kind of worried her. “I’m sure Oliver would help you,” she said, her tone voluntarily reassuring.

Thea chuckled dryly. “For that, he’d have to stand up for himself and it’s not something he has ever been good at doing.”

Felicity frowned. What was she talking about? Before she could ask that question, Thea was already going on.

“I don’t want to end up like him, you know? Working for my parents, doing what they ask of me, even the most absurd and stupid things.”

Because Felicity knew Isabel wasn’t Oliver’s soulmate and he was marrying her because it was what his parents expected of him, she had no problems understanding the meaning behind his sister’s words. But she couldn’t let her know she understood, she’d promised Oliver she’d keep his secret.

Thea’s words worried Felicity a little bit though. She was postponing telling Oliver the truth about them because she wanted to know where she stood on a juridical point first. She knew telling him everything would be the hardest thing she had ever done. She knew they’d fight over what had happened between them but she also believed they’d make it. Mending their bond would be hard but if she’d learnt anything from their short time together, it was that they made a good team. A team good enough to achieve great things. And some parts of her actually believed in them enough to
think that someday, they’d be together. But that could only happen if he chose her instead of his family. And all of the sudden, she wasn’t sure he would.

“He’d have to stand up for himself and it’s not something he has ever been good at doing.”

Swallowing down the feeling of uneasiness that had risen up inside of her, Felicity turned toward Thea.

“I don’t understand your mother. Her story with your father is incredible. It’s fairy tale’s material and yet, she is controlling your SID’s account. Controlling whether or not you know about your soulmate.”

Thea let out a small breath. It took her a while to reply but when she did, her words made Felicity’s heart skip a beat in her chest. “A word of advice? You shouldn’t believe everything you read about our family in the magazines or online.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

Thea shrugged. “Can’t tell you. We all have our secrets after all.”

She orientated the conversation toward a more frivolous topic right after that and Felicity let her do so. She wasn’t ready to unveil more of the Queen family’s secrets. She had already enough in her plate with hers. But she did put that particular information aside in her mind, just in case.

“By the way, I’m buying your dress,” Thea informed her. “And your shoes and accessories.”

Felicity choked on own saliva. “Excuse me?”

“Yeah, for Hanukah.”

Felicity shook her head firmly. “No, it’s too much. I can’t accept. I refuse to accept.”

Thea chuckled. “Too bad I’m not leaving you the choice, right?”

“Thea…”

“Thea no,” Thea cut her off. “Please, let me do this for you. My parents’ party is a big deal and I want you to be the Cinderella to my fairy godmother self. Again,” she quickly added.

“Thea…”

“Thea, please…” And then she gave her a look, the very same look Oliver always gave her whenever he wanted to ask her something. Felicity turned to look at the road again, feeling her heart melt in her chest.

“Okay,” she eventually gave in. “But it will be the one and only time, do you hear me? After that, you’re done helping me out, okay?”

Thea gave her a mischievous smile that meant trouble. “We’ll see about that,” she said.

They spent a few hours at Carl’s, Thea had two dresses to pick, one for her parents’ party, another for her high-school winter’s ball and Felicity only one, but both the brunette and the blonde were particularly picky that day. They ended up eating Chinese take-out there, Carl feeding them with stories from the time he was working for a very famous designer house.

The next day, Oliver acted the same way. He locked himself up in his office, closed the blinds and
let her go about her business. Which was both weird and unsettling. Something was wrong, she could feel it but he was distancing himself so much, she didn’t know how to reach him anymore. He didn’t even come to have lunch with her, which he always did. He just got what she ordered for him, barely thanking her before locking himself again in his office. She ended up eating with Dig alone, which was fine with her, she enjoyed his company but still. She was hurt by his behaviour especially because she didn’t understand it.

She heard Dig chuckle and she looked up from her pasta box and from the piece of meat she had been torturing with her fork for five good minutes.

“What’s so funny?”

He shook his head, amusement making his eyes shine brightly. “You have the exact same sulking look on your face Oliver had when you were dealing with your moving out and barely speaking a word to him.”

She opened her mouth to say something but closed it.

“I’m not sulking,” she said after five minutes.

“Sure you aren’t,” Dig said.

She rolled her eyes at him and forced herself to be more cheerful. Whatever it was that was bothering Oliver wouldn’t last. He’d handle it and then move on. At least she hoped so.

She hoped for five whole hours. Then he walked out of his office, looking as rumpled as the day before and more tired. There were bags under his eyes and she felt concern fill her veins.

“Are you okay?” She asked, jumping on her feet.

“Isabel is coming back from Russia earlier than planned. She’ll be here by the end of the week and will divide her time between QC and Q. Inc,” he announced her.

The news had the effect of a cold shower on Felicity and crushed all our hopes for a quick problems’ resolution. Because Isabel’s presence meant trouble. BIG trouble.

“But… Why?”

“My parents have been negotiating an even stronger partnership with her company. She’s coming over to finalise the terms of the agreement.”

“Why didn’t you tell me about this earlier?”

He pinched his lips together and she saw his shoulders fall slightly. “It’s a recent development,” he confessed. “Things are fastening.”

She frowned. “Is that why you’ve been distancing yourself from your side projects?” She asked him. She knew Oliver had developed them and hired Curtis because it was something he really was interested in and a way for Q. Inc to become self-sufficient and in the meantime, prove to his parents he was a good businessman, could charm investors and build a project of his own. But lately, he had been more invested in the projects his parents had sent over to him.

He sighed. “Kind of. It’s complicated.”

He looked really tired, almost weary and Felicity couldn’t help but reach out for his arm. She
squeezed it slightly and he gave her a small smile. “Hey, you know I’m here if you need anything.”

“Yeah, I just…” He hesitated. “I know you and Isabel don’t go along very well. I don’t want you involve with her or my business with my family.”

“Is that why you quite literally pushed me to go with Curtis yesterday?”

“Yeah…” He scratched the back of his head. “This project it’s… It’s like our baby and I trust you with it while my parents keep me busy with other things.”

Felicity smiled when he called the project their baby. Because he was right. She had helped him develop it. She had helped him pick investors, she had gone with him to meet them. She had advised him on who to hire, she had been there to analyse data and explained them to him. The technologies developed may come from Curtis’ mind but the whole thing was their baby. She swallowed, hard, a myriad of emotions bubbling in her chest. She looked away from his bright blue eyes, chewing down on her lips. A moment like this made it hard for her not to tell him the truth. She felt the words press down on her lips, threatening to fall without her consent. But she couldn’t, not yet.

“Thank you,” she told him.

He nodded. “The day’s over,” he went on. “And you have your appointment with Laurel, so get out of here. No need to pull extra hours.”

“Yeah, right. Don’t stay too late,” she said, putting her coat on.

“I can’t promise anything on that front,” he told her and she just shook her head at him.

Laurel was working for one of Star City’s biggest law firm and Felicity got stuck in traffic on her way to her office, much to her displeasure. But she eventually made it and walked inside the building, which was lavishly decorated. She immediately took off her beanie, the weather had been very cold in Star City lately, taking in her surroundings. Everything looked impeccable, almost immaculate. Even the plants in pots were perfectly cut. She felt a bit out of place as she made her way toward the reception desk. A young man was sitting behind it.

“Good afternoon miss what can I do to help you?”

“I’m a friend of Laurel Lance and she told me it was okay to come by. Could you please tell me where her office is?”

He nodded. “Sure thing, you must be Felicity Smoak?”

“Exactly, I’m her.” She shook her head, her ponytail bouncing on her shoulders. “I mean, it’s me.”

He chuckled, obviously amused by her. “2nd floor, second door on the right.”

“Thank you very much, have a nice end of day.”

“You too,” he wished her, smiling brightly.

She found Laurel’s office pretty quickly. The glass door was closed but she could see Laurel reading a file through it. She knocked softly. Laurel looked up from the paper in front of her and smiled at her before motions for her to enter.

“Come in,” she said.
Felicity nodded and opened the door. In the meantime, Laurel got up to meet her. They greeted one another politely. They had gotten along well the few times they had met but they weren’t really intimate. Still, Felicity found it nice not to feel the burn when they touched.

“Felicity, it’s good to see you,” the brunette told her, smiling kindly.

“It’s good to see you too, and thank you really for agreeing to meet me. I’m sure you have a lot of work to do and…”

Laurel raised a hand to stop her. “Don’t mention it. I’m always happy to help a friend out.”

Felicity smiled at her and sat down when she gestured for her to do so. “How are you?” She asked, dropping her bag at her feet.

“I’m okay, what about you?”

“I’m okay too,” Felicity replied.

“So what brought you here today?” Laurel asked her, leaning down toward her.

“Hm…” Felicity hesitated looking around her. “Just before we get started, hm… Even though I’m not one of your clients, none of the things I’m going to tell you today are going to leave that office, right?”

Laurel nodded firmly. “That goes without saying of course. I’m bound by professional confidentiality.”

Felicity let out a small relieved breath. “Okay, great. So, hm, well…” Felicity stammered, reaching for her bag and pulling out the contract she had signed when she had been sixteen. “Four years ago, my soulmate’s family reached out to me and in exchange of money and a place for my mother in a soulmate’s clinic, they asked me to give up on my soulmate’s rights.”

Laurel didn’t even bat an eye at her confession and instead reached for the contract. She had probably heard crazier things in her career. “And now you want your soulmate’s rights back?”

“You could say that. I met him,” she confessed. “He doesn’t know about me but I know about him and our bond is strong. Crazy strong. Running away from it isn’t really an option anymore. It’s not that I don’t want to fulfil my part of the contract, it’s just that I can’t anymore.”

Laurel frowned. “If you could fulfil it, would you?”

Felicity bit on her lip. “Probably not,” she whispered.

Laurel nodded and went over the contract quickly. Felicity watched her carefully as she read it, underlining a few things here and there.

“Well,” she said after a while, “I’m afraid everything depends on your soulmate’s family. If you break your part of the agreement and goes to your soulmate without talking to them first, they could sue you.”

Felicity huffed back a bitter laugh. “We’re talking about soulmates,” she reminded Laurel. “What kind of judge wouldn’t decide in my favour?”

Laurel shook her head. “Felicity this isn’t about love, this is about business. If you break a contract, a judge can demand you give back what’s been given to you in the first place. And from what I’m
reading, it would be an insanely huge amount of money.”

“So what can I do?” Felicity asked, her shoulders going limp at the news.

“You could take a lawyer and get in touch with them but I don’t recommend you do that. It would look very aggressive.”

“Then what do you recommend I do?”

Laurel intertwined her fingers together. “Well, you could try to go talk to them yourself.”

Felicity shook her head immediately. “I don’t think they’ll listen to me,” she admitted.

“Then, you could get back in touch with the mediator they sent you four years ago and ask him to do his job. Mediate. Find a new arrangement. And if you don’t want to deal with the same mediator, I’m sure you’ll find a trustworthy one in town.”

Felicity considered it immediately. From a logical point of view, she agreed with Laurel. Asking for a mediator to help them find a new arrangement looked like the best solution. But Felicity had gathered enough about Moira Queen to know she’d refuse to allow her back in Oliver’s life. She had gone to great length to scare her away before, she highly doubted she’d see reason now. Especially if she had already picked a suitable woman for Oliver, aka Isabel Rochev.

Felicity pinched her nose slightly, suddenly feeling extremely tired.

“Felicity are you okay?” Laurel asked, concern laced in her voice.

She nodded. “Yeah… Just, you know, worried.”

Laurel reached for her hand. “You don’t have to. If your bond is as strong as you say it is then you have nothing to be worried about. Your soulmate’s parents will break the contract.”

Felicity let out a shaky breath. “My soulmate’s family…. They hate me.”

“They…” Laurel stopped herself, realisation coming down upon her. “I’m pretty sure I don’t want to know the answer to that question but… Who’s your soulmate Felicity?”

Felicity pinched her lips together, frozen in place. She stared at Laurel and she didn’t like what she saw in her eyes. She waited for a few seconds to pass, for her heart to settle in her chest, before saying. “You’re right Laurel, you don’t want to know the answer to that question.”

The brunette nodded, giving her an encouraging smile. They talked some more, about the technicalities of the contract Felicity had signed and then about everything and nothing at the time. When she left her office, Felicity wasn’t feeling any better. If anything, she was feeling more lost than ever.

Felicity had thought she’d have time to put herself back on track during the days before they all left for ten days of vacation on December the 23rd. She had been wrong, dead wrong. Oliver hadn’t been kidding when he had told her he trusted her with their side projects. He had been extremely busy with his parents and Isabel during those days and because of that, she had been extremely busy herself handling everything else. They had barely talked to each other in almost three weeks, Isabel taking up all of his time. The days she was at Q. Inc, she was already in his office with him when Felicity arrived, they went out to eat lunch together and when they came back it was to lock themselves in his office again. And the days she wasn’t at Q. Inc, either she or Oliver’s parents made sure he had a lot to do and very little time to accord to Felicity and their side-projects. Isabel was
using the “soulmate” argument to her advantage an awful lot and the blonde had been very tempted to put her back to her rightful place more than once but had always held herself back. She couldn’t say anything before she met with the mediator and they had an appointment settled for January, 2017.

It had been hard though, very hard for her to see Isabel and Oliver together. She knew they were just pretending, she knew it was an arranged marriage but still. It had made her heart clench painfully in her chest to see Isabel on Oliver’s arms, it had made her blood boil to see her hands all over his body and it had driven her bond crazy to hear her claim he was her soulmate. No. He was Felicity’s. The rational part of her mind knew Oliver wasn’t a piece of meat but the most primal part of her, the one controlled by her bond didn’t care at all. And the fact that Isabel acted like a total bitch to her whenever Oliver was leaving them alone hadn’t made things any better. He had been careful with that, always making sure to be with them but he had had to leave them a few times and whenever he had done so, Isabel had made sure to show Felicity just how much she despised her. Her condescending attitude had made Felicity clench her fists a few times. Even Mandy Miller in high-school hadn’t gotten under her skin the way Isabel Rochev had. But then again, Mandy Miller hadn’t kissed her soulmate – apparently, it had only happened because a few photographers had surprised them on a date night. Still. Yuk.

She had had a lot to do at Q. Inc and she had realized, much to her displeasure, how sad it was to work without Oliver. He made things easy for her, the same way she made things easy for him because they were complementary. What she couldn’t do, he could, what she could do, he couldn’t. And they were good friends, teasing one another regularly, sometimes bickering over the other’s annoying habits. It made the day go faster and the most boring stuff relatively fun to do. Facing everything alone, except for the five seconds it took him to apply his signature where it was needed, had been awful. But the saddest part had been that she had missed him. She had missed him while he had been only a few feet away from her and she had hated it very much.

And while Felicity had been busy at Q. Inc, she had been busy outside of the company as well. She had spent a lot of time with Thea. Things were tensed between her and her parents. They were arguing a lot, about her grades, looks and a few other stuff and usually she’d go to her brother’s place to escape her house but she didn’t go along very well with Isabel, that hadn’t surprised Felicity much, and so she had sought refuge at her place. She hadn’t dared going to Tommy’s, although he was practically like her second brother because he was living with his soulmate and she hadn’t wanted to bother their daily life. So Felicity had found herself spending a lot of time with Thea, at her place or at the library or at the movies’ often wishing she could do more to help her. And on top of that, she had gone out with her other friends, eating dinner at the Allen’s after watching JJ for them or attending her boxing classes with Sara twice a week.

She also had had to plan her ten days of vacation. Her mother was coming over for Hanukah. She would be arriving on December the 24th, the first night of Hanukah and leaving on January the 2nd. Felicity really wanted to make these days of vacation and celebration with her mother special. The previous year, they hadn’t really had a nice time. It had only been a few months after Cooper and Felicity had still been dealing with the aftermath of her abduction, nightmares, panic attacks and other delightful stuff. Tommy had invited them over for lunch on Christmas day, and she had accepted. Her mother had gotten along with all her friends when they had met for Thanksgiving and she knew it would be the perfect moment for them to exchange presents. Plus, Tommy had sworn to have their faith well-represented as well in his home. The only black spot was going to be Oliver and Thea’s absence. They were going to spend the day with their parents, sadly. She would only see them again at their parents’ party, on December the 28th.

So Felicity had been really busy, meaning she hadn’t had much time to think about Oliver and the
fact he was her soulmate. She had gotten back in touch with James Wilde, the mediator Oliver’s parents had sent to her almost five years ago and they had set up an appointment and that was about as much as she had thought of Oliver and the fact he was her soulmate. She was doing her best to avoid thinking about all of it because she knew once she started, she’d want only one thing: talk things out. And she couldn’t. Not yet.

Donna’s plane landed on time in Star City and the moment she saw her mother, Felicity regretted forgetting her sunglasses at home. She was wearing a bright orange form-fitting dress absolutely not appropriate for the snowy weather of the city. But she looked good, with her golden locks bouncing on her shoulders, her tanned skin and killer legs that seemed to go on forever because of her heels.

“Oh my beautiful girl!!” She said when she saw Felicity. “I’m so happy to see you!”

“Mom,” Felicity said, hugging her tightly. “I’m so happy to see you too.”

And she truly meant it. The last few days had been particularly exhausting, because of the situation at Q. Inc and because of all the things that were going on in her personal life as well. Felicity could handle a lot but at the end of the day, she was still a twenty-year-old who sometimes just needed her mother to hug her.

“Let me look at you,” Donna asked, pulling away from her but still holding on to her shoulders. “Oh baby, you’re so beautiful,” she added after a checking on her.

Felicity herself blush, her hands straightening her mother’s hair. “You too, mom. You look very good.”

They went to get her suitcase then, hands in hands. Once they had gotten it, they went back to Felicity’s place. Donna took some time to get herself settled in the guest-room, while Felicity sat on her bed, quietly listening to her mother happy chit-chat about Vegas and her job. It felt good to see her so happy and full of energy. It had been a while since she had last seen her like this, it was almost as if she was… Glowing.

When Donna was done emptying her suitcase, the two Smoak women settled down in the living-room, glasses of wine in hands.

“I like what you’ve done with this place,” Donna said, looking around her and humming appreciatively. “You’ve made yourself at home here.”

“Yeah, I did,” Felicity agreed. She had changed a few things since her mother had last been inside her house.

“But…” Donna looked down toward her glass of wine. “It’s a big place for a girl alone.”

Felicity arched an eyebrow. “What are you saying?”

“I’m saying maybe it’s time for you to find a boyfriend…”

Felicity froze. She hadn’t told her mother about Oliver, or that she’d met her soulmate. She had really wanted to, because she knew her mother’s advice could be precious and maybe help her out but it hadn’t felt right to tell anyone, Oliver needed to be the first one to know.

“I was thinking about getting a cat actually,” Felicity told her, not wanting to have the “boyfriend” conversation with her mother.

“Felicity,” Donna said, giving her a look. “A cat is not a person.”
“That’s exactly why I want one,” Felicity said, feeling a ball of anger form itself inside her chest.

“Baby, not all people are like Cooper. Or your father.”

Felicity raised a hand to interrupt her, her blood boiling at the mere mention of these two men. “Stop mom, right here!” She demanded harshly. “I don’t want to talk about that.”

Donna pinched her lips together, looking down her glass again. Felicity looked down too, her anger receding slightly.

“I just want you to be happy Felicity,” her mother told her then, her voice soft and soothing. “And you seem lonely.”

Felicity shook her head, chuckling. “How can you say that mom? I have a lot of friends.”

“Your friends don’t warm your bed at night,” Donna pointed out.

“Yes and that’s why I bought an extra blanket the other day,” Felicity replied dryly, making abundantly clear the fact she didn’t want to discuss that particular matter any longer. “Look mom, I appreciate your concern,” she said, trying to calm down a bit and soften her voice. “But I’m fine, really.”

Donna nodded, not looking utterly convinced. They moved from the couch after that and while Felicity reheated some pizza for, Donna made a salad. They sat down around the table, Felicity going over their programs for the next few days.

“You’ll be alone the night of the Queen’s party, sorry about that mom. It’s not really something I can skip,” Felicity apologised. She hated that she had to leave her mother alone, she didn’t know when they’d see each other again and she wanted to make the most of the time they had together.

“I know baby girl, you’ve already told me about it, remember? I’ve planned something to occupy myself.”

Felicity cocked her head. “You have? What is it?”

Donna cleared her throat. “I’m going out on a date hon.”

Felicity’s eyes widened and she dropped her fork in her plate. “You’re… You’re…” She stammered, at a loss for words.

“Going out on a date,” Donna repeated. “Yes.”

“But… How – when – who?”

“Well, it’s something I’ve been discussing with my therapist for a while now. He thinks I’m ready to explore new things, contact with other men.”

“But… Do you feel ready?” Felicity asked, completely astonished by the news.

Donna nodded. “Yeah, I do actually. I’ve met someone. We’ve gotten along pretty well and we’ve agreed to go out on a first date.”

Felicity stared at her mother, not knowing what to say. Her mind had just been blown away.

“Honey, could you please say something?” Donna asked after a while of silence, shifting uncomfortably in her seat.
“When I saw you at the airport, I thought you were glowing,” Felicity told her, smiling softly at her.

Donna frowned. “What are you saying?”

Felicity leaned toward her and reached for her hand. “I’m saying if the man you’ve met is the reason why you’re glowing that beautifully then I want you to go out on more than one date with him.”

A bright smile spread on Donna’s lips and with her free hand, she stroked Felicity’s cheek tenderly. “Thank you baby girl,” she said, her voice tight with emotions.

The rest of the day went by quietly. They only went out to go to the grocery store and buy all the ingredients they’d need to cook latkes and fried pastries as well as flowers for the next day at Tommy and Laurel’s. When they were done, they spent the afternoon cooking, following the recipes left by Felicity’s grandmother punctiliously. None of them were great bakers but they did their best, putting their heart and soul into their task. They talked about older times, when their family was bigger. It did some real good to Felicity, to be with her mother and to surround herself with her family’s traditions. A pang of emotion tugged at her heart when she thought about how she used to help her grandmother and how she’d always let her lick what was left of the dough. The evening, they spent it talking, humming songs and blessing and lighting up their Menorah.

The two bouquets of flowers, one for Felicity, the other for her mother, were delivered around nine pm. There was a card attached to each of them, but Felicity didn’t need to read hers to know who had sent them. She smelt the pink daisies’ sweet perfume, letting it engulf her. Reaching for the card with a bright smile on her lips, she eventually opened it.

“Felicity,

Thank you for coming into my life.

May you always be in the light.

Happy Hanukah.

- Oliver.”

She traced the outline of his perfect handwriting with the tip of her index finger, her heart speeding up slightly in her chest at his words. She pinched her lips together tightly, hoping to dyke the wave of emotions she was feeling rising up inside of her. In the end, it was Donna’s voice who brought her back.

“When am I going to meet Oliver Queen, Felicity?” She asked. “Tell me he’ll be here tomorrow.”

She wiped her eyes quickly, letting out a shaky laugh. “I’m afraid he won’t, he’s busy with his own family.”

Donna shook her head. “That’s a pity. Felicity, you have to organise a meeting with him while I’m here. You speak so highly of him and now he’s sending us flowers… I really want to meet him.”

“Well, I’ll see what I can do mom,” she said, the thought of her mother meeting her soulmate dreadful. It was easy to lie about who he was to her when he was absent. It would be less easy with him around. She was pretty sure her mother would notice something, she was her mother after all. Mothers had a super-powers around their children, they were always noticing everything.

The next morning, they both woke up really early. They had to get ready to go to Tommy’s place and they had also promised to bring fried pastries and more latkes meaning they had to bake fresh
They left Felicity’s apartment around noon. A cold spell had fallen on Star City and it had snowed heavily during the night. The main roads and accesses had been cleared up but driving was complicated nonetheless, especially because of the patches of ice. The path that lead to Tommy’s house had been partially cleared and Felicity smiled at the mental picture of Tommy, out in the cold early in the morning armed with a shovel to put the snow away for his friends. The snow cover was thick, and Felicity could only imagine how his garden looked. Something told her they’d probably end up playing outside at some point. Thankfully, she had brought spare clothes to change into. Just in case.

She parked her car and noticed Barry’s car was already there. A smile spread on her lips as her mother got the flowers for Laurel and half of the pastries. Felicity reached for the bag of presents in her car’s chest, and took the rest of the pastries. Heavily laden, they made their way to the house. It was Barry who opened the door to greet them, a squealing JJ in his arms.

“F’licity! F’licity!” He said, his small arms held in front of him, reaching out for her, his brown curls bouncing on top of his head.

“Isn’t that my favourite little boy?” Felicity replied, a bright smile on her lips as Barry stepped aside to let her in. She felt JJ’s arms brushed her sides and she turned around awkwardly, kissing his cheek soundly.

“Ah lipstick!” He giggled, rubbing his cheek to take away the sticky colour, still reaching out for Felicity with his free hand.

“Calm down buddy,” Barry told him. “Let Felicity breathe, she’s barely arrived!”

“But I want to show her what Santa brought me,” he pouted.

“In a minute JJ,” Felicity said.

“Lissy hey!” Tommy’s happy voice greeted her from the living room. In a second he was here, helping her out with the presents and taking the pastries from her mother’s hands.

“Tommy! Merry Christmas!” She told him, hugging him tightly in spite of the burn.

It was unpleasant and she knew it would grow more unpleasant throughout the day. There was no way she could avoid touching her friends on Christmas day but she was determinate not to let that ruin her day the way it already had in the past. Knowing what caused the burn helped her because she knew nothing was wrong with her.

“Happy Hanukah Felicity, I’m glad you’re here.”

“I’m glad to be here too!”

He winked at her, before greeting her mother properly as well. Laurel and Iris joined them and Donna offered the flowers they had bought the day before to Laurel. Felicity hugged Iris first, she was looking as beautiful as ever, before turning toward Barry and hugging him as well, taking JJ from his arms in the process. The little boy practically leaped into her arms and when he wrapped his little arms around her neck to hug her, she couldn’t help but let her head fall against his, the characteristic smell of babies’ shampoo, soap and cream filling her nose.

“Daddy told me not to say Merry Christmas. He said to say Happy Hanukah,” he actually had to pronounce it thrice before getting it right. “So Happy Hanukah F’licity.”
“Thank you JJ, Merry Christmas to you. Did Santa bring you your presents already?”

He nodded firmly. “Yes, but I think Santa is too old.”

Felicity frowned, while everyone around them quietened to listen to his reedy voice. “Why would you say that?” She asked while he played with one of her curls.

“Uncle Tommy said he brought something for me here too because he had forget to leave it under the tree.”


“If Santa is getting too old to be Santa, who is going to bring me presents next year?”

Felicity chewed on her lips, looking for the right answer. She adjusted JJ’s position her hip before saying. “Santa’s not getting too old JJ, he just brought you something here so that you’d have a present to open with all of us.”

“But uncle Tommy said he forgot it…” He argued stubbornly.

“Uncle Tommy made a mistake,” Felicity shot back. “It’s been a while since he was a little boy and he doesn’t remember how Santa operates well.”

“Hey!” She heard Tommy protest. “Are you calling me old?”

She nodded, grinning proudly and everyone in the room burst out laughing. “And if you want to know the whole truth,” Felicity went on as they all moved to the living-room, while Laurel went to the kitchen with Iris, “Santa brought presents at my house for you too. He knows I’m your friend and he trusted me to give them to you.”

“I made a drawing for you F’licity. I’ll go get it!”

JJ wiggled for Felicity to put him down then and as soon as she did, he ran away. She watched him go fondly when she felt Tommy stood next to her.

“How are you Lissy?” He asked.

“Good, you?”

“Good too,” he replied, giving her a small smile.

She hesitated for a second before asking. “Your father?”

“I saw him yesterday, we ate lunch together. And he took the company’s jet today to spend Christmas out of the country.”

“I’m sorry,” she said, pressing his arm tenderly, in an attempt to comfort him.

“Don’t be, it’s been like that for a while. I’m used to him not being here.”

She shook her head. “We both know it’s not something a child ever gets used to.”

He nodded, pulling her in for a hug no more words needed. They both knew how it felt not to have their father around.
“Are you guys okay?” Barry asked them then, putting a hand on Felicity’s shoulder. It enhanced the burn, already burning hotter because of Tommy’s hug but she gritted her teeth and didn’t let anything get noticed.

“Yeah, we were just talking about…” Tommy lowered his voice. “Fathers.”

Barry’s shoulders went limp. “I visited mine at the soulmate’s clinic this morning.”

Felicity felt for him. It was something they often talked about, his father and how he was doing at the clinic. Felicity knew exactly what Barry was going through and she could sometimes understand him better than Iris. She obviously couldn’t support or comfort him the way she could, but she did understand him. Sometimes he barely had to say a few words before she interrupted him, knowing exactly what was going on and she found herself more often than not offering him advice based on her own experiences with her mother.

She gave him a small smile, squeezing his hand softly. His father still had a long way to go before he could celebrate Christmas with him again. But he would eventually, just like Felicity’s mother was there to celebrate Hanukah with her.

They were interrupted by the door opening again and the arrival of Sara and her father, Quentin, and soon enough, they were all standing in the living-room, drinking the aperitif and talking loudly. Felicity played a little bit with JJ, who showed her his brand new remote-controlled car while Tommy and Barry put the presents brought by Santa at other people’s places under the Christmas tree. Yeah, next year, they’d have to prepare this part of the celebrations better.

Felicity and JJ had followed the car in the entryway when they heard the bell ring. They exchanged a surprised look. Felicity turned toward the living-room’s door and saw Tommy on his way to her. He motioned for her to open the door. She did it and her eyes widened when she saw who was waiting on the other side.

Thea and Oliver.

A smile spread on the brunette’s lips when she saw Felicity and she launched herself in her arms.

“Happy Hanukah Lissy!” She said happily.

The blonde’s arms automatically wrapped around her neck, her eyes still wide opened.

What were they doing here? What was going on? Had something happened?

“Merry Christmas Thea,” she whispered in her ears, her eyes glued to Oliver.

He was looking as handsome as usual but there was something wrong with him. There were bags under his eyes and he wasn’t holding himself up the way he usually did. His shoulders were limp and the look on his face, sad, preoccupied, until JJ jumped in his arms.

“Uncle ‘Liver!” He shout, clapping his hand happily.

“Hey buddy!” He replied, high-fiving him, a smile illuminating his face a little bit.

“Ollie! What are you doing here?” Tommy asked, a smile stretching his lips at the sight of his best friend. “And Speedy, you’re here too!” He added when Thea pulled away from Felicity.

“Party sucked at the Queen mansion,” she explained, letting him pull her in for a hug. “And when I left, my brooding brother decided to tag along.”
“I’m not brooding,” Oliver said through gritted teeth.

“Whatever,” Thea replied, letting go of Tommy. She gave her brother a weird look, shaking her head in disapproval before walking inside the house. “Hey Laurel! It’s been a while!” She enthusiastically greeted their host.

“C’me on F’licity! Say hi to Uncle ‘Liver.”

“Oliver,” she corrected JJ, raising up on her toes to kiss his nose. “Hi,” she added turning to face Oliver. “You okay?” Now that she was closer to him, his weariness was even more flagrant. But he did his best to chase it away and he gave her a small smile nonetheless.

“Yes, I’m fine,” he lied and she didn’t hold it up against him. She understand it wasn’t the time nor the place to talk.

“Come on, let’s get inside,” Tommy encouraged them all. “It’s cold here.”

Oliver nodded and they all walked inside the house, Tommy closing the door behind them. “I’m sorry we’re showing up unexpectedly.”

Tommy shook his head, raising a hand to stop him. “None of this with me buddy. You know you’re always welcomed in my house.”

“Mommy, daddy, look!” JJ said when they reached the living-room again. “Uncle ‘Liver is here.”

Felicity glanced at her mother, waiting not so patiently for her reactions. Donna didn’t disappoint. Her eyes widened when she saw Oliver and while she had been talking animatedly to Laurel and Sara’s father just a minute ago, she was now utterly silent. Felicity bit her lip when she saw her check him out. It was typical of her mother, she had taken that habit in Vegas’ casinos.

Shaking her head, Felicity stepped in, ready to make the presentation but JJ beat her to it.

“IT’s Felicity’s mommy,” he explained. “And this is Uncle ‘Liver,” he went on, patting his chest lightly – and the sight of Oliver holding a child was so insanely cute, it made Felicity’s heart fluttered in her chest.

Felicity huffed back a laugh. “My boss,” she added.

“And friend,” Oliver completed. “Mrs Smoak, it’s a pleasure to finally meet you.”

The word “Mrs” seemed to get Donna out of her reverie and she said, shaking his hand firmly. “Oh my god, please call me Donna. Mrs Smoak was my mother!”

“Okay… Donna,” he added, flashing her a bright smile and when Donna blushed slightly, Felicity could help but laugh for good.

Felicity found herself stuck between the Queen siblings when it was time to sit down to eat. The blonde didn’t mind it one bit, on the contrary. Being close to Oliver alleviated the pain of the burn and Thea kept cracking jokes in her ear. The meal went smoothly, the food was delicious, the wine tasty and the conversation flew lightly between all of them.

They went back to sit in the living-room after the dessert. Iris had put JJ to sleep, he had stayed up late the night before to try to catch Santa and needed to rest. They’d wait for him to open the presents. Tommy turned the TV on and they watched a Christmas movie while drinking warm wine, still talking. Thea and Sara were even playing a game of War. And the brunette was totally kicking
the blonde’s ass. Barry talked Felicity into a game of chess, which she won. It’s only when she walked up from the board that she noticed Oliver wasn’t anywhere in sight. She had been watching him carefully the whole afternoon long, worrying about him. He had tried to put on a good face for everyone but she had known better. His smiles had been strained, his laughter constricted.

Taking advantage of the fact that everyone was still talking or deeply invested in the movie, she discreetly got out of the room and went looking for him. When she noticed his coat was missing from the coat rack, she reached for her own, trading her heels for the spare moon boots she had brought with her. She opened the door, as silently as possible and got out.

It was still cold outside, but it had stopped snowing – it had started again while they had been eating. Felicity buried her hands in her pocket and hunched her shoulders, trying to keep herself as warm as possible. It was a lost cause, she could already feel the tip of her nose get colder and the bite of the freezing wind was making the skin of her cheeks sting. She went around the house until she reached the garden and found Oliver sitting on the swing set, staring at the immaculately white snow, only ruined by the tracks of his feet.

She made her way to him, the snow squeaking under her feet.

“Hey!” She said, her voice soft. She didn’t want to disturb the perfect calmness that had taken over the place.

He didn’t look up to meet her eyes, too deeply lost in his thoughts and so she decided to sit down next to him. She put the snow away from the seat in front of her and then sat down, gasping when she felt the wetness and the coldness of the seat come in touch with her coat and through it, her butt.

“Damn, it’s cold,” she cursed.

“Go back inside Felicity.”

His voice was rough, beseeching. It made her heart skip a beat in her chest.

“Not until you tell me what’s wrong with you. And don’t say nothing,” she added just as he was saying it.

“Nothing.”

She reached for his hand but he took it away from her and it both hurt and worried her more.

“Oliver, what’s going on? I’ve never seen you like this before. Is it because of Thea and your parents?”

He didn’t answer right away. She let him take his time, because of how much she hated being pushed to talk herself. “If I was smart, I’d say yes and you’d get off my back.” His words stung more than the cold did and she looked down toward her hands stuck in her coat. “But it seems that I’m not smart because yes, I’m upset by what’s happening between Thea and my parents but it’s not… It’s not the main reason.”

“Then what is?” She insisted.

“My parents have decided to fasten my wedding to Isabel. We’ll be wed before February.”

Felicity’s heart stopped beating in her chest. Then it started again, coming back with a revenge, pounding loudly against her ribcage. She felt blood rushed to her ears and her fists tightened in her pockets.
“You don’t sound so happy about that,” she managed to say, doing her best to hide how the news was affecting her.

He sighed, tilting his head slightly, still not looking at her. She was grateful for that because she didn’t know how she could have lied to his eyes. “Well, it makes it more real I guess. I knew it was coming, obviously but now it’s happening and… I can’t help but wish I had more time.” She opened her mouth to say something but he went on before she could do so. “I know it’s what needs to be done, and I’ll do it, but… I wish I hadn’t received the news on Christmas day. It really isn’t what I asked for to Santa.”

Felicity felt her throat tightened with emotions as her brain was sent into overdrive by his words.

“I know it’s what needs to be done.”

He had told her he was marrying Isabel because it was what his parents expected of him but his words seemed to carry more meanings. As if there was something else, something more, bigger at stakes. She wondered where she fit into all of this, if he really needed her in his life after all. She was starting to fear she was actually going to be a huge complication.

But right now, she didn’t care about herself. She only cared about him.

“Are you sure you’re happy with all of this Oliver?” She asked, trying to hide her eagerness. From the moment she’d seen him, she’d felt it rise inside of her, that visceral need to make sure he was okay, happy.

“I’m as happy as I’ll ever be,” he told her. “Isabel and I came to an understanding, an arrangement of some sorts which makes things work between us.”

“What about her soulmate?”

He shrugged. “She never speaks of him but I know she isn’t taking the Med and they’re bonded.”

Felicity’s blood froze in her veins and it wasn’t because of the weather. How could someone be bonded to their soulmate and yet accept to marry someone else? And how could said soulmates be okay with it? It was beyond her, completely. But then again, maybe she was too young, too naïve to understand what was truly at stakes.

“And what about your soulmate?”

The words fell from her lips before she could hold them back. He stiffened and for a second, she wished he’d tell her it was none of her business, that she should stop asking him questions about his personal life. And when he did not, when he remained silent and the weight of her words became significantly heavier between them, she felt the muscles in her body tense up.

“I haven’t spoken of her in a very long time,” he told her.

She bit on her lips, distracting herself with a seam of her coat. Of course he hadn’t spoken of her. She had been taking the Med for a while now, and before that he hadn’t really cared about her. Why would he speak of someone he didn’t care about?

“Would you like to do it now?” She heard herself say and god what was wrong with her mouth? She didn’t want to hear him talk about her.

“I just…” He paused, turning around to look at her for the first time since she had found him. “I don’t want you to look at me any differently.”
She saw the fear in his eyes just as much as she heard it in his voice and she felt a lump of emotions form in her throat. “I won’t, I promise,” she said, reaching for his hand. They were both wearing gloves, making the skin to skin contact impossible, but she was hoping her touch would comfort him nonetheless, reassure him somehow.

“My soulmate has been taking the Med for four years. It’ll be five years in March.” He paused for a long minute, looking away from her to stare at the snow covering the ground, letting go of her hand in the process. “She’s lost to me forever and I’m the only one to blame for it,” he confessed.

“Why would you say that?” She asked, managing to keep her voice from trembling without knowing how.

“When I was a teenager, I was just like Thea, always fighting with my parents. They wanted to control everything: what I was wearing, what sport I should be practising, what I was going to study and where, what my job would be… It was driving me crazy and just like Thea now, I looked for a way to escape them. I wanted to have something in my life they had no power over.”

“So what did you do?” She asked even though she already knew the answer.

“I partied, I did drugs. Tommy was with me through it all, because he had some issues with his own father he wanted to forget. We got so drunk and so high together we couldn’t even remember our own names. And it felt fucking great, especially when I dropped out from four colleges. You should have seen the look on my parents’ face,” he chuckled bitterly, shaking his head, “it was priceless. I didn’t care that I was hurting myself back then. All I cared about was being a huge disappointment to my family. I wanted to take what they wanted for me away from them the same way they had taken what I wanted for myself away from me.” He kicked in the snow, obviously upset by what he was telling her, by his former self and she almost asked him to stop if it was too much for him. Almost. “That’s why I accepted to join the anti-soulmate group. You know my parents’ story is incredible. The way they met, how the arranged marriage turned out to be a soulmate’s marriage,” he chuckled bitterly. “You have to understand Felicity, I was a total jerk back then, looking at the best way to piss off my parents. And what better way to piss off a famous couple of soulmates than give the finger to my own soulmate and sleep around?”

Felicity looked down toward her shoes, her blonde curls falling to partly hide her face. She was feeling cold, inside and outside. She wouldn’t have been hurting more, had she been slapped. And the worst part of all was that she wasn’t only hurting for herself, she was also hurting for him. Because his pain was evident in his voice, just like his disgust for his younger self.

“I was torn between love and hate with my soulmate,” he told her. “I didn’t take the Med, unlike Tommy, because her life was shitty and I knew she needed my help. I didn’t care she was my soulmate. To me she was just a little girl I was stuck with. She was younger than me, much younger and she reminded me of Thea and in the end, I guess that’s why I stayed and helped her as best as I could.” Felicity chewed down on her lower lip, hard, to keep from crying. “I knew I was hurting her when I was sleeping with other girls,” Oliver went on, “but I didn’t care. I thought she should consider herself lucky I wasn’t taking the Med and sticking around.” He paused for a second and Felicity didn’t need to see his face to know he was keeping himself from crying as well. “My soulmate was strong. She wasn’t giving up on anything and the greater she was, the worst I felt. She was going through things much worse than me and yet she was doing better. I felt like a failure next to her, she was making me realise how much of a screw-up I was and instead of trying to make a better man out of myself, I just spiralled further down. I partied more, drunk more, slept with more girls.”

“Why…” Felicity had to stop for a second, to gather herself up. “Why didn’t you try to draw some
strength from her? Why didn’t you let her help you?” She had thought he’d been partying because he had wanted to. She had never suspected any of this. She had been so engrossed in her own struggles and problems, she hadn’t realised he’d been going through a lot as well and she felt terrible for it. She had failed him, just like he had failed her.

“I honestly don’t know.”

She took a deep breath and she felt the lump in her throat loosen up a little bit. She straightened herself up, and brushed her hair away from her face. “What happened then?” She asked.

“One day, she started acting weird. At least her emotions started to. They darkened. I felt anger and resentment, pain and fear. I wasn’t used to those with her, especially not directed at me. They started distancing themselves from me. She was always everywhere,” he pointed at his heart and head, “vibrant, brilliant. And suddenly she started fading away. That’s when I realised she wanted to take the Med and I freaked out.” He paused for a second. “It’s funny how the prospect of losing something makes you realise how important it is to you.”

“You didn’t want her to take the Med?”

“Hell no! I wanted her to stay. I knew she was living in Vegas, I went there for my twenty-first birthday and we almost met in a casino, so I decided to go find her and stop her. I didn’t even think about it, I just jumped in my car and…”

Felicity stiffened at his words and her heart sped up in her chest.

No.

Blood rushed to her ears and her hands started shaking in her pockets.

She had started taking the Med four years ago. He had almost been killed in a car accident four years ago.

She shook her head, refusing to entertain the idea that maybe she…

No.

“I was on the highway when she took it. It felt… I can’t describe you the pain I felt when she swallowed that damn pill. It was both physical and emotional and it was most definitely the worst thing I’d ever felt in my entire life.”

Her shoulders went limp and she felt her lower lip tremble. “That’s why you lost control of your vehicle and had your car accident?”

He nodded and reached for his glove. He took it off and reached for her hand. “Remember that scar?” He asked her.

She gave him a nod, not trusting her voice. She was doing her best to avoid his gaze as well, not wanting him to see her eyes welled up with tears.

“I kind of lied to you about it,” he explained. “I didn’t get in the car accident. I got it after, when I punched a mirror in the hospital.” He paused. “When I realised she had walked out of my life and I had been the one to show her the way to the door and then push her away.”

Her fingers shaking slightly, she traced the outline of the small scar she had noticed a long time ago when they had been sitting on her couch, back in her rabbit hutch. It was because of her. She had
done that to him. Not only had she been blind to his problems but she had also almost killed him. She had failed him on so many levels, it was making her head spin. Her heart was aching in her chest as she realised how much she had hurt him. And the worst part of it was that he was blaming himself for everything. He didn’t know the role his family had played and they had let him carry the guilt on his shoulders not caring about him or his feelings.

For the first time in years, she felt the weight of the four small birds tattooed on her collarbone weigh down on her. She felt the weight of the years on her shoulders. And it was heavy, god, so heavy, it made it hard for her to breathe. And oddly enough, her side of the bond was silent.

Completely and utterly silent.

“Oliver, I’m…”

They both would never know what she’d been about to say because Tommy’s voice echoed in the silence of the garden.

“Guys! We’re opening the presents!”

Felicity didn’t want to move. She didn’t want to go and open presents. She wanted to curl up into a ball and cry until there was nothing left inside her body.

“We’re coming,” Oliver replied, getting on his feet and putting his glove back on. Tommy nodded and closed the window he had opened to talk to them. “Felicity?” Oliver called when he realised she wasn’t following him. “Felicity?” He said again, walking back to her.

She shook her head. “Yeah, I’m coming.”

He offered her his hand and she took it, even if touching him was the last thing she wanted right now.

“Thank you,” he told her on the way back. “For listening.”

“Anytime,” she said, her voice so low she wasn’t sure he had heard her. She barely heard it herself. They made it back into the house and stopped in the entryway to take their coats and shoes off.

“Stop moving,” Tommy ordered them, coming from the living-room to greet them.

They both froze, looking at him with arched eyebrows. He pointed at something above their heads. Mistletoe.

Felicity’s heart skipped a beat.

And she was fairly sure it hadn’t been there when she had gone out earlier.

“Tommy,” Oliver started.

“It’s tradition,” his best friend argued, grinning like the cat who has just caught a plump mouse. Two plump mice in their case.

Oliver scratched the back of his head, shifting his weight on his feet awkwardly. Felicity stood there, her heart in her throat. She felt like she was suffocating and she needed to walk away before she broke down for no apparent reasons in front of everyone. Deciding to be done with that stupid tradition, knowing Tommy wouldn’t let get them away with it, she raised herself up on her toes, Oliver’s current position putting his cheek on display perfectly. Except he turned his head at the last
moment and her lips met his. They were surprisingly warm and soft, feeling like pillow mountains. His stubble made the kiss pricky, but she didn’t mind it one bit. Because the moment their lips touched, everything around them faded away. Her bond, which had been utterly silent ever since Oliver had started talking about her, didn’t react the way she had thought it would. It didn’t roar to life, yelling and screaming in delight. No. It fluttered in a very intimate way, so intimate it made her heart clench in her chest and it was so intense she had to grip the fabric of his coat in her fist, tightly.

She pulled away when she felt cracks on the walls created by the Med around her and stepped aside, not meeting Oliver’s eyes. She looked up and saw that Tommy was staring at them, his eyebrows frowned.

“I need to go the bathroom,” she mumbled, escaping the entryway quickly.

She fled up the stairs and locked herself inside the same bathroom of the house. Her legs wobbling, she leaned down against the door to hold herself up. When a sob wrecked her body, she brought her fist to her mouth, in a desperate attempt to muffle herself. She cried, her knees, her body rocking back and forth against the door. She cried, and she forgot about everything else but what she had done to him. To Oliver. She cried and sobbed and hiccuped, feeling utterly wrecked. She could still feel the taste of his lips on hers and it made her cry even more.

She could have never felt them. She could have killed him. She had almost killed him.

“Felicity, are you alright?” She heard her mother say through the door. “Everyone’s waiting for you downstairs,” she added.

“I’m coming,” she uttered. And she knew her voice was hoarse and broken from crying.

“Felicity? Open the door, please.”

“Go back downstairs mom,” she ordered. “I’m coming.”

“Uh… Okay.”

She heard her walk away and then she got on her feet. She walked to the sink, looking up to see her face and make-up completely ravaged by her tears. Reaching for her clutch, she took off her contacts and put her glasses back on. If anyone asked her why she’d been crying, she’d pretend it was because of her contacts. Splashing waters on her face, she fixed her make-up as best as she could. She still looked like a mess when she was done, but she was at least a more presentable one.

Taking in a deep breath, she quickly decided what her next course of actions was going to be. She was going to go back downstairs and smile and laugh and spend a nice moment with her friends. She was going to be happy for a few more hours and wouldn’t think about all the things she had learnt that day. She was going to enjoy her mother’s company until the Queens’ party and there, she’d confront Moira Queen and tell her a piece of her mind. She wouldn’t wait for her appointment with the mediator. She’d tell her what it was she was really thinking and after that, she’d tell Oliver the whole truth. And hopefully, everything would be out in the open before the year’s end.

Felicity stared at her reflection with a critical eye. The dress Thea had bought her clung to her body’s curves and its bustier necklace exposed inches of white creamy skin and the four birds tattooed on her collarbone. Taking a deep breath, she gently pulled the fabric of her dress up, so that she wouldn’t step on it and walked out of her bedroom.
“Mom, I’m coming!” She warned Donna.

She met her mother in the living-room. Donna who had been sitting on her couch, a glass of red wine in hands jumped on her feet, squealing.

“Oh my beautiful girl!” She said, her eyes widened, her hand covering her mouth opened in an “o”.

Felicity twirled around, giving her a little show.

“If only your grandmother was here to see you… You’re so beautiful! You look like a winter angel.”

Felicity felt herself blush and she looked up toward her toes, which she had painted a silver colour to go with the icy blue of her dress.

“Thanks mom,” she replied, smiling at her. “You look beautiful too,” she added, admiring the way she look in her short red sequins dress.

“Oh you know… I did my best,” she said, playing with her curls nervously.

Felicity reached for her hand to stop her before she could ruin her hairdo. “I think you look amazing,” she told her. She frowned when she saw uncertainty shine in her mother’s eyes. “Mom, what’s wrong?”

Donna shrugged. “I just…” She shifted nervously under Felicity’s gaze, tucking a curl behind her ear. “I just don’t know if I can still do this…” She sighed. “I haven’t been on a date with anyone in years, and the last first date I’ve been on was with my soulmate… I don’t know if I can do this,” she admitted, chewing down on her lips worriedly.

Felicity immediately tucked her lower lip free and rubbed her mother’s lipstick slightly to erase the mark of her teeth. “Mom, dealing with men is what you do every day at the casino. The only difference is that tonight, you’re going to spend the evening with a man you’ve chosen to be with, because you like him. He should feel lucky to have you to entertain him for the evening because you’re beautiful, funny and kind. You got this, I know you do.”

“Thank you baby girl,” Donna said, her voice tight with emotions. “God you’re making me cry,” she added, wiping the corner of her eyes carefully.

Felicity just smiled at her and leaned down to kiss her forehead. “I’m sure you’ll have an amazing time.”

Donna nodded. “I hope you will too at your party.”

Felicity’s smile faded slightly. She wasn’t looking toward the evening. To say that she was nervous would be an understatement. Anxiety was twisting her insides and she hadn’t been able to eat anything that day. Whenever she had tried, she had felt like she was going to be sick. And the fact that she would be attending the party alone wasn’t helping. Oliver was going to be with Isabel at his arms all the time and Thea had already texted her to inform her her mother had insisted she stayed by her side throughout the evening.

A knock on the door interrupted her train of thoughts. Felicity frowned. She was supposed to drive herself to the Plaza, where the party would be happening and her mother was meeting her date directly at the restaurant.

She and smiled when she saw Tommy standing on the other side through the peephole. Quickly she unlocked the door and opened it.
“Good evening sir,” she greeted him, her heart melting at the sight of him wearing a tux.

“Good evening my lady,” he replied, bowing his head and pretending to take off a hat. “There is a party in town and I’m here to escort you there,” he explained.

She chuckled. “Where is Laurel?”

He sighed. “Unfortunately she wasn’t feeling well, and a handsome man like me can’t show up at a party without a pretty girl on his arm. Just like it would be a shame for a pretty girl like you to show up alone.”

“True,” she replied. “But I do hope Laurel will feel better soon, preferably before New Year’s Eve otherwise your plans to propose will be taking a knocking.”

“Hold on to that hope, please,” Tommy agreed, nodding vigorously. “Ah Donna! You look beautiful as well,” he told her.

“Thank you my boy! Felicity didn’t tell me you were going to come and pick her up.”

“Well, I didn’t know he was coming,” Felicity defended herself.

“I tried to call you but you didn’t answer your phone, sadly.”

“My phone is lost somewhere in my clutch already.”

“It’s okay,” Tommy said, smiling gently. His eyes fell on the tattoo on her shoulder.

“Wow, nice tattoo,” he complimented her.

“Tattoo? What if it’s my soulmark?”

Tommy frowned, looking slightly disappointed. “Is it your soulmark?”

“No,” Donna interrupted them. “Felicity’s soulmark is an ar…”

“…mine,” Felicity was quick to finish. “A cute little ermine.”

Tommy shot them both a weird look but didn’t make any comment. Instead, his eyes travelled from Felicity’s tattoo on her collarbone down to her wrist and her arrow bracelet.

“An ermine. Sure. Are you ready to go?”

“Yes,” she said, letting out a relieved breath. “I just need to put my shoes on.”

She finished to get ready quickly, hugged her mother goodbye and before she knew it, she was sitting down next to Tommy who once again, was her white knight in shining armour. She felt more relaxed with him by her side, she knew that, whatever happened that night, he’d never let her down.

Tommy’s driver stopped in front of the Plaza’s entrance and her friend came to open her door, offering her his hand. She gladly accepted it, not caring about the burn. She needed all the help and support she could get. They started walking up the steps when Tommy said.

“Wait, isn’t that Oliver?”

He pointed at a silhouette a few steps ahead of them. “Yeah it’s him.” She would have recognised these broad shoulders anywhere.
Gripping Felicity’s hand more tightly, Tommy hurried up so they could catch Oliver up. Just like Felicity had expected, Isabel was by his side. The sight of the Russian woman, who tensed up the moment her cold eyes fell on the blonde.

“Oliver, hey!” Tommy greeted him. “Isabel,” he added, his tone less cheerful.

“Mr Merlyn, Miss Smoak,” she replied, her voice colder than the night’s air.

“Tommy… Felicity.” Oliver’s eyes fell on her and she saw him take her in, slowly. She took him in as well, glad to see he looked better than he had on Christmas day. They hadn’t seen each other since then, and the rest of the day had gone by awkwardly, because she had been shaken up by what he had told her. “It’s funny seeing you guys together,” he said, finally tearing his gaze away from her. “Where is Laurel?”

“She wasn’t feeling well so she stayed at home,” Tommy informed him.

“What a pity, I hope she’ll feel better soon,” Isabel minced and Felicity internally rolled her eyes at her, annoyed by all her fakery.

“Thank you,” Tommy said, nodding curtly.

“How about we get inside,” Oliver suggested. “It’s cold out here.”

The four of them started moving up again but when they reached the entrance, Isabel stopped them.

“Maybe it isn’t in our companies’ best interests to have Merlyn Global’s vice-president come in with an employee of Q. Inc. I’m just worried about how it’ll look in the public eye.”

Felicity felt Tommy tense up next to her but she just shrugged. “Oh Isabel, I’m sure it’ll look just as good as Q. Inc’s CEO coming in with Stellmoor International’s vice-president.”

If looks could kill, Felicity was pretty sure she would have died right here and there. Deciding that staying wasn’t a good idea, she’d end up slapping the woman at some point, she reached for Tommy’s arm and dragged him inside, her strides long so that she could get away from them more quickly.

“What was that Lissy?” Tommy asked her after they had handed their coats to the staff members supposed to welcome them. “You know they’re engaged.”

“She knows we’re friends,” she shot back, “and yet she made a comment about us.”

They made their way to the ballroom and when they stepped inside the crowded room, which was lavishly decorated with white lyses, crystal glasses and plates in china on the table, Felicity stopped herself all of sudden. It was one thing to handle the burn caused by Tommy’s touch only. It was a whole other one to handle such a heavy crowd.

“Remind me why we’re here already,” she whispered, her hold tightening around her clutch.

“Well, to talk about business while claiming regularly it’s not what we’re doing. The beginning of a new year is always the perfect time to form new alliances in the business world. It’s the right time for fresh starts but you can’t be too eager or obvious with your intentions otherwise you’ll lose the game.”

Felicity felt her motivation flattened. She wasn’t good at pretending, unlike Tommy who had been doing this for a few years already. She knew how to act in society, she had done quite well when
Martin Walker had invited Oliver and her over in Coast City but she still wasn’t a hardened businesswoman. She wasn’t even a businesswoman in the first place. Oliver only needed her here to represent their side-projects while he’ll be a good son to his parents and be the voice of Q. Inc’s main goal: support Queen Consolidated.

“Look, Thea is there,” Tommy said, pointing at a table in the centre of the room.

A smile spread on Felicity’s lips when she recognised the brunette. It faded away quickly though. Her friend was sitting down next to her father and looked utterly bored. Felicity’s eyes moved from her to scan the room, looking for her mother, the woman she wanted to confront. She found Moira Queen closely dancing with Walter Steele, the CFO of Queen Consolidated. His hands were wrapped tightly around her waist and she seemed to be completely lost in their conversation, her eyes never wavering from his.

A waiter passed by them and Tommy got them two flutes of champagne.

“Here,” he said, handing one to Felicity. “Cheers!” He added, raising his glass up.

“Cheers,” she replied, clinking their glasses.

They both took a sip from their drink before Tommy took a hold of her hand again and they went to give their regards to all the prestigious guests of the party. They shook a lot of hands, cracked a few jokes and went looking for their seats. They traded Laurel’s name with Felicity’s so that she’d be able to sit down next to Tommy. It was all for the best because Martin Walker, the main investor for Curtis’ project at Q. Inc, would be sitting down around that table as well. They ran into him in the crowd and he insisted on having her tell him how things were going. Of course, he was getting regular updates but it wasn’t worth a good conversation, with funny anecdotes. He smiled a lot at her quirky comments and it made her feel like she was doing a fine job at reassuring him about his investment.

They were talking to a friend of Tommy’s father when Felicity froze next to him, gripping his arm tightly.

“Don’t turn around,” she whispered excitedly in his ear. “But Ray Palmer is walking toward us.”

She hadn’t told Oliver when she had brought up his name a few days ago at Q. Inc but she was really excited to meet Ray Palmer for the first time. He was a brilliant engineer and his genius mind was always coming up with new ideas. His company was at the leading edge of technology and she was following their progress closely. She still had a hard time using a computer, the memory of MIT and Cooper too fresh in her mind, but it didn’t mean she’d lost all interests in technology. Why would she be working for Oliver at Q. Inc if she had?

Tommy’s father’s friend left them just before Ray Palmer joined them, a beautiful brunette with an evident baby bump at his arms. It was Anna Loring, a journalist and his soulmate.

“Mr Merlyn,” he said, shaking Tommy’s hand, “Miss Smoak,” he added and she just froze.

“You know my name?” She blurted.

He nodded, smiling. “I make a point of honour to always know the names of all the guests attending the same events I do.”

“Actually, we share,” Anna cut in, patting her soulmate’s chest lightly. “I learn half of the names and he learns the other half.”
“Your name happens to be one of the names I had to learn,” Palmer went on. “I was extremely surprised when I found out you were Oliver Queen’s EA. With your qualifications and degrees, you could be working for the IT department at Queen Consolidated, aiming to quickly become its youngest head.”

Felicity blushed. How was this her life? Ray Palmer knew about her and he thought she could become the head of Queen Consolidated’s IT department! She held back a squeal of delight and instead enrolled herself into a very animated conversation about Q. Inc’s side-projects and Palmer Technologies’ development of the cogeneration process while Tommy and Anna got lost in the flood of their technical jargon.

They parted ways when Anna felt the need to sit down but Palmer got Felicity to promise him to give him a call so they could talk business.

“So this is how you look like when you meet your idol?” Tommy teased her.

She smiled, turning around to look for Oliver. She caught his eyes on her, an unreadable expression on his face, and she raised her thumbs up excitedly. He gave her a small nod before bringing his attention back to Thea. Isabel was nowhere in sight, and Felicity wasn’t exactly going to complain. The further she was, the better. And yes, she was aware that was mostly her very possessive bond talking but she didn’t care.

“Would you like to dance?” Tommy offered, putting their empty flutes on a tray.

“Yes,” she enthusiastically accepted.

She was starting to realize the burn wasn’t as strong as it used to be around Tommy. Maybe it was because her bond had realized it had nothing to fear from him, she honestly didn’t know and didn’t care. He led her to the middle of the room where people were dancing. She wasn’t a fabulous dancer, except when she was with Oliver, but she managed not to trip on Tommy’s feet which she considered a victory. At the end of the song, they traded partners, like everyone else in the room and Felicity ended up with Walter Steele, which had been partnered with Moira before her. Again.

“Miss Smoak,” he greeted her, his British accent sounding like music to her ears.

“Mr Steele,” she replied, forcing a smile on her lips. She was feeling the burn when he was touching her and it was more unpleasant than with other people. She wondered why because she had already spoken a few times with Walter and they had gotten along nicely. And maybe it was the problem. The burn was hotter around people she appreciated. And it had indeed been blazing hot when she had shaken Palmer’s hand.

“Did you get a chance to speak with Mr. Palmer? I heard he was eager to meet you,” he told her.

“Oh really?” She felt her cheeks redden slightly. “We did talk a little bit.”

“That’s great. Did you tell him about that battery Mr. Holt is working on?”

Oliver hadn’t revealed much about his side-projects to his parents but she knew he had told Walter about them. Having known him his entire life, he was very close to him and seemed to have a better relationship with him than with his own father. His father who was swirling with Isabel Rochev just a few feet away from her and Walter.

“Just what was necessary to get him interested. Oliver wants to diversify his partners and investors.”

“I know, that’s why I told Moira inviting Mr. Palmer would be a great idea.”
She couldn’t help but notice how his voice slightly softened when he pronounced Moira’s name before saying. “Thank you for your help Mr. Steele, it means a lot to Oliver.”

“He knows he can count me. So can you by the way,” he added. “I’m happy he’s found you, he’s doing better at Q. Inc. Don’t misunderstand me, he was already doing a great job, but now he’s… Perfect. He’ll be QC’s CEO sooner than we think.”

Felicity nodded, a strained smile stretching her lips. Of course she was happy to hear her presence had affected Oliver in a good way. After all, his had affected her in the best way possible. But Walter’s words were worrying her to no extent. Was it the reason why his parents were fastening his wedding to Isabel? Did they want Oliver to already step up and become QC’s CEO? Before she could try to get more information, it was time to change partners again and she ended up pressed against the solid chest of the very man who had been occupying her thoughts for a long while now.

“Oliver,” she said, her body automatically relaxing against his own.

“Felicity,” he replied, his hand falling on her waist, holding her tightly. “You look breathtakingly beautiful tonight,” he whispered.

“That much, uh?” She teased him, already getting lost in their bubble. They hadn’t been that close in weeks and she had missed him a lot. Secrets still kept them apart, but she put them to rest long enough to savour his warmth and his presence near her. She had truly missed him.

“Yes, that much,” he confirmed, stepping away from her so that she could turn, quickly pulling her back to him. “I saw you speak with Palmer earlier. You looked happy.”

She saw a shadow of something crossed his eyes and she gave him her brightest smile. “I think I may have found us a new business partner.”

“That much, uh?” He said and she playfully slapped his shoulder.

He chuckled slightly and the sound made her heart melt in her chest. God, she had missed him.

“We haven’t talked much since Christmas and you contacts’ accident,” he started saying.

“We haven’t talked at all,” she immediately corrected.

He looked down, his shoulders going limp for a second. “I’m sorry. With my parents planning the wedding, I’ve been really busy and…”

“It’s okay,” she interrupted him, the mere mention of the word “wedding” making her feel sick. “I just wish…”

The music stopped entirely and they stopped dancing as well. It was time for dinner.

“Can we talk later?” She asked him, reluctant to let go of his hands, to let go of him. “There’s something I need to tell you.”

“Sure,” he nodded, bringing her hand to his lips and kissing it tenderly. It made a blush creep over her cheeks and her heart fluttered in happiness.

She excused herself, exiting the room to go to the bathroom. She hadn’t made it there when she felt a hand grabbed her arm and yank her back, pulling her against a wall. She wiggled and got away from the other woman’s grasp before looking up to see Isabel Rochev looking at her scornfully.
“You and I need to have a talk Miss Smoak,” she said.

“I don’t think so,” Felicity replied angrily, trying to walk away from her.

“Oh yes we do. James Wilde contacted us, he said you had asked for a meeting with him because you wanted to break your contract with the Queen family.”

That made Felicity pause. “How…?”

“His loyalty is being well-rewarded,” Isabel simply said.

Felicity’s eyes fluttered at this new blow.

“Now let me ask you a question Felicity. What do you think you’re doing exactly?”

“You’re not a part of the Queen family, I have nothing to say to you,” she spit out through gritted teeth, trying to pass by her. Isabel grabbed her arm to stop her.

“I’ve been a part of the Queen family for longer than you have Miss Smoak,” she stated.

Felicity tilted her head. “You’re nothing without a ring on your finger,” she reminded her. “And by a ring, I mean an actual wedding band, which you’re aren’t wearing.”

“Yes,” Isabel was quick to add. She then crossed her arms on her chest, putting her engagement ring on display. “You should spare yourself Felicity and stop whatever it is you’re trying to do here.”

“What?”

“Life is not a fairytale,” she claimed, her tone harsh. “Just because you meet your soulmate doesn’t mean you’re going to end up living together happily ever after.”

“Are you talking from experience?” Felicity shot back, crossing her arms over her chest as well.

“Maybe I am,” she replied mysteriously. “You want to get your soulmate’s rights back? Fine. But have you thought about what will happen once Oliver knows about you? About what he’ll do?” Felicity opened up her mouth to say something but Isabel cut her off. “It’s okay if you haven’t, because I have. He’ll reject you my dear, simple as that. He will never pick the girl who almost killed him over his family.”

“It was an accident,” Felicity protested. “How was I supposed to know he was driving?”

“You would have known, had you cared enough about him,” Isabel stated, her tone dead cold.

“Don’t you dare talk about what you don’t know,” Felicity threatened her, her tone cold and angry. Isabel’s know-it-all expression and her smirks were making her blood boil in her veins.

“I know more than you think Felicity. I know how you were never Oliver’s choice back in the days and how you’ll never be his choice now.” Felicity opened her mouth to say something but Isabel didn’t let her. “Do you want to know the real reason why we’re getting married?” Isabel asked.

Felicity didn’t reply, and instead she stared stubbornly at the floor, waiting for the storm to end. Her fists were clenched tightly along her sides, she was digging her nails in her palms to prevent from slapping Isabel across the face. She wasn’t a violent person by any means but the Russian woman just knew how to push her buttons.

“Because without the financial support of my company, QC would have already closed down.”
Felicity’s eyes widened. “What?”

“It’s true. They were flirting with bankruptcy when Stellmoor decided to support them. Marrying me is just another way to strengthen the partnership of our companies.”

“No,” she breathed out.

“Now, let’s think for a minute that Oliver would choose you, the gold-digger who almost cost him his life, over his family, which has always been there for him. Do you really think he’d choose you over the thousands employees of QC and Q. Inc? Do you really think your bond is worth the fall of two companies? Will you be selfish enough to ask him to give up on everything just for you?”

“I – I,” Felicity stammered at a loss for words. What was she hearing? Was it true?

“And let’s face it, even if he did, you wouldn’t be fit enough to be his wife,” she shook her head, laughing. “Honestly, I wonder what Mother Nature was thinking when she decided to pair the two of you together. You’re such an ordinary girl Felicity, it’s almost sad! You’re the kind of boring girl that eats ice-cream on her couch on Friday nights because she has nothing better to do with her life. Oliver Queen deserves better than that lonely girl. Oliver Queen deserves a woman people look up to. And guess what? Nobody spares a glance at your thick thighs and the fat in your arms. Actually nobody spares you a glance at all, unless you’re wearing one of your inappropriately short dresses of course. Men are just men after all.” She sighed. “And don’t get me started on that supposedly genius mind of yours. You think your nerdiness makes you adorable? I’m sorry I have to be the one breaking the news to you but when people laugh or smile, they’re all merely feeling sorry for you. You embarrass yourself so much sometimes with that big mouth of yours, you’d take the risk to embarrass your soulmate as well? Even your so called soulmate would be ashamed of you if you opened your mouth in public. I’ll give you one thing though. You’re one hell of an actress. You’ve played with your past quite well, at least well enough for Oliver and all his friends to pity you, Felicity the victim. But you know what? People’s pity doesn’t make you likeable or worthy of anything. It only makes you pathetic and Oliver Queen doesn’t need pathetic in his life. He doesn’t need ordinary and average. He needs a strong and ambitious woman, not a broken doll. The little girl you used to be was never enough for him, the woman you’re turning into isn’t as well. You’ll never be enough for anyone Felicity, get used to it.”

“I…”

“I don’t know what you think this is but this is not your real life Cinderella story. You can dress up as much as you want, put on a sparkling dress and drink champagne but it won’t change anything. You’ll never be part of this world because you just don’t fit here. This is real life Felicity, not a movie. Girls like you don’t get the boy! Do Oliver and yourself a favour and walk away. Preferably for good this time.”

Felicity stood for a very long moment, utterly silent, standing still. She watched Isabel leave, blood rushing to her ears. She stood still unable to come up with something to say, unable to hold her back and give her a piece of her own mind. Unable to do anything but feel. She didn’t know what she was feeling exactly, her emotions being a total mess at the moment but she knew she probably would have felt better if Isabel had tied her up to a car and then dragged her naked body through mud, brambles and nettle fields. The pain would have been much more bearable than the one that was currently threatening to overwhelm her. She was crying, when had she started, she had no idea, her fists clenched tightly along her sides, her whole body shaking violently.

“You’ll never be enough Felicity.”

A gut-wrenching sob wrecked her body and she had to catch herself up against the wall to keep
herself from collapsing on the floor. She gasped, fighting for air, feeling she was suffocating. Every intake of breath was painful, every beat of her heart an agony.

“Felicity?” She heard the sounds of someone rushing toward her. “Felicity, what’s going on?” Tommy asked, wrapping an arm around her waist to support her.

“I just – I…”

She was lacking air to form words. She hiccups, her sobs growing bigger, louder. Tommy pulled her into him, his grip on her firmer, and he stroked the back of her head with his hand, trying his best to comfort her.

“Shhh…” He whispered against her hair. “It’s okay, everything’s okay.”

“No, it’s not,” she managed to whisper back. “I just want to go home,” she added.

“What happened?” Tommy insisted, putting a hand under her chin to make her look at him.

“Nothing,” she said, escaping his grasp, catching herself on the wall. “I’m just not enough.” Her voice broke again, as more tears rolled down her cheeks. Her whole body was trembling, her insides were swirling and she felt like she going to be sick.

“What? Who said that?”

Felicity closed her eyes, shaking her head as blackspots started dancing behind her eyelids. “I just want to go home. Leave this place.”

“Felicity, how about I call Oliver…” Tommy suggested.

“No!” She yelled, the name piercing her heart like an arrow would its target. And yes, she was well-aware of the irony. “No,” she added, trying to get a grip on her emotions, knowing she was looking slightly hysterical. “I’m going to go home and you’re going to go back to the party.”

“Felicity…” She started to move, her legs wobbling, but he gripped her arm.

“Tommy please,” she begged. “Let me go.”

She didn’t know what he saw in her eyes but it was enough for him to let go of her arm. “What I am supposed to tell Oliver?”

She shrugged. “Nothing,” she whispered, more tears rolling down her cheeks as she started walking away from him again, the sound of her heels echoing against the wall. “Everything’s over,” she added for herself, her hand on her chest, trying to hold her heart in place.
SO.... Before you guys start yelling at me and telling me Oliver deserves to know, you should know that he'll learn the truth soon. Either in the next chapter or one after. So relax. Yes at the end of this one Felicity pretty much decides that she's done with everything and votes against telling him but he'll learn the truth soon, okay? Trust me, I know what I'm doing. 

And I'm not really satisfied with the scene where he tells her about his soulmate, I mean, I think the ending of that scene is kind of rushed, you may feel that way too and I just wanted to say that they'll talk some more about it. Later. (In the next chapter actually).

Anyway, what did you think of the chapter?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)

Chapter 13: All that you rely on [...] will find you in the day

Chapter Notes

Hey guys!!

I'm going to try and keep this quick, since I don't want to delay your reading more :) So here's the new chapter it's a monster and I have nothing to say about it. Everything's in the chapter. I'm just super nervous and excited at the same time to share it with you!!! I also wanted to thank you, once again for the amazing responses this story is getting. You guys are killing me in the best way possible. You truly rock, I don't have the words to express how grateful I am so I'll just stick with a heartfelt THANK YOU! :D <3

Now, happy reading!! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 13:

“Nothing goes as planned
Everything will break
People say goodbye
In their own special way
All that you rely on
And all that you can fake
Will leave you in the morning
But find you in the day”

- Andrew Belle, In my veins.

Felicity didn’t immediately leave the party. Not because she didn’t want to, no, she was actually pretty desperate to get out. But she couldn’t. She was feeling too weak, and just wouldn’t stop crying. How would she ask for her coat back if she could barely form an understandable sentence? How would she hail a cab if she could barely breathe? She knew she needed to get a grip on her emotions; to control herself more and that’s why she made her way to the bathroom instead of heading for the Plaza’s entrance. Luckily enough, the room was empty when she walked in. She locked the door behind her and collapsed on the floor right after, a sob wrecking her entire being, her whole body shaking badly. She gripped the fabric of her dress, clenching it tightly in her fists, needing something to hold onto.

Felicity knew pain. She had experienced all different kinds of pain in her life. The pain caused by abandon, when her father had walked out of her life to never come back. The pain caused by loss
when her grandmother had passed. The pain caused by helplessness when she had watched her mother sink into depression. The pain caused by rejection, when her soulmate had gotten involved with other girls. The pain caused by humiliation when Mandy Miller had tortured her in high-school. The pain caused by emotional abuse when Cooper had lured her into being with him. And last but certainly not least, the physical pain. The one Cooper had put her through when he had cut deep into her skin to carve his mark on her body. So Felicity knew pain. And she knew how to handle it, how to grit her teeth and bear with it until things got better. Because things always got better. It wasn’t true that time healed every wound but it did make things better. It soothed even the deepest cuts, inch by inch until it was possible to live past the pain.

But now, as she was walking away from Tommy, Felicity was feeling another kind of pain. The symptoms weren’t actually all different from what she had been through in the past. Her heart was aching, the pain dull and sharp at the same time. She felt like it had been torn to pieces, the fragments so small she doubted she’d ever be able to bring them back together again. Her lungs were suffocating in her ribcage, each intake of air burning down her throat. Her stomach was rolling up and down inside of her, as if she was on a ship in the middle of a storm. The accuracy of the comparison made her head spin. She was the ship and the storm was the truth Isabel had poured down on her. And this was where the difference lied. For the first time in her life, she was feeling pain caused by the truth. The cold hard truth, which had felt like a freezing shower.

A freezing shower which had been her wake up call.

Because there was nothing Isabel had said to her that wasn’t true.

What the hell had Mother Nature been thinking when It had decided to pair her up with Oliver? They couldn’t have been more different from one another. Felicity was just a calm and ordinary nerdy girl. She enjoyed nights in, filled with movies and take-outs and occasionally going out with friends was a plus whereas Oliver’s life was an endless circle of evenings out, filled with mundanities and meetings. She could attend one once in a while but she knew she couldn’t live that kind of life. There was a time where she wouldn’t have minded being exposed to the eyes of the world, where she would have even craved it, her desire to surround herself with people, to finally belong somewhere stronger than anything. But that time had stopped when she had been abducted and tortured. Now she was more protective of herself, more suspicious of the world. She had opened up to the world and had been burnt in return. Remaining in her small bubble was the best solution.

She closed her eyes, more tears rolling down her cheeks. Really, why pairing them up? They weren’t anything alike. Oliver was six feet of hot handsomeness. He truly had everything: the toned skin, the firm muscles, the blue eyes and the cute smile with the dimples. He was charismatic and funny without even trying. People loved him, rightfully so. He was very lovable after all. But Felicity? She wasn’t like that. She knew she could really rock a dress and looked relatively pretty but she wasn’t a sex bomb. And according to all the pictures of Oliver from his wild years she had found online she wasn’t his style either. She wasn’t a tall brunette with hypnotic eyes. She didn’t have big boobs or strong legs that went on forever. She was blonde and small and her eyes were hidden behind square glasses. Her breast was ordinary because fat just wouldn’t go up to her boobs and went down to her thighs instead. She was cute but she didn’t have the same aura Oliver had. Her brain ran a mile a second and her mouth was directly connected to it meaning that more often than not, she ended up telling people more things than she had originally intended to. Most people laughed amusingly at her but it was highly likely they just felt sorry for her. And honestly? If self-pity was her thing, she’d probably feel sorry for herself too. Since she didn’t, she mostly felt embarrassed, mortified even, when her rants ended on very inappropriate sexual innuendos. It was something that had started after Cooper had occurred. She had gone from dark colours to bright colours. From invisible to way too talkative. But what she had become still wasn’t enough. She had never been enough and she had been a fool when she had entertained the idea of her and Oliver finally coming together.
But did any of these considerations mattered anymore? She wasn’t so sure. Because Oliver wasn’t marrying Isabel just because it was what his parents expected of him. No. He was marrying her because they had made a deal and the fate of two companies and thousands of people depended on that deal. Doctor Lazerev had said some things were just meant to be. Sadly, she was going to be the one proving him wrong and step back while she still could.

Taking a deep breath, she got on her legs, which were still kind of wobbly and she fought back her tears. Unlocking the door she had clumsily locked behind her earlier, she made a beeline to the sink, knowing deep down it was her will only that was keeping her up. She splashed water on her face, hoping to cool down her cheeks a little bit. It did her some good and, encouraged by that small progress, she tried to fix her make-up. She looked like a raccoon, with her smudged mascara, ruined eyeliner and powder and there wasn’t much she could do without the appropriate products. But she did do enough and in the end, she went from looking like a raccoon to looking like a panda. She wasn’t sure it was better but since she loved panda better than raccoon, she decided that it was. Sighing, she dragged herself out of the room. She was feeling weary and exhaustion was pulling at her muscles. She only wanted one thing: to be out of the Plaza, preferably as soon as possible.

She reached the entrance and asked her coat from the staff members who had taken it from her when she had arrived earlier with Tommy. God… She had felt so confident back then, so hopeful. She had been planning to confront Moira, she had been about to tell Oliver the truth about them and… No. The mere thought of him was enough to make the ache inside her heart grow. She could already feel her tears fight with her will for their right to flood her cheeks again. She needed to stop thinking about Oliver, or what had happened, otherwise she was going to breakdown all over again and she couldn’t. She wouldn’t.

“Are you okay ma’am?” The man who was handing her coat back to her asked, concern filling his eyes.

“Perfect,” she replied, giving him a nod and a generous tip before leaving.

The cold air of the night felt like a slap across the face. Felicity hunched her shoulders and hurried downstairs, careful not to trip on her way down. Stupidly hurting herself was the last thing she needed that night. She crossed the street and hailed a cab. She opened the door and quickly got inside, appreciating to be back inside a warm place. She gave the driver her address and he started pulling away.

“And please, stop by Walmart on the way.”

“Walmart? But I’d have to make a detour Ms.”

Biting back an angry comment, the poor man hadn’t done anything to her after all. On the contrary, he had only been trying to help her save some money. “Please, just stop by Walmart,” she pressed him, close to beg.

He nodded gently, focusing back on the road. She sighed in relief, catching her reflection in the mirror. She looked like a mess, but then maybe it was because she was one. Her eyes were red and puffy, a mix of blue, black and red. Leaning back in her seat, she stared out through the window. Star City was a beautiful city, especially at night in winter, when it had been snowing for the biggest part of the day. The streetlights were being reflected on the white snow cover, making the city look like it was glowing. She felt good here, at home and the mere thought of leaving, of never seeing its buildings again… It formed a lump in her throat and tears welled up at the corner of her eyes. She wiped them away quickly, breathing through her nose slowly.

When the driver started slowing down and Felicity recognised the familiar sign of Walmart, she
unbuckled her seat belt. The driver parked the car and she opened the door, saying.

“Stay put, I'll be right back. You can keep the meter running.”

She walked inside the shop and headed straight toward the drinks section. She selected two bottles of wine, recommended by Laurel on Christmas day, and she tried her very best not to pay attention to the weird looks people were shooting at her. She could only imagine what they were thinking of her and her bizarre appearance. She was standing in the middle of a Walmart alley at almost nine pm dressed like a princess with her very expensive dress, jewels and hair done up in a complicated style but looking like she had been partying for days with her red cheeks and smudged make-up.

When she was done with the alcohol, she made her way to the pharmacy’s alley. She quickly found what she had been looking for. The pill for a ten. She didn’t hesitate before taking it, throwing it in her cart without sparing it another glance. She stopped in the middle of the alley when it occurred to her that, maybe, one day, she wouldn’t be able to do so anymore, courtesy of Mr. Rollins and his desire to regulate access to the Med. If the law was voted, what would she do? She shook her head, the question enough to send waves of panic down her body.

Thanking God for the invention of automatic cashier, she probably wouldn’t have been able to stand the look of an actual cashier at the sight of booze and a box of the med with the word 10 written in bold character, she quickly paid for her stuff and rushed back to the taxi.

She had barely closed the door and her taxi driver was already pulling away. She reached for the box of the Med she had just bought and tried to open it, her bond protesting wildly in her head and her hands shaking as a result. They really were trembling like never before, it was so bad she was pretty sure she wouldn’t have been able to read a text, had she been holding her phone. After several failed attempts she decided to just blow off some steam and shredded the folder loudly. She quickly swallowed the pill down, not needing water in order to do so. She had taken so many pills in her life, she had learnt how to do it without liquid. She didn’t feel her hipbone burn, where her soulmark used to be and she guessed it was because she was already on the Med. But she knew the effect was immediate, because her bond, which had been voicing its displeasure quite loudly suddenly became utterly silent and she felt her heart skip a beat at a result. To use Doctor Lazarev’s analogy again, it was as if Rapunzel, who had been locked in her tower, had now been chained up and gagged. It was just like when she had started taking the Med. How long would it last? How long would it take before her bond found its way out and started being a thorn in her side again? She had no idea. She just knew that, all of a sudden, there was a deafening silence around her and a throbbing void in her chest. She swallowed, hard, trying to get rid of the lump in her throat. She hadn’t realized how much she had gotten use to her bond being loud and vibrant again. Yes, it had annoyed her at first but it had also given her hope. Now, she was left with nothing. There was no more hope.

“Are you doing drugs in my cab?”

The driver’s voice got her out of her thoughts.

“What?” She asked, her eyes wide opened.

“Are you doing drugs in my cab?” He repeated, looking up to meet her eyes in the mirror above him.

She shook her head immediately. “Why would say that?”

“You look like you’ve been through hell,” he stated simply.

“And according to you, doing drugs would automatically be the solution to that particular problem?”
He shrugged. “You did buy two bottles of wine.”

She snorted, shaking her head. “Point taken.”

“So… Are you doing drugs in my cab?”

“Are you going to turn me in?” She asked suspiciously.

He chuckled. “No, but to buy my silence, I might ask you to share.”

She couldn’t help but smile a little bit and a smile of his own stretched his lips.

“So she can smile,” he said, a thoughtful expression on his face.

She looked down toward her clutch in her lap. “I wasn’t doing drugs in your cab,” she admitted, her voice small. “It’s just been a long night.”

“It has barely started though,” he reminded her.

“Damn, I knew I should have bought more bottles,” she replied and he chuckled again.

She was grateful for what he was trying to do which was keep her focus on something else than her own mind and its dark thoughts. He didn’t know her at all and yet, he spoke and joked with her, his tone gentle, just to try and make her feel better. His kindness moved her and that’s why she gave him a nice tip when he stopped near her building.

“Thank you,” she said, not only speaking of the ride.

He gave her a brief understanding nod before driving away. Her hands holding onto her bottles of wine tightly, she walked down the street to her building’s entrance. Her heart felt heavy in her chest as she opened the door to her apartment. Everything was the same way it had been when she had left. And yet, everything looked different. Duller. Darker. Her world had lost the little something that had made it shine brightly lately, the same way she had lost hope.

She dropped the bottles of wine on her kitchen table before locking herself in the bathroom. She opened her dress and let it pool down at her feet. She took her expensive shoes off and kicked them aside, not caring where they landed. She took off her jewels then and it was when she reached for her wrist and her arrow bracelet that she realised it was missing.

Her heart, which had been dead in her chest a minute ago, jumped back to life.

“No, no,” she whispered, kneeling down toward her dress, checking if it hadn’t gotten caught in the fabric.

It hadn’t.

“No, no,” she whispered frantically, running out of the bathroom, reaching for her coat. She slipped her fingers inside the sleeves frenziedly.

No arrow bracelet there as well.

Her heart beating more quickly in her chest than it had all night, she threw her coat away, her hands coming up to cup her head and gripping her hair, hard. She dug her nails in her skull to the point of pain, tugging at her blonde locks in frustration, her lower lip trembling.

She had lost her arrow bracelet.
It was an old piece of jewellery, one which had cost next to nothing four years ago. The clasp had probably broken and she hadn’t felt nor heard it fall. Tears rolled down her cheeks and she pinched her lips tightly together to hold back a sob. It was probably for the best, she tried to reason as she dragged herself to the bathroom again, her energy entirely gone from her body. That way you can completely let go of him, the rational part of her mind quickly supplied.

But her bracelet had meant so much to her, her heart argued. It had been more than just a reminder of her past, it had been her beacon of hope for the future.

And now she had lost it, it was gone. There really was no more hope. And that hurt more than all the things Isabel had said to her.

Stumbling in the shower, she turned on the spray, hissing when the hot water hit her skin. That last blow was the hardest to put up with. She didn’t believe in coincidence, the whole soulmate’s concept was based on destiny. Having a soulmate meant fate existed; one was destined to be with a specific someone. There were no uncertainties, no coincidences. So what was she supposed to think now that she’d lost the very thing that had connected her to her other half throughout the years?

Now that she had taken the new Med, staying in Star City was unthinkable. Staying near Oliver would only diminish its effect. She had to leave town, find another job and settle down somewhere else. Somewhere far, very far. Australia maybe? Or England? She’d go and it would be like she had never been here in the first place. Maybe her friends would miss her a little bit at first but they’d forget about her, eventually. She hadn’t been in Star City for too long, they’d go on with their lives without her, she was sure of it. But she couldn’t help clench her eyes shut at the thought, tears rolling down her cheeks and meddling with the water.

“It’s funny how the prospect of losing something makes you realise how important it is to you.”

Oliver’s words echoed in her mind and she leaned her forehead against the cold tiles of her shower’s wall, water ruining her up-do and then cascading down her neck. Her mind was filled with images, memories of the few months she had spent in Star City with Oliver. Memories of their bickering at Q. Inc, of their long talks and silly games they’d played to pass time. The same silly games which had brought them closer, which had made them learn so much about the other. Memories of late movie nights and hugs and kisses they used to comfort one another. She could his blue eyes perfectly and hear his laugh in her ear and the reality of her situation hit her, hard. In the past, she had cared for the boy and despised the young man. She had resented almost hated the soulmate. But she loved the man and she knew she always would.

The verb “love” made her pause.

She’d never used it before, never applied it to someone that wasn’t family. Oliver wasn’t family. He was darks jeans and white tee-shirt, firm muscles and broad shoulders, warmth and safety. He was her boss, her friend, her soulmate. He’d made a place for himself in every aspect of her life and she’d let him. She’d opened the doors for him, welcomed him inside her arms, accepting his comfort and offering him support in exchange.

Oliver, she realised, was home. Her home.

And it wasn’t leaving Star City that was so repelling to her. Leaving him was.

And she’d have to watch him marry another woman from afar.

The mere idea of him calling Isabel his wife, of her calling him her husband made her blood boil with anger and she cried out in frustration, punching the shower’s wall while she was at it. She heard
her knuckles crack and her angry scream turned into a sharp one of pain. She cradled her hand on her chest, breathing noisily through her nose. She shut down the water with her good hand and got out of the shower. She wrapped herself as well as she could in a towel and walked to her bedroom, to put her pajamas on. She managed to get into them using only one hand, hissing every time she had to move her injured one. She looked down at it when she was dressed. It was swollen, and most definitely blue. She knew it wasn’t broken, but it was still bruised and it hurt. Probably more since she was distressed and transferring emotional pain to the body was an actual thing.

She shuffled her feet to the bathroom again and undid her hair, brushing it clumsily before doing it in a messy bun. And that simple task was suddenly very complicated to accomplish, with only one hand at her disposal. When she was done, Felicity moved to the kitchen, where she wrapped ice cubes in a dish towel before putting the makeshift icepack on her swollen hand. She let out a small relieved breath when the cold immediately alleviated some of her pain and she regretted not being able to put ice cubes on her heart as well.

“But that’s why alcohol and ice-cream were invented,” she mumbled under her breath, struggling to open one of the bottles of wine. She knew no mint-chip ice-cream and red wine Band-Aids would ever be able to fix her heart but she knew they’d both numb her heart and mind and that’s what she wanted now. Not being able to feel anything. Not being able to think about anything.

She poured herself a very generous glass of wine before moving everything to the coffee table in front of her couch. Felicity gathered her phone from her clutch and turned on the TV, not really wanting to watch anything, but needing to fill the void and silence around her with something. Some dumb TV-reality program would do the trick. She unlocked her phone and saw she had several missed calls and texts.

“9:11 pm

*Tommy said sthg happened to you. You okay?*

*OQ”

--

“9:15 pm

*Why did you leave so early?*

*TQ*

--

“9:27 pm

*Felicity, you okay?*

*OQ”

--

“9:34 pm

*Did you get home safely?*

*TM”
“9:41 pm
Lissy, you aren’t picking your phone. Please tell me you got home.
TM”

“9:45 pm
Felicity pick up your phone!
OQ”

“9:57 pm
Got home safely, you can tell Oliver to stop worrying about me.
FS”

“10 pm
Why don’t you tell him yourself?
TM”

Felicity sighed. For obvious reasons, she didn’t want to talk with Oliver, but she also knew if he
didn’t hear from her that she was fine, the chances to find him on her doorstep demanding answers
would go up like crazy. And she wanted to see him less than she wanted to talk to him. Besides, it
was easier to lie through texts than it was to lie to his face. To giver herself strength, she sipped half
of her glass in one go without tasting the red liquid on her tongue – this wasn’t about savouring at all
but getting drunk quickly and efficiently. Then, she typed a quick text.

“10:05 pm
I’m fine, no need to worry about me!
FS”

The answer came after she had emptied her glass and poured herself another one.

“10:08 pm
What happened? What did you want to talk about?
OQ”
“10:10 pm

Nothing, get back to your party.

FS”

“10:12 pm

Tomorrow, we talk.

OQ”

“10:13 pm

Going to be busy with my mom. Tomorrow and the following days.

FS”

He didn’t reply to that and she guessed he had probably gone back to the party. Not that it mattered to her or that she’d have wanted him to fight her on her last text or anything because she didn’t. Absolutely not. Sipping her second glass of wine, she ate some ice-cream before pushing the cup away, not feeling any better and not liking the mix of wine and mint. She stared at the void, the sound of her TV only a buzz in the background, drinking her wine and crying silently. She’d never been much of a weepy when she had been a teenager. She had probably cried more over the last few months than she had in her entire life. And she wanted to be mad at herself, for being so weak and sensitive, but she couldn’t. She just accepted she couldn’t be strong all the time.

Her mother came home earlier than Felicity expected. She had barely reached the end of her first bottle. She was still sitting on the couch and she hadn’t moved, not even when the ice cubs had completely melted on her hand.

“Oh Felicity, hi!” Donna said, a bright smile on her lips. “I didn’t think you’d be here already,” she said, her eyebrows furrowing at the sight of her daughter sprawled out on the couch. And her eyes widened at the sight of the bottles of wine next to Felicity. “Baby, are you okay?” She asked, concern laced with worry in her voice.

“Never been better!” Felicity replied cheerfully, and she knew her voice was too high to sound anything else but drunk. “How was your date?” She squinted her eyes, seeing her mother’s lipstick slightly smudged. “Did you kiss him?”

Donna blushed slightly.

“Oh my god you totally did!” She squealed. “You go mom, get your man!” She added, clapping her hands happily.

Donna frowned, and gave her a weird look. “Well, technically, he kissed me. He doesn’t seem to share my “no kiss on a first date” rule.”
“Aww!” Felicity squealed again before starting to giggle. “I’m so happy for you. You deserve all the happiness in the world mom! I’d squish your face if I could but I can’t. I hurt my hand in the shower.”

Donna tilted her head, dropping her clutch on the floor. She rushed her daughter’s side, her eyes filled with concerns. “You hurt your hand?”

Felicity nodded, showing her bruised and swollen hand to her. Her mother took a quick look at it before saying.

“I’ll be right back.”

She came back a few minutes later, holding a square towel and Felicity’s first-aid kit. She dropped everything on the coffee table, taking Felicity’s glass from her hand. “You drunk all of this alone?”

The blonde nodded, watching her mother sit down next to her.

“Why baby? Did something happen at the party? Why did you cry?” She added, tracing the path of Felicity’s tears on her cheeks with the tip of her fingers.

Felicity shrugged. She was feeling pleasantly numb, just like she had wanted to. She had stopped crying a while ago and now the memory of the party seemed very far away, Isabel’s voice in her head having been replaced with a nice alcohol-induced buzz. That was probably why she didn’t really feel the pain when Donna cautiously dried her hand before applying some cream on the bruise. Then, she wrapped it with gauze, making sure the bandage wasn’t too tight.

“Thank you mom,” Felicity replied. “You must be tired of fixing me,” her mouth quickly added, without her brain’s consent. “It seems as if you’ve been doing that only for a while now.”

“It’s my job to take care of you hon,” Donna replied softly, cupping her cheek. “But you didn’t answer my question Felicity,” she insisted, keeping her daughter’s injured hand in her lap.

Felicity shrugged. “I don’t want to talk about it,” she simply said, feeling her tears coming back and the nice bubble of denial she had been stuck in started to break. She didn’t really feel all giddy and squealing anymore.

Donna’s shoulders went limp and she got up, gathering up Felicity’s glass, the bottles of wine and the ice-cream. Felicity leaned back in the couch, and closed her eyes, suddenly feeling exhausted. Until she felt the couch dip next to her and she opened her eyes again to see her mother staring at her expectantly, handing her a glass of water and some sliced bread.

“Eat and drink,” she demanded, rummaging through the medical aid-kit again and getting two ibuprofen tablets out. “And swallow that,” she added.

Felicity did as she was told. She wasn’t feeling like giggling or squealing anymore. Her mother’s severe eyes on her made her feel like she was six years old again and she had played with the wires of the microwave, to try and fix it just like “daddy does it all the time”. When she had eaten all the bread, and drank two glasses of water, Felicity started feeling the hold of the alcohol on her brain loosen up even more. Her head fell slightly as exhaustion hit her, reminding her of what she had been through that night.

“Come on,” Donna said. “Let’s get you to bed.”

She helped Felicity up, and walked her to her bedroom. She undid her bed, so that she could slid into it and tucked her in. She sat down next to her, brushing wet strands of hair away from her face.
Felicity smiled slightly at her tenderness.

“I can see something happened at that party baby,” Donna whispered and when Felicity opened her mouth to say something, she interrupted her by pressing two fingers to her lips. “You need to sleep now, I can see in your eyes that you won’t last too much. But we’ll talk tomorrow, okay?”

Felicity nodded and Donna leaned forward to kiss her forehead. “Goodnight hon.”

“Goodnight mom,” Felicity replied.

Donna got on her feet and started walking away. When she reached the door, Felicity called her back.

“Mom!” Donna turned around, a question in her eyes.

“Will you stay with me until I fall asleep?” Felicity asked, almost timidly.

Donna looked surprised but she nodded nonetheless. She came back to her daughter, who turned on her side to make some room for her. Donna lied down next her and wrapped her arms around her, holding onto her tightly. Felicity hid her face in her comforter. She fell asleep in her mother’s arms, silent tears rolling down her cheeks.

When she woke up the next morning, it was to the sound of a fried pan slamming against a hotplate and the delicious smell of pancakes cooking. Her eyes fluttered open and she groaned when the light of the day reached her eyes. She blindly looked for a pillow, gasping when she used her wrong hand. Eventually, she managed to cover her face with a small square pillow. She had a mild headache and though she had slept through the night without waking up, she was feeling still exhausted. And there was an aching hole in her chest, filled with immense sadness and deep longing.

Sighing, she kicked her sheets away and got on her feet. She shuffled to the chicken and found her mother setting on the table.

When she saw her daughter, Donna didn’t say anything. Instead, she reached for something and Felicity’s heart jumped in her chest when she realised it was her new box of the Med.

“Care to explain?” She asked.

Felicity shrugged. “It’s the Med,” she simply said, feeling taken aback and trapped. She had just woken up and was still feeling a bit drowsy. She most definitely wasn’t ready to face her mother and her questions.

“For a ten,” Donna said. “Last time I checked, your number was 8.8.”

Felicity bit on her lower lip. “Well, now it’s 9.4,” she told her, knowing there was no point in lying to her now that she had seen the box.

Donna’s eyes widened. “9.4… 9.4… That’s… How?”

Felicity looked down toward her feet. “My soulmate’s Oliver.”

Donna fell on a chair at the news and her jaw dropped. Not literally, but her mouth did fall open. Sighing, Felicity moved to sit down in front of her and told her everything that had happened at the party the day before, and what doctor Lazarev had told her about her bond. Her voice was low and neutral, lacking emotions. She didn’t like being that detached but she knew she’d break down again if she wasn’t. That’s also why she kept the details of her story with Oliver for herself. Thinking about him that way, thinking about how he had held her or kissed her was just too painful.
Donna didn’t say anything for a long while after her daughter was done telling her story. She had been the perfect listener, never interrupting Felicity and letting her say things at her own pace while holding her hand tightly.

“When are you going to tell him the truth?” She eventually asked, her voice strained.

“Never,” Felicity replied, nervously playing with the fabric of her tank top. “He can never know mom, this is very important.”

“But why?”

“What part didn’t you understand?” She angrily shot back, knowing it was unfair to take out her frustration on her mother but doing it nonetheless. “The one where I almost killed him? Or the one where his marriage to Isabel is the only way to save QC and Q. Inc?”

Donna gave her a warning look and Felicity hunched her shoulders.

“Sorry,” she quickly apologised, doing her best to calm herself down but she was feeling so angry and revolted, she had to let those emotions out, one way or another.

“Felicity, you have to tell him the truth. This,” she pointed at the box, “is only hurting you. And him.”

She shook her head. “I can’t tell him mom. I won’t be the one to put him in a position where he has to choose between me and his employees.”

“What are you going to do then? Keep working for him? Watch him marry another woman?”

“No of course not…”

“Then what are you going to do? Leave? To go where?”

“I – I don’t know,” Felicity stammered, feeling overwhelmed by her mother’s relentlessness. “Somewhere far. Maybe abroad.”

“Abroad? What about me? Visiting you in Star City is one thing, visiting you in another country a whole other. And what about your friends? There are people here who care about you. What about them? Are we supposed to say one last goodbye and then be done with them?”

“I – I don’t know, okay?” Felicity yelled, slamming her uninjured hand on the table, making her mother flinch. “Do you think this is easy for me?” She asked, her voice distorted by her anger. She got on her feet and started pacing. “Do you think I hold all the answers? That I know what to do and where to go? Well guess what? I don’t! I have no fucking idea of what I’m supposed to do now. I’m lost, okay!? Completely and utterly lost!”

She stared at her mother breathing heavily, her fists clenched tightly along her sides. “I don’t know what to do mom. I wasn’t prepared for this, it was never supposed to happen,” she pinched her nose fighting back her tears. God, why things had to be so hard and complicated? “I understand why you want me to tell him and you have to believe that I would have, had the circumstances been different. But I can’t tell him and I can’t stay, even if I don’t want to go either.” She took a deep breath, trying to get a hold on her emotions. “I really need you to support me on this mom, to help me. Please,” she added.

Donna closed her eyes, her lower lip shaking slightly. “I only want what’s best for you baby,” she eventually said, the look on her face more serious than Felicity had ever seen in her whole life.
Donna’s voice wasn’t warm like it usually was, but cold and harsh. “And it’s not that.”

Felicity flinched, her fingers twisting the fabric of her jammies.

“But…” Donna’s voice softened slightly. “You’re my daughter and I’ll help you, even if I don’t approve of your choice.”

Felicity nodded, feeling relieved. Donna wasn’t really on her side but she knew she’d help her, through anything. And right now, it was everything she needed.

Obviously, the two of them didn’t really feel like happily celebrating Hanukah after that. Something was weighing down on them now, there was a lingering tension between them. Felicity hated but there was nothing she could do about it. In spite of that, and under Donna’s impulse, they kept on with their traditions at night while they spent their days planning where Felicity’s journey would take her next. The blonde was doing most of the job though, because she knew her mother didn’t like it. But she did listen to her suggestions when she had some. Things were incredibly hard for her. She wasn’t leaving because she wanted to but because it was needed. It wasn’t really her decision, her choice was motivated by the current situation in Star City. To say it wasn’t really animating her to find a new position somewhere would be an understatement. She did attempt to write a resignation letter from Q. Inc though but she found it hard to find the right words and she knew it probably was because there wasn’t any.

She didn’t try to contact anyone, responding briefly to the texts she got from Tommy or Sara. She avoided talking to Oliver, not replying to his messages at all. And he surprised her when he didn’t show up at her doorstep. But then again, she could easily guess why. He was probably very busy with Isabel and his family and hoping to see her on December the 31rst, when they were supposed to help Tommy prepare things for his proposal to Laurel. Felicity had wanted to cancel at first but her mother had convinced her otherwise, reminding her she hadn’t left Star City yet – she still didn’t know where to go, but London was the city she was the most attracted to. Plus she already was on babysitting duty that day for Barry and Iris, so spending some time with her other friends as well wouldn’t hurt her. She’d just have to avoid being alone with Oliver.

Barry and Iris were celebrating their bonding anniversary on December 31rst, and they had decided to spend a romantic day and evening together. On Christmas day, they’d asked Donna if Felicity and she were okay with babysitting JJ, while Felicity had been outside with Oliver. Donna being Donna she had gladly accepted, not that Felicity would have refused if she had been present. But in the end, she’d be the only one watching JJ for most of the day, since Donna was leaving on another date with her mysterious boyfriend, for the whole day. Felicity was happy to see her mother happy and radiant so she hadn’t minded it too much when Donna had told her the news. In fact, she was looking forward to that day. She’d wake up super early to go watch JJ, they’d spend the day together, help Tommy in the afternoon and then they’d have a nice New Year’s Eve dinner with Donna. It was going to be a beautiful day, at least a better one than the ones she had spent hiding herself from her mother to cry and looking for somewhere to go and a new job.

Tommy Merlyn was a lot of things, Felicity had learnt in the time she had known him. He was a good businessman, a loyal friend and a loving soulmate. He cared about his family’s legacy about as much as he cared about what the future was holding out for him. He wasn’t perfect, but then nobody was, but he was fundamentally good. Now, as she was helping him prepare his proposal for his girlfriend, Felicity realised Tommy Merlyn was also a huge sap. And it made her laugh to no end.
To propose to Laurel, he had spent an insanely huge amount of money to rent Star City’s high school because he had decided to ask her to marry him where he had met her for the first time. He had discussed his plans for the evening with his friends and together, they had refined every single detail, so they’d spend an unforgettable evening. At first, they’d watch the movie they’d watch on their first date in the chemistry class, thanks to the overhead projector. They’d sit on blankets and pillows and eat popcorn and drink beer, just like they had that day. Then, they’d move to the hallway, where Tommy had first laid eyes on Laurel when she had been transferred to Star City’s high school. There, they’d eat her favourite meal on a small table, with a white tablecloth and a few candles to light things up a little bit. There would be two blackboards surrounding them, covered with pictures of the two of them throughout the years. Tommy wanted to remind her of all the things they’d been through during dinner. Then, they’d move to the gym, where their prom ball had taken place. They’d been elected King and Queen, even though they hadn’t even attend the thing as a couple and Tommy had been adamant they decorated the place exactly like it had been decorated that day. There, surrounded by flickering lights and red roses, Tommy would propose. He had even hired the band who had played the song they’d danced on after being crowned.

And it was to help Tommy get everything ready in time that Felicity found herself inside a gym, climbing up a ladder to fix lighting garlands to the ceiling. Wires were wires after all, whether they came from a powerful computer or something as beautiful as a garland.

“You alright up there?” Thea asked, as she was pinning silk ribbons to the walls.

“Never been better,” Felicity replied through gritted teeth, doing her best to stop looking down. She raised her arms up above her head again, gasping because the ladder was less stable when she wasn’t holding it. And also because she was wearing a crop top sweater and whenever she lifted her arms, she was afraid her scar would be exposed to her friends’ eyes. She had already felt the cool air of the gym hit the bottom of the car and thankfully, her friends had been too busy to notice anything but she didn’t know how long her luck would last. Damn Oliver for being late! She would have never worn that top, had she known she’d have to raise her arms high above her head.

“You’re doing great,” Tommy assured her. He was himself standing on another ladder to help her fix the garlands and tulle banners to the ceiling

“You’re the best F’licity,” JJ added, his reedy voice making Felicity a bit better.

“We’re almost done,” Tommy told her, hammering the last hook, before attaching the garlands to it. “And here, we’re done.”

“I’m so gonna kill Oliver,” she mumbled, relieved that it was finally time to go down.

“He’s being held back by Isabel,” Thea reminded her. “Have mercy!”

Felicity rolled her eyes and started climbing down, her legs shaking just slightly. When she reached the floor, JJ put a hand on her leg, smiling from ear to ear. She pinched his nose playfully, before running a hand in his hair. He giggled and she couldn’t help but huff a laugh too. They had had a great day so far, and she was actually happy Oliver was being held somewhere else, even if it meant she had to be the one climbing up the ladder. It was a small price to pay to avoid spending time in his company.

“So, what’s next?” Felicity asked, rubbing her hands together.

“We help Thea with the last ribbons and then… the blackboards,” Tommy said.

She nodded. “Right. You have the pictures?”
“In my car. I’m going to go get them, you stay here and help Thea. I’ll be back soon. Want to come with me buddy?” He asked JJ then and the little boy shook his head, his curls bouncing on top of his head.

“I’m staying with F’licity,” he said, gripping the fabric of her pants.

“Ouch, you’re hurting me,” Tommy joked, winking at Felicity.

He left them then and Felicity hurried to go help Thea while JJ gently offered to throw the pieces of ribbons and tulle banners in the bin.

“Hand me the scissors,” Thea asked and Felicity did it without thinking, coming up to hold the ribbon while Thea shortened a side.

“Careful with my fingers,” Felicity teased her. “My hand’s already been injured enough.”

“Aw poor baby! Did the doctor offer to cut it as a cure?” Thea replied humorously, bringing the scissors close to Felicity’s hand.

“They did actually,” Felicity explained, staring at her bandaged hand, “but I voted against it.”

“Wise choice,” Thea commented, pinning the last ribbon. “You can always use a hand,” she added, flashing her a bright smile.

Felicity smoothed the silky decorations and the girls both got on their feet, satisfied with their work.

“JJ be careful with your car, don’t play near the ladders,” she recommended when she saw the remotely controlled car hit one of the ladders a bit too violently, making it tremble slightly.

“Sorry F’licity,” he told her, guiding his toy somewhere else and running after it, babbling something about it being the “the most fastest car on earth”.

“You’re so good with him,” Thea complimented her.

Felicity shook her head. “I have nothing to do with this. He’s just a nice kid.”

Thea shrugged. “If you say so.”

Then, she suddenly shifted on her feet nervously, turning to face Felicity again. The blonde arched an eyebrow at the look on her face, the exact same Oliver always had when he wanted to ask her something.

“What is it?” She asked.

“You’re good with computers, right?” Thea said. “I’ve heard Ollie mention several times how good you are at explaining things to him and you did tell me the story of how you hacked into the phone of that Mandy Miller girl who was so mean to you in high-school so I assume that you know your way around a keyboard and that you know it very well actually.”

Felicity tensed up slightly, unpleasant memories surfacing again. “Yeah you could say that.”

“I was wondering if you could…” Thea chuckled nervously. “If you could help me with my SID’s account.”

Felicity frowned. “You’re turning eighteen in three weeks Thea, how could I possibly help you?”
“It’s driving me crazy,” she confessed, chewing on her lower lip worriedly. “The mere thought of my mom hiding things from me… It’s killing me. I need to know.”

“Thea, I…” Felicity started but she was interrupted by the arrival of Tommy and Oliver.

“Look who I found outside,” Tommy cheerfully said.

“Uncle Liver,” JJ squealed, dropping his remote control to jump in Oliver’s arms.

“Hey buddy!” Oliver greeted him, lifting him up.

“You see what we did?” The little boy asked, pointing at the garlands.

Oliver whistled, impressed. “You helped doing that?”

“Yes,” JJ confirmed, nodding happily. “I climbed up the ladder and helped Tom-Tom!”

“Is that so? You’re stronger than you look then,” Oliver teased him, tickling his sides playfully. The little boy giggled in delight and Felicity felt a smile stretch her lips. She felt her heart clench in her chest at the thought that soon, she wouldn’t be here anymore to witness this anymore. A lump formed in her throat at the sight of her soulmate, looking more carefree than he had in weeks. When he looked up and his eyes crossed hers, a wide smile on his lips, she felt her legs shake slightly. Being in his presence today, even for a few hours, was going to be harder than she had expected it to be and she started regretting not cancelling everything.

They moved from the gym to the inside of the school, and the hallway where they’d eat dinner. They had previously set the table and the chairs up, and Thea had decorated them with comfortable pillows and beautiful fabric. Oliver and Tommy went to get the blackboards while Thea and Felicity started organising the pictures of Laurel and Tommy. The plan was to have one blackboard covered with pictures of their youngest years, before they were a couple, and another blackboard covered with pictures of their life together.

“How is it possible to have so many pictures with the same person?” Felicity wondered.

“Laurel loves taking pictures,” Thea reminded her. “So do I by the way,” she added, leaning toward Felicity to snap a selfie of the two of them.

“I want to be on the picture too,” JJ pouted, holding his arms out.

Felicity lifted him. “Excuse Thea’s rudeness little man,” she apologised, kissing his cheek.

Thea nudged her playfully but did snap another picture, of the three of them this time.

“This is how you’re working?” Tommy teased them when they came back with the first blackboard. It was meant to be a joke, but Felicity could still feel his nervousness. She didn’t blame him though. He was only going to propose once in his life, and everything needed to be perfect, and more importantly ready on time.

Thea stuck his tongue at him. “We’re taking a break,” she replied, as they went away again. “Let’s get started though,” Thea suggested once they were out of sight, “or I fear Tommy might have a stroke.”

“He’s going to propose to the love of his life tonight. It’s normal to be nervous,” Felicity immediately defended him, letting go of JJ again.
“I never said it wasn’t,” Thea told her, reaching for a magnet to put the first picture on the board. “God I love weddings,” she sighed. “We’ll go shopping together, right Felicity? I’m sure Carl will come up with amazing ideas for our dresses. And if he doesn’t, then I will,” she laughed.

Felicity nodded absent-mindedly, knowing that she probably wouldn’t attend the wedding. Leaving Star City meant putting everything behind her. And in her heart she knew it was the true reason why she hadn’t cancelled her plans for today. In the end, those were among her last moments with the people she had met in Star City and had grown so close to and it she was determined to make the most of them.

She was saved from replying to Thea by Tommy and Oliver coming with the second blackboard.

“What were you guys talking about?” Oliver inquired.

“I was just telling Felicity how much I love weddings,” Thea informed him. “I can’t wait for your big day,” she added, elbowing Tommy playfully.

“F’licity, F’licity,” JJ cried, running toward her, his very small legs making the simple task cuter than it normally was. “My car doesn’t move!” He whined, handing her the remote control.

“The battery’s probably dead,” she told him, kneeling down next to him. “We’ll have to charge it up at home because I didn’t bring the charger here with me.”

“But I wanted to show uncle ‘Liver it’s fast,” he sniffled.

“How fast it is,” Felicity corrected gently. “You’ll have to show him another time. But if you want, I have this car game you like on my phone. You can show uncle ‘Liver that,” she added encouragingly.

He nodded and she handed him her phone, telling him to be careful with it. “Thank you F’licity.”

She got up again, watching him sit down against a locker tenderly. She looked up and saw Thea staring at her intently.

“What?”

“Nothing,” the brunette said. “Just thinking your children are going to be very lucky to have your as their mother.”

Felicity snorted, shaking her hand. “If I have children,” she couldn’t help but correct.

“You don’t want children?” Oliver asked her.

Her next breath got caught in her throat. It was the first words he had spoken to her directly since he had arrived. “I didn’t say that,” she replied. “I just…” She hesitated, nervously playing with the hem of her sweater. “I just never really thought about it.”

“Which is completely normal,” Tommy immediately agreed, coming to her rescue after sensing her nervousness. “You’re not twenty-one yet.”

“Right,” Oliver said, focusing back on the pictures in front of him.

They spent a few minutes without talking, pinning the pictures to the boards with only the sound of JJ’s game to fill the silence surrounding them. Until Tommy gasped.

“Oh my god, Ollie do you remember that party at Helena Bertinelli’s?” He asked him excitedly,
handed him the picture he had been holding.

Oliver frowned for a second, wincing slightly. “Yep, I do,” he said, not sharing his friend’s enthusiasm.

“We played a stupid game of Truth or Dare with our teammates before going,” Tommy told them. “Helena was the cheerleader’s captain and she had decided to throw a party in her house after we qualified our team for the finale of the state’s basketball championship,” Tommy shook his head, chuckling fondly at the memory. “Those idiots dared us to try and make out with more girls than the other. We were supposed to snap pictures to count down the number of girls we had kissed after the party.”

“Gross!” Thea and Felicity said both at the same time.

“This is technically when I kissed Laurel for the first time. It was more a peck than a kiss to be honest but I remember it as if it was yesterday,” he added softly, getting the picture back from Oliver.

“So I’m pretty sure I’m going to regret asking that question but who won that dare?” Thea asked, scrunching her nose slightly.

“There actually was a system of points. Three points for a kiss on the cheek, seven for a peck, eleven if we went all in like the French do. And of course, extra points if she had let us grope her a little bit.”

Felicity tensed up at his words. For the first time ever since she’d met Oliver and Tommy, she was confronted to her soulmate’s tumultuous past. She knew that whenever Tommy started sharing some of their stories, he made sure his friends would only tell the funny stories. Not the uglier ones, involving sex, drugs and alcohol. Because deep down, she knew Oliver wasn’t proud of his past, of who he used to be, and after their conversation on Christmas, she even believed he regretted most of the things he had done.

“That system of points still exist,” Thea blurted out before realising what she had just say when her brother stiffened and shot her a dark look. “Not that I’ve been a part of any game including it, I’ve just… I’ve just seen guys, and girls too to be honest, use it at parties.” It wasn’t enough to make Oliver relax. “So Tommy,” Thea went on, eager to change the topic, “who ended up winning the game in the end?”

“Ollie,” Tommy answered. “He scored 50 extra points that night, with Helena Bertinelli herself.”

Thea gasped while Felicity frowned. “What does that mean?”

“Nothing,” Oliver assured her, a blush creeping on his cheek.

“It means they did it,” Thea said, looking slightly disgusted. “Ew, ew Ollie!”

“Oh,” Felicity let out, understanding what Thea had meant, her shoulders going limp. Why was she so surprised? It wasn’t like she didn’t know how he used to act back then.

“Can we talk about something else?” Oliver asked, clearly looking ill-at-ease.

“No way,” Thea interrupted him. “This is golden blackmail material,” she added, grinning like the cat which had just caught the canary. “Tommy, do you have more stories to share?” She asked.

“What about this picture? What does it remind you of?”

“Oh this was at Carter “Douche” Bowen’s place,” Tommy started. “Ollie was dating Carrie
“Freaky” Cutter then and she was a bit of a possessive bit…”

“Guys,” Oliver warned them.

“Right, sorry Ollie,” Tommy apologised, looking back to the pictures in front of him.

Thea grumbled a little bit after he stopped talking but the conversation was quickly orientated toward weddings, which were really something she loved. Adored would even be more accurate. They talked about Tommy’s weddings, what he had in mind for his big day.

“But what about you guys?” He asked them. They had just finished pinning the pictures and were now waiting for the florists to come and drop the red roses. “What would you like for your big day?”

“The Plaza, in May or maybe June,” Thea replied immediately. “Roses everywhere, very expensive champagne and a princess dress with lightings, like that Zac Posen’s dress from this year’s MET gala.”

Both Tommy and Oliver chuckled. “You’ve put a lot of thought in your wedding Speedy.”

“I’m just thinking ahead,” she replied, shrugging. “What about you Lissy?”

Felicity, who had been drinking, choked on her bottle of water. “Me?” Her voice was strangled and she coughed some more. “I haven’t been thinking ahead.”

“You haven’t thought about your children, you haven’t thought about your wedding,” Thea listed. “What do you think about when you think of your future?”

The next place to run.

Felicity was this close to say that to her. But she couldn’t, obviously, so she went with a more neutral.

“I’m kind of soulmateless at the moment.”

“Me too,” Thea argued. “But I already know I want three children, and their names will start with the letter C. Camila, Cecily and Chris are my favourites.”

Felicity blinked at her and noticed Tommy had started fidgeting nervously. “You’re crazy.”

Thea shook her head. “No, you want to have thought of baby names before you start arguing with your soulmate over them.”

Tommy snorted at that and Felicity shot him a weird look. JJ got on his feet and came to Felicity handing her phone back to her. He couldn’t play anymore, having lost all his health points. She lifted him up in her arms after that.

“Felicity will marry me,” he said very seriously then, wrapping one of his arms around her neck.

Everyone chuckled at his words.

“Aren’t you a bit young?” Oliver asked, amusement filling his eyes.

JJ nodded. “I’ll be four soon,” he reminded him.

“That’s still young,” Oliver insisted. “And what about your soulmate?”
He shrugged. “I don’t have one,” he said, hiding his face in Felicity’s neck.

The little boy was too young to understand what a soulmate was exactly and what it meant to have one. But since every children were born with a mark on their skin, most parents chose to tell them tales and stories of princes and princesses being soulmates, and sharing the same mark, in order to have them grow up knowing about soulmates. Barry and Iris were among them.

What JJ meant when he said he didn’t have a soulmate was that his other half wasn’t born yet. At such a young age, it was hard to put into words how having a soulmate felt, but it wasn’t complicated to say how not having one felt. Children weren’t exactly in pain when they were born before their soulmate, but they did feel a void, one they often told their parents about. They forgot about it while they grew up though, the presence of their soulmate erasing everything else. Felicity had never been through that, since she was born seven years after Oliver and she didn’t remember exactly how it had felt to have him in her heart and thoughts when she had been around three and four years old. She had just been left with a vague impression of bright colours and sweet tenderness. It wasn’t common for two people to be born with such a huge difference. Most soulmates were born the same year, four years top. Huge age gaps like Felicity and Oliver’s were rare but actually not the rarest. The rarest were those exceeding ten years.

“She’ll be in every part of your life soon enough kiddo,” Tommy told him, patting his back. “Damn, I…” he sighed.

“Language,” Felicity chastised him immediately.

He cocked his head. “I don’t remember about Laurel’s birth. But then, that’s probably because we were born months apart,” he added, scratching the back of his head.

“Mine was born before me,” Thea said.

“My too,” Felicity confessed.

Tommy opened his mouth to say something but then the florist called him to tell him he had arrived and they went to get the boxes of flowers. They dropped some boxes in the hallway before making their way to the gym where they hang roses on the arch Tommy would propose to Laurel under.

“I remember when my soulmate was born,” Oliver said after a while of them working silently, except for exchanging advice and ideas.

Felicity froze at his words while Tommy and Thea looked up from their flowers.

“I don’t remember the exact date but I do remember the day perfectly. I was six years old, maybe seven already, I really can’t say. My soulmark had been burning all day long at school. I know now it wasn’t that bad but then I thought it was awful. I kept scratching it, trying to relieve some of the pain. Raisa – you remember Raisa, Felicity? She’s our family’s help, I told you about her.” She nodded, a lump of emotions forming in her throat at what he was telling them. “Well, she picked me up at four, like she always did. She had even baked me my favourite cookies during the afternoon,” he said, smiling fondly.

“The double-chocolate ones?” Tommy wondered.

Oliver nodded. “Yep. Raisa was worrying a lot and she called my parents to ask for their opinion. They said it was probably nothing – I really was fine after all, except for that burn – and they urged her to put me to bed, but to call them if things got worse.” He paused, smiling softly, looking down at the rose he was holding. “Her cry woke me up in the middle of the night. I heard it echo in my
head. Her first cry. It pulled at something, right here,” he pointed at his chest, “and before I knew it everything was brighter, better. She was everywhere.”

Felicity pinched her lips together, swallowing, hard, to loosen up her throat a bit. No one had pointed out Isabel, Oliver’s so called soulmate, was actually three years older than him and she didn’t know if she was happy or sad about it. She dropped the roses she had been holding on a near table.

“I need to go to the bathroom,” she excused herself, pinching her lips as she left, trying to hold back her emotions.

“And before I knew it everything was brighter, better.”

She pushed the door behind her, leaving it half-open and took a few steps toward the sink. Oliver really wasn’t making things easy for her when he said such things. She gripped the rims so tightly her fingers turned white. The moment she had decided to leave, she had known it was going to be hard. But it was so much worse than what she had expected. She loved her friends, her life in Star City. She loved Oliver too, his eyes, his smile, his laugh. She wiped the corner of her eyes, trying to find the strength inside her to hold onto her what she had decided. What she needed to do.

“Why are you sad?” A small voice asked her.

She jumped in surprise, putting a hand on her chest to cover her racing heart. “JJ, God! You scared me kiddo.”

“Why are you sad?” He insisted, his little eyebrows furrowed in concentration.

She cocked her head gently. “I’m not sad,” she told him softly.

“But you have a sad face.”

She shrugged, widening her smile a little bit, to reassure him. “I’m just a little bit tired,” she explained.

“Do you need to go to sleep? I’ll give you Coco, he’ll watch while you sleep,” he added.

“That’s very nice of you,” she replied sincerely, knowing how much he loved his teddy bear. “What about you? Do you want to go home? Are you tired?”

He nodded, his curls following the movement of his head. “A little bit,” he admitted.

“I know it’s not funny to be here all day,” she agreed, a sympathetic smile stretching her lips. “I’ll tell you that, we finish with the roses in the gym and then we go back home.” There wouldn’t be much work left to do, and she was sure Thea, Tommy and Oliver would have enough hands between the three of them to handle it. Plus, if they left early, Oliver wouldn’t have time to talk to her in private, like she suspected he had planned.

He smiled, clapping his hand enthusiastically. “Can we eat key lime pie?” He asked. “Daddy takes me when he picks me up from the nanny.”

Felicity knew which place he was referring to, having been there with Barry herself once. “Deal,” she agreed, lifting him up in her arms.

They went back inside the gym and soon enough, they were done with putting the roses on the arch. They all stepped away, admiring their hard work.
“We should think about becoming professional proposal planners,” Thea commented, smiling appreciatively.

Both Oliver and Tommy chuckled, shaking her head.

“You can still do it if you want to,” Felicity told her, squeezing her shoulder gently.

Thea gave her a small smile and Felicity’s shoulders dropped when she realised what she had just said. Thea was going to study at Star City’s University next year and get a MBA.

“Anyway, what’s up next?” Thea asked, shaking her head.

“The band should be here soon, they need to install their equipment,” Tommy replied.

“JJ and I will go now,” Felicity informed then. “He’s starting to get tired and I know there isn’t much left to do so…” She looked down toward the tips of her shoes, feeling slightly remorseful for leaving before everyone else.

“Yeah, it’s okay. I’m surprised the kid lasted that long,” Tommy told her, squeezing her hand lightly. Now that she was taking the proper dose of the Med, his touch wasn’t burning her anymore and it was a relief. She helped JJ into his coat, putting on his beanie, scarf and gloves. It was still cold outside, the weather still being very snowy. She put on her own coat when she was done with JJ and they left, waving everyone goodbye and wishing Tommy all the luck, not that he would need it. They walked to her car and Felicity held JJ’s little hand in hers on the way.

They stopped by the small bakery shop near the police station where Barry worked to eat the key lime pie JJ had mentioned. Felicity snapped a picture of JJ and his white creamy moustache and quickly sent it to his parents. They didn’t reply immediately, but Felicity didn’t expect them too. They were after all gone for a romantic escapade and had decided against consulting their phones during it. They had given Felicity the number of the place they were staying in, to use only in case of emergency.

“F’licity, can we go to the park before going home?” JJ asked her politely, a cute smile on his lips.

She tilted her head. “I thought you were tired.”

“But the park is just here,” he told her. “And I want to play in the snow, please.” He pouted slightly, and it made him look so adorable, she had to fight off the desire to hug him tightly and peppered his face with kisses.

She sighed. “Well, we did spend the whole day between four walls,” she admitted. “I guess we could use some fresh air!”

“Yes!” He squealed in delight.

“But we won’t stay out for too long,” she warned him. “I don’t want you to catch a cold, your parents would kill me.”

“I’ll protect you F’licity,” he assured her and she shook her head amused by his confidence. The little boy really was her favourite person in the world at this very moment.

They walked to the park, which was not as empty as Felicity had thought it would be. There was a few couples strolling between the snowy trees and a few children playing in the snow, building snowmen. Before she could hold him back, JJ was running toward the children, who welcomed him
warmly and he started helping them with the snowmen. Felicity politely greeted the people watching them, funnily most of them were grandparents, before bringing her attention back to JJ.

Parts of her conversation from earlier with her friends came back to her as she watched the children play in the snow, giggling. They looked so happy, so carefree, so innocent, it tugged at something in her heart. A pang of want and longing, she hadn’t known she had in herself overwhelmed her. It had always been out of question for her to have children with someone other than her soulmate. Her father had been her mother’s soulmate and it hadn’t prevented him from leaving. Who knew what would happen with someone with less attachment to her? She didn’t want her children to be fatherless. So she had decided she’d never have any and it had always been fine with her. Until now. Until she met her soulmate. Until Oliver.

It was normal, she thought, that she was wondering about the what ifs. About what could have been. It was normal she was desiring things she had never wanted before, hoping for things she knew would never be. She was still too emotionally invested in this part of her life where she had entertained the thought of being with her soulmate. She knew with time and distance she’d find her former self back. But for now she was here and she indulged herself a small fantasy. One single fantasy. She imagined a boy with high cheekbones and adorable dimples. A boy with blue eyes clear like the sea and sandy brown curls bouncing on top of his head. She closed her eyes, saving the boy in a corner of her heart. Unreachable, but safe.

When she opened her eyes again, she realised she wasn’t seeing the children anymore. She frowned, her heart jumping in her chest in worry, but then she spotted one counting and she figured they were playing hide-and-seek. She let them play for a while longer before getting JJ and telling him it was time to go home. He took her hand without protesting, waving goodbye to his friends with the other.

They started walking toward the park’s exit and at some point, JJ decided to run ahead of her, hiding himself behind trees, his little head with his mischievous smile the only thing peeking out. Until he called for her.

“F’licity! I found a box!”

Frowning, she walked to the tree he had hidden behind. He was standing next to a cardboard box.

“Don’t touch it,” she told him. “We don’t know who put it there or what’s inside.”

He nodded and came to her. She looked around, trying to see if there was anyone around. There wasn’t. Sighing, she kneeled in front of the box and watched it carefully. It didn’t look dangerous, but then dangerous things rarely looked like it. She was startled when she heard a faint nose and felt something knock the box. From the inside. Intrigued, she opened it and her heart clench in her chest at the sight of two very small kitten glued to one another and still shivering.

“Oh!” She let out, motioning for JJ to come. “Look!”

“Kittens,” he whispered. “They’re so small!” He said, looking at them in wonder. “Why are they in a box?” He asked her and she bit on her lower lip nervously, not knowing how to explain to him that sometimes people abandoned their pets.

“I don’t know,” she said, taking off her scarf. The snow had dampened the bottom of the box and the two poor kittens were lying on it, wet and freezing. Carefully, she moved them and they meowed weakly in response, their blue eyes half-open. Then, she placed her scarf in the bottom of the box, before putting the kitten back in.

“Why are you putting them back in the box?” JJ asked. “We can’t leave them here,” he stated, his
little hand reaching out to pet one of the kitten. The poor baby was so tired, it didn’t even fight the
contact.

“Of course not,” Felicity agreed, getting on her feet, the box in her hands. “But I know nothing about
kitten and how to take care of them.”

“Mommy takes me to the doctor when I’m sick,” JJ told her very seriously, walking close to her now
that they had a precious cargo to take care of.

Felicity checked her phone for the time. 5 pm. “At this time of the day? On New Year’s Eve?” She
shook her head. “I doubt we’ll find a vet willing to see them.”

“We have to try,” JJ insisted, as they reached the car. Felicity sighed. She put the box with the kitten
on the seat next to her before buckling JJ up in his seat. Then she sat down, and pulled her phone out
of her purse. She had several missed calls from Oliver, which she decided to ignore, and one from
her mother. She had left a message and Felicity listened to it, biting on her lip worriedly.

“Felicity, I just wanted to tell you I’m probably going to be late for dinner. I’m so sorry baby, we
went far out of town, and now the road is blocked because of a car accident – a heavy truck slipped
on the icy road. We have to wait for the road to be cleared out, it should take a few more hours and
then we have to actually drive back... I’m so sorry baby, I’ll call you back when I know more.”

Felicity sighed, that was bad luck. Shaking her head, she texted her mother to let her know she had
gotten her message. Then, she opened Google – it was why she had gotten her phone out in the first
place after all. The blessed search engine was kind enough to inform her there was an animal shelter
opened until 9 pm every day and to guide her there, using the GPS app she had downloaded – she
had a terrible sense of direction.

They went there and were received quickly by a vet. The kittens were two weeks and a half old and
they’d find them right before their condition became critical. There was a male and a female. They
were white long-haired kittens, with darker ears, tails, muzzles and paws and both had beautiful blue
eyes.

“You probably saved their lives,” the vet told Felicity and the blonde was glad that JJ was too
absorbed by his game on her phone to hear what he was saying. They didn’t make her pay the
consult, it was New Year’s Eve after all and even offered her what she’d need to feed the poor
babies. It wasn’t exactly the time for Felicity to get a kitty, even less two kittens but the shelter was
already taking care of too many animals and the look JJ shot her when she suggested they keep them
made her forget the idea quickly. She could keep them for now and give them for adoption later,
when they were older. If she didn’t fall in love with them in the meantime, of course.

They went back to Felicity’s apartment after that and it was almost 6:40 pm. Felicity felt exhausted
when they stepped inside the elevator. It had been a very long day and when she realised it was far
from being over, she grunted. JJ was happily babbling about the kittens and Felicity felt relieved that
pets were allowed inside her building, because JJ spoke of the kitten so loudly and enthusiastically, it
would have been impossible for her to get them in discreetly, right to the face of her neighbours.

She almost dropped the box with the kitten when she saw Oliver sitting down, his back to her door,
obviously waiting for her.

“Oliver,” she let out.

“Uncle ‘Liver!”’ JJ shout giddily.
He got on his feet and Felicity felt her heartbeat fasten. What was he doing here? What did he want? What was she supposed to do?

“Hey again buddy,” he said smiling, running a hand though JJ’s hair.

“We have kittens!” JJ told him, fisting the fabric of his dark jeans tightly.

Oliver frowned. “You have kittens?”

“Yes,” JJ nodded. “I found them in the park and Felicity took them to the doctor and he said we had to keep them.”

Oliver looked up to Felicity. “It’s true,” she confirmed.

“That’s why you didn’t pick up your phone?”

“I was busy,” she quickly said. “I hope you haven’t been waiting here for too long.”

He shook his head. “Nah, it’s alright. Although I feared for my virtue when your neighbour, Mrs. Fisher, insisted I came in while waiting for you.”

Felicity couldn’t help but chuckle. Mrs. Fisher was her next-door neighbour and an old cat lady. She was anything but mean or dangerous but she could be quite persistent. She had been alone for too long, and craved others’ company more because she’d never been bonded to her soulmate. Felicity would probably become a Mrs. Fisher someday. At least she had the cats now.

Sighing, she reached for her keys to open the door, but between the box with the kittens, her purse and the bag with the stuff she’d need for the babies, she found herself struggling. Oliver immediately came to help her, taking the box from her, his hands brushing hers in the process. She gasped when the simple touch made her skin react, goose bumps breaking along her arms. She quickly turned her head away, focusing on the door in front of her instead of the blush she could feel spreading on her cheeks.

The three of them walked inside her apartment and Oliver closed the door behind him, listening to JJ telling him about the pie he had eaten and what games he had played in the park with the other children.

“You should be careful,” Oliver warned Felicity. “If you keep spoiling him like that, he’ll never want to leave you.” He put the box on her couch and opened it.

“Damn,” he swore. “They’re so small.” He reached for one hesitantly, the female – there was a dark spot on her back, that wasn’t on her brother’s. Felicity watched him pet her before he lifted her up. She fit in his hand perfectly.

“She looks good on you,” she said, going to fetch a blanket. The vet had said keeping the kitten warm was very important.

When she came back, Oliver had knelt to let JJ pet the kitten in his hand. Felicity moved the box from the couch, her fingers brushing the male’s back reassuringly. She put one of the blankets on her couch, then she carefully deposited the two kittens on it, wrapping them tightly. They looked adorably cute in the pink blanket, holding onto one another.

“What are you doing here?” Felicity eventually asked Oliver, while JJ carefully caressed the kittens’ heads, whispering sweet words to the “kitty cats”. Their eyes were closing and Felicity had a feeling they were finally all warm and content. They only needed to be fed now and she’d get to it after she
had dealt with Oliver.

“You weren’t picking your phone, so I came to see you,” he simply said, before gesturing toward JJ.

She opened her mouth to suggest they moved away from the three-year-old when her phone rang. She picked up immediately and got on her feet, Oliver right behind her.

“Yes mom?” She said.

“Felicity, I… Have… News.” There was something wrong with the call, static and interference on the line.

“What news? Mom I don’t hear you very well.”

Oliver gave her a questioning look and she mouthed. “Date.”

His eyes widened even more and she ignored his surprise to focus on her mother’s words.

“We’re stuck… A snow…storm is coming.”

“Snowstorm? Did you say snowstorm?” She asked.

“Yes, not safe… to drive… right now.”

“Wait, you’re not coming back?

“I’m so sorry baby… I’m leaving… you alone with JJ.”

Felicity clenched her eyes shut and pinched her nose. That’s why she didn’t see Oliver coming to her and sweep her phone out of her grasp.

“Donna, this is Oliver. […] Yes.” He scrunched his nose in the same cute way Thea had earlier, obviously struggling to understand Donna because of the static. “Don’t worry about Felicity, JJ and I will keep her company. […] Yes, sure. Take care.”

He hung up then and Felicity stared at him with her eyes wide open. “Be my guest, take my phone, talk to my mom without my consent…”

Oliver chuckled. “I just wanted her to know you were going to be fine,” he said.

“I could have told her that myself,” she hissed back. “Besides, don’t you have somewhere to be tonight?”

He shrugged. “My parents and Isabel are busy I-don’t-really-know-where and Thea is attending a party with her friends from high-school.”

“They’re leaving you alone? Just like that?”

He nodded. “New Year’s Eve is not really a family thing.” He crossed his arms on his chest at the look on her face. “What’s wrong with you anyway?”

She opened her mouth to say something when JJ came inside the kitchen. “F’licity can I feed one of the kitty myself?”

“One of the kittens buddy,” Oliver corrected him gently. “And maybe you should let me and Felicity take care of that, okay?” JJ pouted. “C’me on, don’t give me that look man. I’ll let you help me with
the cooking. We wouldn’t want Felicity to poison us for New Year’s Eve,” he added playfully, his tone teasing. He was obviously trying to get a reaction out of Felicity and he got one when she rolled her eyes at him.

A smile appeared on his face and he asked, his tone hopeful. “You’re staying?”

Oliver turned to look at Felicity. “I don’t know, am I?” He asked her.

She sighed. It wasn’t what she had planned for the evening. It wasn’t what she wanted at all. Her plan was to distance herself from everyone and especially Oliver, not to spend a whole evening with him and a three-year-old who’d go to bed before the night was over for the grown-ups. What would she do once she was alone with Oliver? It was obvious he wanted to talk to her. What would she tell him? She knew she couldn’t lie to him face to face, he’d see right through her immediately.

But how could she say no to him, when he was using JJ against her? He knew she wouldn’t refuse the boy anything.

“Of course, he’s staying,” she found herself saying, forcing herself to smile.

Everything was going to be alright. She just needed to regain control of the situation. But it was kind of hard when she was suddenly feeding kitten with a bottle next to Oliver, JJ next to them throwing out name ideas.

“Peanut.”

“I’m allergic to nuts.”

“Bacon.”

“We aren’t going to eat it buddy.”

“Cookie.”

“What’s with you and naming kitten after food?” Felicity eventually asked, laughing.

“I love food and I love kittens,” the little boy explained simply. “Can I take a picture with your phone please?”

“You know how to do that?” Oliver asked, looking surprised.

“Of course Uncle Liver. Daddy lets me use his phone!”

“But you’re not four yet!” Oliver protested.

“Time to live with you time old man,” Felicity teased him, glad she could get revenge for his comment on her cooking. “And sure you can,” she added for JJ, patting his leg gently.

After they were done feeding the kittens and taking care of them, Felicity went to the bathroom with JJ, to help him shower while Oliver started cooking dinner. As soon as he was out and clean, the little boy went to help him and Felicity watched them from afar, her arms crossed over her chest to hold her heart back in place. The image of the little boy she had safely tucked there was coming back to haunt her.

Why did Oliver stay here? Why was he making things so hard for her? And why wasn’t he with his family? His fiancée? It would make sense, especially if he wanted people to believe in their fake union.
“Come help us F’licity,” JJ told her from where he was standing on a chair to reach the counter and help Oliver.

“If you don’t mind, I’d like to rest my hand,” she told him, pointing at her bandaged hand. It was still sore and bruised from how she’d punch her shower wall.

“What happened to your hand?” Oliver asked, frowning.

“Little boy’s ears,” she said.

Oliver quickly covered JJ’s ears with his hands, making the little boy giggle before he started to fight against them.

“I punched a wall,” she said, rolling her eyes at him.

His frown grew deeper. “Why?”

“It was being rude to me, I had to defend myself,” she deadpanned.

He gave her a look and she shrugged. He let go of JJ and Felicity’s eyes focused on his hand, where she knew a scar was marking his skin. The same way he had punched a mirror after he had realised she was gone, she had punched a wall when she had realised she had to leave him.

“I was angry, because I lost something,” she answered him, hoping it would satisfy him. It wasn’t technically a lie. She had lost him that night.

“Look inside my coat’s pocket,” he told her.

She tilted her head. “What?”

“My coat’s pocket. The left one.”

Frowning, she got on her feet and reached for his coat, which he had left on her couch. She pulled out a small box and when she opened it, she saw her arrow bracelet, shining slightly because of the light inside her kitchen.

“I found it at the Plaza,” Oliver explained. “Must have fallen from your wrist when you left the party, it was on the stairs, outside.”

She opened her mouth to say something, anything but no words come out. She had lost it outside, what were the chances of having Oliver find it? She felt a lump of emotions form in her throat and she had a hard time swallowing it down. When she had lost her bracelet, she had thought it wasn’t a coincidence, that it really was time for her to let go. But now, she had gotten her bracelet back and Oliver had been the one to give it to her. What was she supposed to make of that? What was she supposed to think?

“Felicity, are you okay?” Oliver asked and she heard mild concern in his voice.

“Yes,” she replied, closing the box. “Thank you,” she added, truly meaning it. “You have no idea how much this means to me. I was really upset when I lost it.”

He nodded. “I can understand that. I tend to get upset too when I lose something,” he told her and she felt like he was talking about losing something far more important than losing a bracelet.

He gave her a small smile and she replied with a soft one, knowing now what she had to do. Enjoy the evening. Enjoy the night. It was an unexpected gift. She was being given one last chance to be
with him and be happy with him, before it was time for her to go. She’d be a fool if she wasted it. With her arrow bracelet back, the circle was fully complete. She could go back to what her life used to be before Oliver, before Star City. But she wouldn’t do it without enjoying another few hours in the light first.

“Thank you again,” she added, going up to hug him.

It was quick and she pulled away before he could hug her back but it was enough to make her feel better.

“You’re welcome,” he replied, squeezing her shoulder.

They stared at one another for a second, forgetting about JJ. Until he said.

“Are you going to kiss like mommy and daddy do?”

They broke eye-contact at his words. Oliver started coughing and Felicity felt her cheeks redden, and a nervous laugh escaped her.

“What? Oliver and I? No, no way, never!”

“But you look like mommy and daddy do,” he insisted.

Oliver pinched his lips together before saying. “It’s because we’re very good friends,” he explained. “But just good friends. We’re not like mommy and daddy, right Felicity?”

She remained silent for a second, her eyes going back and forth between them.

“No, we’re not,” she agreed, her fingers holding the box in her hand a little bit tighter.

In the end, she made the most out of the evening. She laughed and smiled and enjoyed the presence of her soulmate and her favourite human being in the world, who happened to be a three-year-old boy. She drank tasty wine and ate good food – that may be the only point on which Oliver and she were complimentary, since she couldn’t cook to save her life and he was a chef. They watched a Disney movie, Finding Nemo, with JJ in Felicity’s lap and the sleeping kitten in Oliver’s. JJ fell asleep before the movie was over but they didn’t move him until the very end.

When the credits started, Felicity smiled, looking down at JJ sprawled out on her chest, his curly head buried in her neck, his little arms hanging loosely along her sides. Then, she turned her head, to see Oliver’s eyes shining slightly.

“Oliver Queen are you crying?” She whispered.

He shook his head. “I’m not.”

But she did see him wipe his eyes and she squeezed his hand lightly.

“I’m going to put him to bed,” she told him before getting on her feet. JJ would be sleeping in a folding crib Barry and Iris usually used when they went on vacation. She carefully set him down in his bed, and covered him with his blanket, safely tucking his Coco under his arm. She brushed her fingers lightly against his cheek.

“Goodnight,” she whispered softly even though he couldn’t hear.

When she came back, she found Oliver standing against her kitchen counter, a piece of paper on the table. He had his arms crossed over his chest and a look on his face she had never seen before. It was
angry, but mostly it was hurt. She was facing raw pain, the kind of pain people walked away from because it was just too much and nothing could have prepared her for it.

“Care to explain?” He asked. No scratch that, there was something definitely demanding in his tone.

Slowly, she reached for the piece of paper. Her heart sunk in her chest when she saw what it was.

Her attempt at a resignation letter.

Frack.

“Oliver,” she started, her voice shaking slightly. “I…”

“You what Felicity?” He cut her off. “Is there something you wish to tell me?”

His voice was hard, his tone harsh. He’d never used that kind of tone with her. Ever.

She pinched her lips tightly, her heart throbbing in her chest. “Yes,” she whispered. “Yes,” she repeated, looking up to meet his eyes, “there is. I quit.”

“No you don’t.”

His reply was quick and strong. It didn’t call for any debate.

“Yes, I do.”

“Is it because of what I told you at Tommy’s the other day?” He asked, the pain underlying in his tone hitting her like arrows in her chest. “Ever since I told you about it, you’ve been acting weird, distancing yourself from me…”

“Oliver,” she tried to say.

“And I’d like to remind you,” he went on as if she hadn’t said anything, “that you promised you wouldn’t look at me any differently. And yet you are.”

“It’s…”

“It wasn’t easy telling you,” he interrupted her again, running a hand through his hair in frustration. “Honestly, it was one of the hardest things I ever had to do. Because I’m not this jerk anymore and I never wanted you to know about him but I thought – I thought after all the things you had shared with me, I could share that one thing without being afraid.”

“Oliver, you don’t understand…”

“What is there to understand?” He shouted, and for a short second, she thought he might wake JJ up. “I told you the truth about me and now you want to leave. What is there to understand?” He repeated, his voice breaking by the end of his speech.

“I’d tell you if you let me speak!” She shouted back, starting to feel frustrated.

“You promised Felicity,” he reminded her. “You promised you wouldn’t look at me differently and I trusted you.”

The words hurt and she felt her heart shatter in her chest. She hadn’t thought of that. She hadn’t thought he’d feel like she was pulling away because of who he used to be, because of what he had told her.
“I’m not looking at you differently Oliver, I swear,” she told him, her voice shaking. “And it’s not the reason why I want to quit.”

“Then why?” He asked, his eyes a swirl of emotions – fear, pain, desperation, they were all there, taunting her. “Did something happen at the party? Is it my mother? Is it Isabel?”

She shook her head. “No,” she tried to lie. “Nothing happened, they’re not the problem.” She knew she couldn’t lie to him so she had to tell him the truth. At least parts of it. “I am,” she confessed.

“No,” he stated, strolling toward her. “You’re not.”

Before she knew it, he was there, close to her. He crossed the invisible borders of her personal space and invaded her bubble, forcing her to take a step back. He didn’t let her go far though because he wrapped an arm around her waist and brought her back to him, pressing her chest against his.

“Oliver,” she gasped.

“Now, you listen to me, and you listen very carefully Felicity Megan Smoak.” She swallowed, her heart pounding in her chest, her skin burning in the most pleasant way where his hand was holding her tightly. “You’re not a problem Felicity, you’re a solution.” He shook his head. “Sorry, that wasn’t my best way of saying things. What I mean is that with you here, with me, I’m better. I’m happy. Both at work and in my life. You make me happy and I don’t want to see you go.”

“Oliver…”

He leaned his face closer to hers, cupping one of her cheeks and her next breath got caught in her throat. “That day, under the mistletoe, when you kissed me, I – I felt something,” he whispered. He leaned impossibly closer to her, enough for her to feel his warm breath on her lips. “Something I’d never felt before,” he went on, his nose rubbing against hers. She felt him shiver against her as he inhaled deeply. “God, what are you doing to me?” He whispered, his voice so low she wasn’t sure he had meant to say the words out loud.

“I’m not…”

“Don’t,” he interrupted her, sounding slightly annoyed. “Don’t pretend you don’t feel it, because I know you do.” He tilted his head slightly after that, his lips brushing her cheek. She felt her legs buckle under her and she probably would have fallen if he hadn’t been holding her. He pressed a firm kiss under her ear and a shiver coursed through her body, goose bumps breaking on her skin and she mentally cursed the way her body was reacting to his, in spite of her will, in spite of the Med.

“Felicity,” he whispered tenderly, and she felt her heart skip a beat in her chest.

“Oliver,” she replied in a breath, her fingers fisting the fabric of his shirt, bringing him impossibly closer to her.

It proved to be his undoing.

He crashed his lips to hers forcefully, muffling her gasp of surprise in the process.

For one perfect second, time stopped and it was just lips against lips. Skin against skin. Chest pressed to chest.

The calm before the storm.
But then Felicity put two and two together and she realised what was happening. She was kissing Oliver. The thought drew a deep moan out of her and he took advantage of it to slip his tongue past her lips. She wrapped her arms around his neck, holding him to her while his tongue invaded her mouth, not losing time to discover her, learning her and immediately stroking boldly against her tongue. She replied as best as she could, tasting the savour of wine on his tongue but in the end, she was helpless against his assault, against the desperation with which he was consuming her. She was surrounded by him as he was taking possession of all her senses. He was the only thing she could feel, taste, smell - the heady perfume of his cologne was making her head spin, until her head was literally spinning. He picked her up and turned her around, so that he could sit her down on her kitchen table. His tongue slipped out of her mouth and he nibbled at her lower lip, earning a long moan of pleasure from her when he soothed the pain with his tongue.

He moved his mouth from hers to her jaw, peppering open-mouthed kisses on every inch of skin within his reach, nibbling her skin lightly on the way to her ear, making sure to rasp his scrub against her sensitive skin. She threw her head back to give him more access, abrading her lips to hold back the sounds of pleasure he was pulling out of her. His hand moved from her waist to her hipbone, where her soulmark used to be, his fingers starting a fire wherever they brushed her skin. Her own hands gravitated toward his chest on their own volition and she knew it had to be where his own soulmark was. She swore she could feel it pulse under her fingers. Or maybe it was just his heartbeat, she honestly couldn’t say and didn’t care. She cried out when he reached her ear and tugged at her earlobe in the most sensual way, her fists clenching the fabric of his clothes, desperate for something to hold onto.

“Oliver,” she moaned, her breathing erratic, her heart beating so hard and fast she feared it was going to dig a hole out of her chest. Her bond was still tied up by the Med, but she felt it was that close to breaking and it was what brought her back from the haze Oliver’s lips on her had sent her in. She reached for his hair and made him pull away from the column of her throat, where his journey had taken him next.

He pressed back soft kisses on her mouth, whispering against her lips.

“Please don’t go away,” kiss, “please?” kiss, “no one’s ever stood by me for so long before,” kiss, “and – and I look at you, and I… and I’m home.” He didn’t kiss her this time, just leaned his forehead against hers.

Her eyes welled up with tears when she heard the words that had made him cry earlier being so softly and tenderly said to her. It wasn’t hard for her to understand why they meant so much to him now.

“I’m sorry Oliver…”

She felt more than she saw his desperation. It was palpable, in the way his hands came up to cup her cheeks and held onto her tightly, just as she was trying to pull away from him. “Felicity, please don’t go. Please stay.”

_I love you._

It was the words from his nightmare. The ones he had spoken to his soulmate. The ones he had spoken to her.

And the truth was that she loved him too.

It was that truth she needed to use against him now. To tell him she was leaving.
“Oliver, this is exactly why I have to go,” she told him, her voice breaking. “You’re getting married in a few weeks and this… This can’t happen.”

His hold on her tightened. “But I don’t care about her the way I care about you.”

“It doesn’t matter,” she replied, her heart throbbing in her chest at the pain she was inflicting to the both of them. “You’re getting married and I don’t fit in this. I won’t be the other woman and I need to go before I get burn.”

“I already did,” he confessed.

She wanted to reply that she had too. But she couldn’t.

“Oliver, let go of me,” she demanded.

“If you want me to accept that resignation letter,” he whispered, “you’ll have to leave town without giving me any address to return it to you.”

He kissed her forehead tenderly for the longest while and she closed her eyes, tears rolling down her cheeks. Then, he stepped away, gathering his coat, heading out. He stopped to look at the small box with her arrow bracelet.

Turning around to face her again, he said. “If there was something more between us, you’d tell me, right?”

She held his gaze, praying that her eyes wouldn’t betray her.

“Yes,” she told him in a breath.

A week and a half later, Felicity was still recovering from New Year’s Eve, locked in her apartment, the two kittens her only company. They were both recovering well from their misfortune in the snow, growing up and gaining weights as they were supposed to. JJ had named the male Nemo and she had picked the name Arrow for the female– there was apparently some part of her brain which enjoyed dusting her wounds with salt. Barry and Iris had accepted to let JJ keep Nemo but they’d agreed it was best for him to stay at Felicity’s with his sister until he was older and stronger. Aside from that, Felicity hadn’t really talked to any of her friends since she had briefly replied to their Happy New Year texts. She knew Laurel had accepted to marry Tommy – but that wasn’t really surprising. Laurel had called her to tell her about the contract she had signed when she was sixteen. She had told her it wasn’t valid because she hadn’t been an adult when they had made her sign it, and her mother hadn’t signed it with her either. Felicity had thanked her for her help, even though she had known deep down it didn’t matter anymore.

She was busy working on her computer when she heard someone knock at her door. Well, pound on her door would actually be more accurate. Frowning, she went to open the door, wondering who could be visiting her a bit after two pm on a Thursday afternoon. She got an answer when she looked through the peephole.

Thea.

She opened the door, surprised to find her here and not at school.
“So, she is alive,” the brunette said, her tone both accusing and angry.

She walked past Felicity and right inside her apartment, not waiting for an invitation. Felicity closed the door behind her, leaning her forehead against the cold metal. She was in for rough moments. Sighing, she turned around to face Thea again. She had crossed her arms over her chest and she was glaring at her.

“What’s wrong with you?”

“Nothi…” Felicity started but Thea cut her off immediately.

“You barely reply to texts, you refuse to go out and you don’t go to work so please don’t tell me nothing’s wrong with you because it’s obvious something is.”

“Thea, I assure you…”

“Stop it!” She shouted. “I’m having the worst day ever and I can’t hear another lie. I just can’t.”

Felicity frowned, concern filling her. She was about to leave, yes, and she had been putting distance between her and friends, yes, but it didn’t mean she didn’t care anymore. On The contrary, everything was made so much harder because she cared a lot. It didn’t mean she didn’t want to help either, quite the opposite actually.

“What’s happening?” She asked immediately.

Thea laughed dryly, shaking her head. “You would know, hadn’t you been MIA for the last few days.”

Felicity gave her a look. “Thea, what happened?”

“Ollie went back to Russia with Isabel three days ago. I only found out today, they’ve all been keeping it a secret from me.”

Felicity’s heart froze in her chest at the words. Gulping, she said, trying to keep her tone even.

“Why would they do that?”

Thea shook her head, a bitter expression distorting her features. “Because they knew I wouldn’t react well to the news.”

“Why is that?” Felicity questioned, although she could pretty easily guess why.

“He’s supposedly going there to visit QC’s installations.”

“Supposedly?” She repeated, her nervousness dampening her hand. Her suspicions were being confirmed.

“They’re going to elope,” Thea spit out, clenching her fists in anger and frustration. “And to the outside world, it’ll be as if they are two soulmates, madly in love, who couldn’t wait to be together and decided to just go with it and get married.”

“But Thea, they are…”

“Oh please!” The brunette cut her off. “We both know it’s just bullshit.”

Felicity opened her mouth to say something but Thea interrupted her again. She was doing that a lot.
“I know Ollie told you the truth,” she explained.

“Oh,” Felicity said, looking down toward her feet.

“I tried to talk him out of it but he didn’t listen to me,” Thea told her, looking both disappointed and miffed. “He’s getting his life ruined the same way my parents did and it’s so damn frustrating,” she added, stomping her feet.

Felicity froze at her words.

“What did you just say?”

“Oliver is getting his life ruined,” Thea repeated. “He’s letting our parents control…”

“No, not that,” Felicity interrupted her, her heartbeat fastening, her hands shaking slightly at what she’d just heard. “About your parents. You said they’d gotten their lives ruined. What does that mean?”

Thea frowned. “Ollie didn’t tell you?”

“Tell me what?” Felicity urged her on.

“He said he told you the truth and I thought he meant the whole truth,” Thea said, chewing worriedly on her lower lip, hesitancy filling her eyes.

“What’s the whole truth?” Felicity almost yelled, her frustration rising by the minute.

“Our parents aren’t each other’s soulmates, their marriage was arranged by my grandparents.” Thea confessed quickly, as if she was afraid she’d regret telling her the truth. “It’s a lie. The perfect Queen family, it’s all a lie.”

Felicity took a step back, her head spinning.

“A word of advice? You shouldn’t believe everything you read about our family in the magazines or online.”

Thea’s words from before made so much more sense now. Actually, everything made so much sense now and she felt stupid for not having figured it out earlier. She’d always wondered why Moira, who was supposedly happily in love with her soulmate, would force her son to marry someone who wasn’t his soulmate. She knew why now. She was doing to him what had been done to her. She closed her eyes, memories of the party coming back to her. She saw Moira and Walter dance closely, looking at one another as if there wasn’t anyone else in the room. She thought about how Walter had stood faithfully next to Moira and Robert throughout the years, without ever settling down and getting married. She thought about how fondly he said her name. More memories of the party came back to her and that’s when the most horrible doubt grew inside of her. She thought about how much time Isabel spent at the mansion, about how close she was to the Queen family, about how she was bonded to a mate who was fine with her marrying someone else. A memory of Isabel and Robert dancing together at the party floated in her mind and she felt bile rise up her throat, burning her from the inside. God, she was probably going to be sick.

“Thea,” she asked, her voice shaking with emotions. “Do you know who your parents’ soulmates are?”

The brunette shook her head. “No, they never told us.”
Her words had the effect of a cold shower on Felicity. They snapped her awake and brought her back in control of things. Her head stopped spinning and she calmed her heart enough to be able to think clearly again. She moved from the hallway to her living-room, where she gathered her purse and her coat.

“What the hell are you doing?” Thea asked, her eyebrows furrowed.

“There is somewhere I need to go,” Felicity told her, taking her car keys. “You stay here and wait for me,” she added, walking back to the door.

“Where are you going?” Thea insisted, her tone laced with surprised and worry.

“I’ll tell you when I’m back. Stay here, I won’t be long.”

She opened the door and walked out. “Oh and there are two kittens asleep in my bedroom. If you hear some noise, it’s probably them.”

She left then, without waiting for an answer.

The drive to Queen Consolidated was a total blur. She focused on the road, and on her driving blocking over thoughts from her mind. She couldn’t let what she was suspecting overwhelm her. She needed to keep her head clear otherwise she’d become crazy. Her hands shaking slightly on the wheel, she parked her car in the lot.

She had never been more thankful for Oliver’s stubbornness than when she was granted access to Walter’s office thanks to her Q. Inc’s ID badge. Oliver hadn’t accepted her resignation, meaning she was still an employee, meaning she was still welcomed inside both Q. Inc and QC’s buildings. The man behind the reception desk was even kind enough to give Walter a call, so that he knew she was coming. She twisted her fingers nervously in the elevator, mentally preparing herself for the conversation that was ahead of her.

“Miss Smoak,” he greeted her when she knocked at his office’s door. “I was surprised when Jimmy called to tell me you were here to see me,” he told her, getting up to welcome her and shake her hand.

“I’m sorry, I hope I’m not disrupting anything,” she apologised, watching him close the door to his office before motioning for her to take a seat. She was quick to obey, her fingers tightly wrapped around her bag’s handle.

“It’s just that you said at the party you were here for me if I ever needed anything,” she quickly added.

“I stand by my word,” he assured her.

She nodded, taking a deep breath to give herself some courage.

“Mr. Steele, I’m going to ask you a few things and I need you to tell me the truth,” she then told him, rather directly.

He frowned but gave her a small nod of approval nonetheless. She was a hundred per cent sure he was Moira’s soulmate. And it was because she knew confronting Moira and Robert with that information would be pointless that she was sitting down in his office. She could expect more lies and manipulations from Oliver’s parents. She was hoping for more from Walter. Oliver had always trusted him more than he did his parents, it was time for her to see if he had well-placed his trust.
“Are you Moira’s soulmate?” She asked.

He didn’t blink, didn’t flinch, didn’t react in any way. And for a long moment he remained silent, watching her cautiously, gauging her.

“You already know the answer to that question, don’t you?”

“You did promise me the truth,” she reminded him.

He held her gaze, before nodding slightly. “Yes, yes I am.”

“Isabel Rochev is Robert’s?”

“She is,” he confirmed.

Hearing her suspicions being confirmed made Felicity’s heart jump in her chest. Bile rose up in her throat again. What kind of twisted people would make their son marry their soulmate? It was wrong, so wrong, on so many levels.

She tightened her hold on her bag. It wasn’t the time for her to get lost in her own mind and thoughts. She needed to stay here, with Walter and learn the truth. The whole truth.

“And you know I’m Oliver’s soulmate?”

Again, he nodded.

“Why?” She asked, her voice barely louder than a whisper. She didn’t really know what exactly it was that she wanted to know but Walter seemed to know.

“Moira and Robert both came from wealthy families. On paper, they were perfect for one another, they had the potential to achieve great things. And they did achieve great things,” he added, gesturing at his office, but it was easy to understand he was talking about the whole building. There was sadness in his voice, sadness and bitterness. He had let go of his mask the moment she had started confronting him and she could know see how he really felt, who he really was.

A broken-hearted man.

“What about you?” She asked. “What about Isabel?”

“Twenty years separate Robert from Isabel,” he told her as if it was enough justification. And Felicity guessed it was. “As for me, Moira’s family was old and extremely conservative. I had no money and my skin colour didn’t really suit well with them, to say the least. They deemed me unsuitable for her right away.”

“And she let them?”

She couldn’t help but sound a little bit judgmental. Moira seemed so strong, not at all like the kind of woman who could be made to do something, how could she have let her parents decide for her? Walter noticed the different tone in her voice immediately.

“You’re in no place to judge her,” Walter told her, defending his soulmate as best as he could. “You let her do the same thing to you.”

“But how could you stay? How could you watch her be with someone else? Have his children?”

Walter didn’t reply to her immediately. For the longest moment, he just stared at her, with a sorrow
so deep in his eyes she instantly regretted asking her questions.

“Because it was harder to leave and spend my entire life away from my other half than to stay and share her with another man.” He paused, his shoulders dropping slightly. “The things we did Felicity, the things we let happen…” He sighed. “We’ve been living a lie for thirty years. Thirty years where I’ve been living in the shadow for the sake of this company.” He paused, his hand rubbing against the surface of his desk lightly. The desk he had stayed in the dark for. Felicity pinched her lips tightly, feeling for him. “They say love conquers all but they’re wrong. Money rules this world and it doesn’t care about whether or not people are meant to be. I used to be an idealist you know, I used to think that the mark on our skin was the only thing we should ever worship, the only thing we should ever need. In good times and in bad. In sickness and in health.” His eyes looked away from Felicity and she felt her heart dropped in her chest. “Life proved me better.”

“And now QC is flirting with bankruptcy and it needs Stellmoor to survive. So really, was it all worth it? All those broken hearts, all this time,” Felicity shook her head, disgusted, “wasted in vain.”

Her words snapped Walter out of his dark thoughts, because suddenly the warmth in his eyes was back, and the sadness receded.

“Who told you that?” He asked her frowning.

“Isabel,” she replied.

He rolled his eyes in irritation. “That’s not entirely true. QC does need Stellmoor’s support, but we’re not flirting with bankruptcy. Isabel just wants to make sure she gets parts of what should have been hers, had she married her soulmate. Robert was unable to refuse her, like always, and Moira suggested she married Oliver to enter the family since she didn’t want to just sign shares off to her.”

Felicity’s eyes widened. What the hell?

“And what will she do if one day you come to her and ask her for what should have been yours as well? She’ll marry you to Thea perhaps?” She asked, barely to contain her anger and disgust. She jumped on her feet and started pacing, her brain going into overdrive. There was so much to think about, so much to process.

And important decisions needed to be made.

“I’m not Isabel Rochev,” Walter defended himself. “I’m not thirsty, eager for more or ambitious. I’m content with what I have, happy with what I do and honestly… I’m too old to want more.”

That made Felicity stop and consider his words. Moira, Isabel, Walter and Robert… They were all crazy. But he was probably the sanest of them all. They had been living a lie for so long they didn’t know how to get out of it anymore. And since there was no exit, they were dragging innocent people in it. People who had never asked for anything. Thea. Oliver. Thea’s soulmate. Even her.

“They should have divorced the moment Isabel met Robert,” she stated. “Tell the truth and hope for the best.”

“And break the trust of the board? Of the investors and shareholders? And fight over their shares of QC?” Walter shook his head. “It would have brought the company to its knees and you’re smart enough to understand it.”

“You can’t ask me to not tell Oliver the truth,” she whispered, reading the hidden meaning behind his words.
He closed his eyes for a second, so that she wouldn’t see the dilemma raging inside of him.

“Walter please,” she added, almost begging. “I don’t want to be you.”

The moment she said the words, she realised how true they were. Walter seemed like a broken-man. He claimed to be happy with what he had, but she knew no money could ever compensate the time he had spent in the dark, the time he had spent lying and more importantly, the time he’d spent not getting a family of his own.

“I don’t want you to be me either,” he eventually said, opening his eyes again. “I care about Oliver as if he was my own son and I’d be lying if I told you I don’t want better for him than this life we’ve been living for almost thirty years.”

Felicity nodded, gathering her things up.

“Thank you Walter,” she said, her hand reaching for his. He gently squeezed his fingers in reply.

“Be happy Felicity and have no regrets,” he told her.

She nodded shortly and he walked her out of his office. She pulled her phone out of her purse and speed dialled Oliver’s number not caring that he was in Russia and it was probably the middle of the night for him. He didn’t pick up and she sighed, stepping inside the elevator which was empty except for one man.

Robert Queen.

“Hm,” he hummed when he saw her. “Isn’t that my son’s soulmate? I’m surprised to see you’re still in town.”

“Not for long, I can assure you,” she replied through gritted teeth, dialling Oliver’s number again. He didn’t reply again and she exhaled slowly, annoyed.

“It’s frustrating, isn’t it? When technology fails you.”

Felicity turned her head to face Robert. “Excuse me?”

“I mean, these things are meant to make our lives better, but sometimes, they just make it ten times worse. But then, you’re the genius. You understand these things much better than the old man that I am.”

His tone was unpleasantly sweet, honeyed. She found herself be more ill-at-ease in his presence than she had been in Moira’s and Isabel’s. She could deal with pure unadulterated hate better than with hypocrisy.

“Or you know, the person I’m trying to call is just not available at the moment.”

“There’s always that possibility of course,” Robert agreed. “Though, it has been brought up to my attention this problem is a recurring one of yours. It’s time you understand what it means when someone keeps ignoring you.”

Felicity turned around, her fists clenched tightly, not liking the things he was implying at all. “Let me guess,” she said, trying to fill her voice with as much contempt as she could, ‘you’re probably referring to Thanksgiving, when I tried to get in touch with your son and he never got any of my calls or texts, because your wife or you or that Russian ice woman you’re making him marry did something to his phone.”
“Careful Ms Smoak, you don’t want to accuse my family of anything without evidence,” he whispered making her want to crawl out of her skin.

“I don’t need any evidence,” she replied. “I know exactly what I need to know.”

Robert frowned and took a step toward her, just when the bell rang to signal they had reached the bottom of the building. “You should forget what you think you know Ms Smoak, and hurry your departure of Star City. Accidents happen so fast these days,” he added.

The doors opened and she couldn’t reply anything to him, because people were waiting for them to get out of the elevator to get inside. She hurried outside of the building, her heart pounding in her chest. Robert Queen had just threatened her and the tone he had used to say the word “accident” made her feel like he was no stranger to her car accident, the one she had had with Oliver when they had come back from the basketball game.

Felicity’s body was buzzing with energy when she sat down behind the wheel. QC wasn’t flirting with bankruptcy and Moira and Robert were the worst parents in history of parenting, Moira’s parents behind not too far behind. Isabel was a greedy bitch with no principles. And she was going to go to Russia and tell Oliver the whole truth, hopefully stopping the wedding before it happened.

Thea jumped on her when she unlocked her apartment’s door and walked in.

“Where the hell were you?” She demanded angrily, the kittens in her arms. It made her angry look funny and cute but the burning look in her eyes prevented Felicity from saying so.

“QC, I needed to speak with Walter,” Felicity replied, dropping her purse in the hallway and running to her tablet. She unplugged it and sat down on her couch, the device in her lap.

“What are you doing?” Thea asked.

“Booking a flight for Moscow. Do you know which hotel Oliver is staying at? And his room number?”

“Why are you going to Moscow? Why did you need to speak with Walter?”

Felicity didn’t even look up from her screen, as she kept scrolling, looking for a flight. “I’m going to stop Oliver from marrying Isabel,” she replied, looking for a flight. She cursed when she saw the first one which still had a few seats left only took off the next day at four pm.

“Why?” Thea asked, taking the tablet from Felicity’s hands, to make her look at her. Felicity swallowed, hard, her lower lip trembling slightly as she felt her excitement and frenzy loosen up a little bit. “Felicity, what’s going on?” Thea insisted.

“I’m his soulmate,” Felicity confessed.

Thea’s eyes widened and she almost dropped the tablet on the floor.

“You’re…” Thea’s voice failed her.

“His soulmate,” she repeated, letting out a small breath. It kind of felt good to finally tell someone.

“But…”

“I don’t have time to tell you the whole story,” Felicity cut her off, taking the tablet back from her. “I need to book a flight.” She was starting to feel panic inside of her. “The first available flight is
tomorrow. You said Oliver has been in Russia for three days already? By the time I get there, they might be already married,” she said, chewing on her lower lip nervously.

“They can get an annulment,” Thea suggested. “I’m sure Laurel could find something. And if not, Ollie could still divorce.”

“It would be better to not get to that,” Felicity told her, twisting the fabric of her top nervously. “Isabel will cause us problems, she wants to get her hands on parts of QC’s shares.”

“Greedy bitch,” the brunette let out. “For the record, I hated her from the start.”

Felicity gave her a look. “Not helping.”

“Right. We need to find an early flight. Can’t you…”

“Wait a minute, there’s no “we”. I’m going, you’re staying.”

“But, you can’t go alone!” She argued.

“Thea, you’re not eighteen yet and you actually have to go to school – by the way, don’t think I didn’t notice you skipped school this afternoon.”

“Geometry. I hate geometry,” she complained.

“And I can totally go alone,” Felicity added, selecting the flight, because a late flight was better than no flight at all.

“Felicity, it’s Russia we’re talking about,” Thea reminded her.

“The Cold War is over, chill Thea.”

The brunette rolled her eyes at her, before taking Felicity’s tablet away from her again and handing her phone to her instead. “Why don’t you call Tommy? I’m sure he’ll be happy to help his best friend out of an arranged marriage.”

Felicity sighed.

“Thea, it’s my fault if Oliver is in trouble. If I had told him the truth sooner…” She shook her head, biting on her lip harder than before. “I don’t want anyone’s help, it’s my mess to fix.”

“Felicity, I love you really,” Thea said, her voice strained, “but sometimes you can be so annoying… Call Tommy, now!”

And the look in her eyes was enough to make the blonde comply immediately.

Tommy picked up after the first ring.

“So she lives,” he immediately teased her.

She grunted and saw Thea gave her a “told you so” look.

“Yes, yes, I’m alive,” she confirmed.

“So, to what do I owe the pleasure of talking to you today?” He asked her, his tone more serious, a maybe a bit angry. She promised herself to apologise properly the next time she’d see him.
“How do you feel about a trip to Russia?”

“I think it’s too damn cold at this time of the year,” he replied.

“Okay, let’s try again. How do you feel about stopping your best friend from marrying someone who isn’t his soulmate?”

A heartbeat passed before he replied. “Okay, I’m listening.”

“Isabel isn’t Oliver’s soulmate and they went to Russia, supposedly for business reasons, but they’re actually going to elope. We need to stop them before Oliver makes the biggest mistake of his life.”

“Did you book a flight already?”

“First flight’s leaving tomorrow. We need to…”

“Leave earlier, yeah figured so. They’ve already been there for three days, clock’s ticking. Give me an hour to get my stuff ready here at Merlyn Global and arrange something. I can’t take the company’s jet, father would never let me but I know someone and… You know what? It doesn’t matter. Meet me at my place in one hour.”

“See you later.”

She hung up then, her heart settling in her chest, her panic and fear slightly receding. Tommy was arranging something, he was going to help her, she wasn’t going to do this alone. She knew she’d told Thea she could go alone, that she needed to go alone, and she totally would have gone alone, had she had to. But she couldn’t deny she felt better now that she knew Tommy was going to be with her, to help and support her.

“I need to pack,” she said, getting on her feet. “Thea, can you check the weather in Russia?”

The brunette nodded and the two of them packed a small travel bag because Felicity highly doubted she’d be spending more than a couple of days in Russia. She gave Thea the spare key to her apartment, and the brunette promised she’d stay over to watch the kitten.

“Thank you, Thea,” Felicity told her, on the verge of leaving.

“Don’t mention it, and go. But just so we’re clear, you’re going to have a lot of explaining to do miss,” she warned her.

Felicity nodded. “I know,” she said, squeezing her hand tightly.

The drive to Tommy’s place, Felicity spent it focusing on what she had just learnt. She knew Tommy would have questions when he saw her and she needed to have processed everything in order to reply to him. It wasn’t an easy task because everything was just so crazy and had happened so fast… She honestly hadn’t seen it coming, she hadn’t been prepared for it.

Oliver’s parents weren’t soulmates. Their marriage was another arranged one, like there had been millions on earth in the past. They’d lost themselves in this lie, turning it into the truth they lived by. And instead of wishing better for their children, they’d caught them in the lie, they’d even made them lie. They’d controlled their lives, doing the very same thing their parents had done to them. The worst thing in all of this was that they’d never told the truth about their real soulmates. They’d never given them the hope to have them by their side, in the same twisted way they had. Because in the end, it didn’t matter that Moira and Robert were married. She belonged to Walter and he belonged to Isabel, end of the story. And the four of them had committed themselves to their money and
reputation to the point where they had very disgustingly arranged a marriage between Oliver and his father’s soulmate.

And it was just disgusting.

“Do you know how this will look like to the outside world?” Tommy asked her once they were both sitting in his car, his driver taking them to the airport.

She tilted her head. “Uh… No?”

He chuckled. “Like I’m running away from my fiancée with another woman. This is very old Tommy like,” he joked, in an attempt to cheer her up.

Tommy obviously had less problems with his past than Oliver. He didn’t seem to regret anything, was more than willing to share stories and more generally had no problem talking about it. But then again, the fact that his soulmate had been on the Med too and had lived the same kind of life, though Laurel had never been anything like Oliver and Tommy back in the days, surely helped alleviate his conscience. His behaviour hadn’t driven Laurel away from him, she’d never taken the Med because of him and he hadn’t had a car accident because of her actions.

Their plane took off at five pm and since there was around twelve to thirteen hours’ flight to reach Russia, they’d arrive around five am, US time and three pm, local time. It was highly likely Oliver wouldn’t be at his hotel then, unfortunately. Tommy had tried to call him too, to warn him they were coming but he hadn’t picked up, since he was probably still sleeping. Stupid time difference! They were hoping he’d be concerned when he’d see all the missed calls from Felicity, Thea and Tommy and would try to get back in touch with them. He wouldn’t be able to reach Felicity and Tommy, since they’d be flying, but he could get in touch with Thea and she’d tell him to expect visitors.

Still, Felicity couldn’t help but worry. She twisted her fingers together, torturing her lower lip between her teeth.

“Relax Felicity,” Tommy told her, pressing her knee. “Everything’s going to be okay.”

“You don’t know that, what if they’re already married?”

“We’ll find a solution,” he assured her, sitting down in front of her.

She nervously played with her arrow bracelet, a habit she had taken throughout the years.

“It’s the first time I’m leaving the US,” she confessed, staring at the clouds, not feeling a hundred percent fine, because, well, heights.

“And you’re doing it to go get your soulmate, how romantic?”

Felicity’s eyes widened and she stared at him in confusion.

“I may not be a genius like you Felicity but I’m no idiot,” he told her softly and she let out a small shaky breath.

“Right,” she said. “I assume you have questions.”

He nodded. “But I’m not gonna ask them. Tell me what you feel comfortable telling me. But I’ll be honest, if you could be comfortable telling me everything, that would be perfect.”

She didn’t tell him everything, because there were just some things he didn’t need to know. Cooper
was one of those things. But she told him how her mother created a SID’s account without her
consent and how the Queens sent a mediator to pay her off, how he said her soulmate didn’t want
her and how she believed him because of how Oliver acted back then. She saw Tommy’s expression
darken up at her words and she thought that maybe, he regretted his past more than he let on. She
told him how she picked Star City to settle down, how everything felt oddly familiar, how she knew
things about some places even though she had never been there herself. She told him about she’d
instantly connected with Oliver, sharing a few details like how she’d known his usual order or sillier
things like how he’d craved frozen yoghurt because she had. Now that she took the time to think
back to all these things, it was obvious to her Oliver was her soulmate and, once again, she felt stupid
for not picking up the clues earlier.

She told him about how Moira didn’t welcome her with opened arms, though he already knew about
it, but more particularly she told him that she suspected Moira was the one behind the break in inside
her first apartment. She told him how the Med slowly stopped working, the stronger her bond got.
She talked about the burn and what doctor Lazarev had told her about it, keeping the details on how
exactly she’d found out Oliver was her soulmate to herself. Those details belonged to them and them
only.

“It’s funny, but Laurel and I never felt the burn,” he admitted. “But I guess it’s because we were both
on the Med. My bond couldn’t feel hers since they were both locked up and vice versa.”

Felicity nodded. “It also depends on your number.”

“5.7,” he told her. “Not nearly as strong as you and Ollie. Anyway, what happened after the doctor’s
appointment?”

She explained she had thought about leaving but had decided to stay. She told him about the contract
and how she’d thought it was valid at first, even though now she knew better now, thanks to Laurel.
She told him she got back in touch with the mediator but the traitor ran to Moira to tell her she was
planning on breaking the contract. She told him about what happened at the party and how she learnt
she caused Oliver’s accident.

She felt a lot better not that she had let it all out. She hadn’t realised how much everything had been
weighing down on her before. She now felt like a weight had been lifted off her shoulders and she
could finally breathe again. Tommy remained silent for a long while after she was done with her
story, needing some time to collect his thoughts. She let him take as much time as he needed, needing
to collect herself to after such a huge confession.

Finally he sighed, his shoulders dropping.

“You know, for a long time, I hated you.” Felicity’s heart skipped a beat at his words. “I resented
you for what you had done to Ollie. I blamed you for everything, for the accident and for the heart-
break that followed. He was such a mess after it and it wasn’t because he had to work hard to walk
again. I honestly think he would have traded more than his legs to have you back, to have a chance
to apologise and make things better. He was a mess because he had lost you. Because you were gone
and the guilt was eating him alive. He was convinced he had failed you and I hated you for leaving
and making him feel like that.” He sighed. “But I guess it was just my own guilt showing its ugly
head. I knew, even if I refused to admit it, that what Ollie had done to you wasn’t right but… It
wasn’t always him. It was me too. I dragged him to parties, I pushed him into girls’ arms and vice
versa and I couldn’t help but feel like, maybe, if I had stopped him, you wouldn’t have left and Ollie
would have never ended up in a hospital bed, wired to half a dozen of machines keeping him alive. It
was easier to hate and blame you than myself,” he confessed softly, “and I hope that you won’t
resent for that.”
There was so much sadness in his eyes, Felicity felt a lump of emotions form inside her throat. She couldn’t begin to fathom how Tommy must have felt when Oliver has been stuck between life and death. When he had been in pain and there had been nothing he could have done to make him feel better.

“I could never hate you, Tommy, never,” she reassured him, barely keeping it together.

“It was awful,” Tommy said, “when he woke up the first time. He kept calling for you and saying he had to get to you…” He closed his eyes, the memory too much for him and when Felicity saw he was on the verge of crying, she almost started crying herself.

“I’m so sorry Tommy,” she whispered, leaning forward to take his hand. He squeezed her fingers, giving her a small smile.

“It’s not your fault,” he whispered back. “You didn’t know he was driving.”

“But if I had listened, if I had paid attention,” she started, staring at their joined hands because she knew she’d start crying if she met his eyes again, “maybe I would have felt he was coming to me. For me.”

Tommy brought his free hand to her chin and lifted it up. “It certainly wouldn’t have changed anything. The two of you weren’t in the right state of mind back then. He tried to get to you yes, but what could he have possibly said to make you change your mind? From what you told me, he hurt you like no other. Would you even have listened to him?”

“I’d like to think so,” she whispered. “I’d like to think we would have worked things out.”

“I’d like to think that too,” Tommy said. “But we don’t know about the what ifs and we can’t rewrite history.”

She nodded, knowing he was right and that she needed to stop thinking about the past and what had happened. She couldn’t control her guilt but she could control her thoughts so she would.

“And you know Moira and Isabel are wrong, right?”

Felicity frowned. “About what?”

“When they said you aren’t the right fit for Oliver,” he explained. “They’re wrong.”

Felicity felt her shoulders drop slightly. “I don’t know, maybe…”

“No, Felicity,” he cut her off, “listen to me. I know you and Oliver have a lot of problems to work on and I can understand that after what you’ve been through you somehow feel like you’re not enough. So I’m going to ask you to trust me and believe me when I tell you you’re enough. Actually, you’re more than enough, you’re perfect and I knew it from the start.”

His hand moved from her cheek to her eyes and he wiped a small tear away.

They spent the rest of the flight talking, eating dinner and then sleeping. Tommy even moved to sit down next to Felicity, so that she could rest her head on his shoulder. An hour before they landed, they both went to the small bathroom and changed their clothes, putting on warmer ones and ate a quick breakfast.

They went through the Customs and control without encountering any problems. They met with the driver Tommy had hired to pick them up and drive them to Oliver’s hotel. Felicity was disappointed
when she saw she had no texts from Thea telling her she had been able to talk to Ollie. All her nervousness from the previous hours came back to hit her.

What if they were too late?

What if they were already married?

Tommy reached for her hand, to stop her from twisting her fingers.

“Everything’s gonna be fine,” he assured her.

She doubted it. She knew in her heart it didn’t matter if Oliver and Isabel were already married – it mattered in a way, because it would have consequences – but it didn’t matter because she’d tell him she was his soulmate. She’d tell him the truth and face the storm she was sure was going to follow. And that’s why she doubted everything would be alright.

She doubted they’d survive the storm.

“If there was something more between us, you’d tell me, right?”

Her eyes fluttered close. He was going to be so mad at her.

“Felicity, please stop,” Tommy whispered. “You’re making me nervous.”

She hadn’t noticed but she had started fidgeting and stomping her foot. She tried to calm down and to focus on the city. Moscow was a beautiful city, there’s was no denying it. It was old and powerful. It was made of History and Felicity felt slightly intimidated by its buildings and monuments glowing slightly because of the snow. Oliver was staying in the Four Seasons Moscow, which was close to famous places in the city, according to Tommy.

The driver dropped them in front of the hotel, where Tommy had booked them rooms since they were only supposed to leave on Sunday. They got the keys to their room and went upstairs. Felicity’s nervousness was growing and she felt like she was going to be sick. They went to her room first and she put her travel bag on her bed, and sat down her legs shaking.

“Want to go see if Ollie’s here now?” Tommy asked her.

“Yes,” she replied immediately.

“Do you want me to come with you? Don’t worry, I’ll leave to let you guys talk. I just want to make sure you don’t get cold feet and turn away at the last minute.”

She gave him a look. “I didn’t come all this way to get cold feet now,” she told him.

He nodded, reaching for her hand. She let him take it and squeeze her fingers to comfort her. They weren’t staying on the same floor as Oliver, he was two floors up.

“I shouldn’t have eaten in the plane,” she mumbled, “I’m going to be sick.”

“No you’re not,” Tommy assured her.

“What if he’s not here Tommy?” She asked him.

“We’ll wait for him to come back,” he told her. “Simple as that.”

They stepped out of the elevator and headed toward his room.
“Here, that’s the one,” Tommy said, stopping in front of a door. He knocked then, loudly.

They waited. Nothing came. They didn’t even hear a sound.

Tommy knocked again then.

Nothing.

Then, a lock.

And Isabel was standing in front of them, her hair dishevelled, her make-up smudged and her clothes rumpled. Felicity’s eyes immediately went to her left hand and when she saw a wedding band next to her diamond engagement ring, her heart stopped beating.

Isabel smirked triumphantly, a smug expression on her face.

“I’m afraid you’re a bit too late,” she said, contempt in her voice.

Felicity just saw red.

“You bitch,” she let out, blazing anger coursing through her veins.

She didn’t realise she was moving until her hand collided with Isabel’s cheek. The slap was loud, the silence following it only lasting one second but deafening with its intensity. Isabel gasped, and stumbled back. Tommy reached for Felicity’s hand and pulled her back.

“Lissy!” He said, something resembling pride and astonishment in his voice.

“Felicity? Tommy?”

She looked behind Isabel and saw Oliver standing behind Isabel, who was rubbing a hand over her cheek. He was wearing a grey suit, his white shirt had a few buttons opened and his blue tie had been loosened up from around his neck. When her eyes caught the wedding band around his ring finger, a pang of sadness tugged at her heart.

“We came here to stop you from marrying her,” Tommy pointed at Isabel, “but it seemed that we’re too late for that. Couldn’t you pick up your phone? We tried to call you at least a thousand times!”

Oliver blinked, obviously very confused. “My phone’s broken,” he explained, briefly.

“How convenient,” Felicity hissed, glaring at Isabel.

“Isn’t it?” The Russian woman shot back, her hand still on her cheek.

She had quiet the nerve, to stare down at Felicity the way she was. The blonde felt her anger rise up against and if it wasn’t for Tommy’s arm on her, holding her back, she probably would have slapped her again. She took a deep breath, getting a hold over her emotions and as calmly as possible, she said.

“You married your father’s soulmate Oliver.”
Isabel gasped, obviously surprised that Felicity knew her little secret. Tommy’s hold loosened up on her arm and he cursed under his breath. Oliver just blinked, staring at her.

“No,” he whispered, turning toward Isabel, horror filling his eyes. His right hand came up to his wedding band, starting to slide it off.

Isabel’s eyes went from Oliver to Felicity, and if looks could kill, she knew she’d have died right here and there. Isabel’s glare was a force to be reckoned. But suddenly, something shifted in her eyes, determination filled her cold gaze. She straightened her spine and turned toward Oliver.

“She’s right,” she said. “I’m your father’s soulmate and she is yours.”

Blood rushed to Felicity’s ears.

No.

She hadn’t…? Had she just…?

No.

“What?” It was all Oliver managed to say.

“She is your soulmate,” Isabel repeated, the pride in her tone impossible to miss.

No, no, no. This wasn’t how things were supposed to go. She was supposed to tell Oliver herself, she had come here to tell him and…

“Felicity?” Oliver asked, his voice shaking.

She looked at Tommy and saw he was busy glaring at Isabel.

Her heart was beating loudly in her chest and she knew she was living the most important moment of her life. Nothing would ever be the same after that.

Taking a deep breath and looking up to meet the blue eyes she loved so much, she jumped in the unknown, without anything to pull her back.

“Oliver, I’m your soulmate.”

Chapter End Notes

///PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE\\

Don't hate me.
So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)}
Chapter 14 - Then it's all my fault let me fix it please

Chapter Notes

Hey guys!!

Long time no see, I know right? Sorry about that. I've found myself struggling quite a lot with the chapter... I really hope that you'll all like it, I'm very nervous to post it. I wanted to thank all of you for leaving comments and kudos and for supporting me on Twitter and Tumblr when I was having moments of doubts. You guys are amazing and I'm so grateful to be writing for you :) With no more delays, the chapter, the longest I've written so far :)

Happy reading! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 14:

“And if this be our last conversation
And if this be the last time we speak for a while
Don’t lose hope and don’t let go
Cause you should know

If it makes you sad
If it makes you sad at me
Then it’s all my fault and let me fix it please
Cause you know that I’m always all for you
Cause you know that I’m always all for you.”

- Safetysuit, What if.

They say the truth will set you free.

Felicity knew now it was true.

“Oliver, I’m your soulmate.”

The moment the words fell from her lips, she felt like a weight had been lifted from her shoulders.
For weeks now, she had been carrying that secret with her, letting it eat her alive and affect every aspect of her life. But finally, she had let it out and she knew that, no matter what, it was all for the best. She was already better. She could breathe more easily, air came in and out of her lungs quickly and smoothly. She knew it was crazy, she knew it made no sense, because she had just dived in the unknown without any back-up and it was so unlike her but she didn’t care. The truth was out and she was free. When she thought about it, Felicity found it was remarkable, the power of the truth. The impact just a few words could have on a life. Nothing would ever be the same again for her. She was done living in the shadows, she was done living a lie and more importantly, she was done letting people mess with her life. She was out in the open and it was the best feeling in the world. So really, it was remarkable what could come out of just a few words.

But if telling the truth had such a great impact on Felicity, it didn’t seem to have one at all on Oliver. Felicity hadn’t really known what to expect when she had thought about telling him the truth. She had thought about what would happen after he understood what she’d just told him but she hadn’t given much thoughts to his immediate reaction. She couldn’t even imagine how she would react to such news let alone him. And in spite of that, in spite of her lack of expectation, she was still surprised, almost disappointed by his reaction, or lack of, to the news. He just stood there in that hotel room, staring blankly at her and remained utterly silent. There wasn’t even a slight increase in his breathing, he didn’t flinch or clench his fists. He didn’t even blink. He just stood there, stoically, his eyes empty of any emotions. And it was saying something since they usually were very expressive, full of life.

He didn’t say anything, she didn’t say anything, Tommy behind her didn’t either and Isabel contemplated the scene in front of her, a smirk distorting the traits of her smug little face. The silence was oppressing, suffocating even and the sense of freedom Felicity had found in telling Oliver the truth left her and was replaced by nervousness and worst, fear. The longer he remained silent, the longer no one said anything, the more Felicity’s uncomfortableness grew. She shifted on her feet, ill-at-ease, starting to fidget.

She thought maybe he hadn’t heard her, and her nervous mind immediately started to ramble stating it was impossible, she had spoken loudly and distinctly and there hadn’t been any noise in the room. She bit on the inside of her cheek to stop from speaking out loud, now really wasn’t the time for another of her rambles. Instead, she took another deep breath.

“Oliver, I,” she started.

“I heard you,” he cut her off, and the way he said it, it was like he’d known exactly what she’d been thinking about before. She knew he hadn’t though, she was still on the Med, her side of the bond strained by the proper dose for their number. Speaking of her bond, she felt it stir weakly inside of her right after she said the words.

“Oliver, I’m your soulmate.”

“O-okay,” she replied, nervously twisting the hem of her sweater between her fingers.

“I just…” He pinched his nose and she could see his frustration, clear as day. “I asked you if there was something more Felicity,” he said.

“I know,” she interrupted him, trying to explain herself.

“I asked you a question,” he went on as if there had been no interruption at all, “you answered me and I believed what you told me. I stood right in front of you and looked you in the eyes and I believed you. I saw the truth where there was a lie and…”
“Wait, are you saying you don’t believe me?” She asked him, her heart skipping a beat in her chest at the thought.

“I’m saying you lied to me,” he accused her, pain filling his blue orbs. “Again.”

She frowned, not really understanding why he was insisting on this. She had just told him she was his soulmate for god’s sake! Couldn’t he insist on that?

And then she realised he couldn’t.

Knowing him like she did, she knew, deep in her heart, that he couldn’t. Because it was too much. That knowledge was too much for him and so he just ignored it.

“I’m sorry,” she said, her voice barely louder than a whisper. “I didn’t have much of a choice,” she added before being rudely interrupted by Isabel.

“We always have the choice,” she spit out.

“Oh you shut up!” Felicity told her, rather aggressively.

Isabel glared at her and Felicity felt all her anger from before come back to her. Tommy felt it too, if the way he tightened his grip around her arm was any indication.

“Get out,” Oliver told Isabel, his voice low and threatening and his tone so cold it sent shivers down Felicity’s spine. “Get out of here,” he repeated, louder, when she didn’t comply. “And don’t come back here. Next time I see you will be with my parents.”

He said the name as if it was an insult and considering what they’d done to him, Felicity couldn’t help but understand his anger and resentment.

Isabel opened her mouth, obviously about to say something but she thought better and just walked away, not without sending one last glare toward Felicity. Except this glare was different from all her other glares. It wasn’t icy or contemptuous. No. It was blazing hot and for some reasons, it scared Felicity more than her usual coldness.

Oliver’s eyes focused on Felicity again and she was relieved when she saw they were full of emotions again. She’d choose angry, hurt, disappointed, frustrated, betrayed Oliver over robot and emotionless Oliver every day. His emotions were raw and intense and they scared her a little bit – she had no idea how she was going to handle them, how she was going to face them without backing down in front of their strength.

“I’ll just go too,” Tommy said awkwardly then, “let the two of you talk,” he added, letting go of Felicity’s arm.

She turned away from Oliver, to face Tommy. He cocked his head, asking a silent question. She nodded reassuringly and he gave her a small smile, leaving without adding anything else. He knew it wasn’t time for him to speak. Straightening her sweater, she had made quite a mess with the fabric earlier, she spun again to face Oliver.

His eyes were still solely focused on her but she avoided them, avoided the emotions shining in them and took him in, really seeing him for the first time in days. He had loosened up his tie and opened a few buttons of his shirt, as he always did when they stayed late at the office and there was no one else but them. His hair was slightly dishevelled, more than they usually were, there were bags under his eyes and his chin and cheeks were covered in stubble the way they usually were. Her eyes fell on the wedding band he had started sliding off earlier and the sight of it felt like a stab in her heart. Her
side of the bond, which was very calm and silent since she was taking the proper dose of the Med, snarled weakly inside her head. Felicity didn’t know if a bond could snarl but it’s how it felt to her. She twitched, her fingers itching to cup his cheeks and just hold onto him, breathe him in, reassure herself somehow that he was here with her and he was still hers.

If he had ever been.

“You have three minutes,” he told her harshly and it was his voice which got her out of her thoughts.

“Excuse me?” She replied, blinking.

“You have three minutes to say whatever it is you have to say and then you can leave too.”

Her jaw almost dropped and she stared at him in disbelief for a few seconds. “I’m not the only one who has some explaining to do,” she told him cautiously. She could see he was working very hard to keep himself in check, the tension in his shoulders obvious to her even if there were a few feet between them.

“I don’t have anything to explain,” he told her, his jaw clenched tightly.

“Oh really? Are you sure you don’t have anything to say about Mrs Rochev’s dishevelled appearance? Damn, should I call her Mrs Queen?” She asked him, jealousy and anger mixing inside of her. She remembered all too well how Isabel had looked. Her clothes had been rumpled, her mouth swollen and the skin around it slightly redder. Oliver himself looked like he had been thoroughly kissed. His clothes were slightly messy and the state of his hair could very well be explained by a hand running through the sandy blonde strands. Her stomach twisted inside of her and she felt her bond press slightly against the walls of its prison. It was connected to her emotions and her emotions were connected to it, at least when it wasn’t imprisoned. The more emotional she’d be, the stronger it’d get.

“What?” Oliver said, his eyes widening. “No, she kind of jumped on me after the wedding but I pushed her back and nothing…” He stopped himself and shook his head. “No, no you don’t get to make this about me,” he told her. “I’m not the one who lied, again, and kept a secret for… I don’t even know long. For how long have you known? Did you know when we met? Is that why you came to Star City?”

The more questions he asked, the louder his voice got and in the end he was almost yelling. His eyes wide opened, anger, pain and betrayal taking over his blue orbs.

“No, no, I had no idea of who we were to each other when we met,” she was quick to reply. “But I guess it’s indirectly why I came to Star City. I pick the city because everything felt familiar, like I had already been there and I kind of had, through you, thanks to our connection,” she babbled, “but I swear to God, I only found out recently.”

“Then when did you find out?”

She bit on her lower lip, his anger coming off of him in strong and steady waves, stroking her own.

“That night, in your apartment,” she confessed, her hand immediately coming up to hold her ribs.

He took a step back, his eyes widening. “But – but, that was weeks ago!” He yelled.

She flinched. “I,” she started.

“Why didn’t you tell me then!”
“I – I… I just needed some time to process the news,” she explained, her voice shaking slightly.

“Process the news? You wanted to process the news?” He repeated as he started to pace. “Were you still processing the news the next Monday? Or the days, weeks that followed? Were you still processing the news on Christmas day, when I told you about my past? When I told you I was going to be married soon? Were you still processing the news at my parents’ party? Or that night in your kitchen?” He shook his head, scratching the back of his head. “But then, perhaps you planning to quit and leave was your way to process the news.”

She didn’t reply to him, just stared at him knowing there wasn’t anything she could say that would make things better.

“When were you going to tell me this?” He yelled suddenly, stopping his pacing right in front of her. “Were you even going to?” He asked, his voice still loud and her heart shatter in her chest at the look in his eyes when he guessed the answer. “You weren’t. You were just going to leave again.” His voice broke and she felt tears burn at the corner of her eyes. “Why Felicity?” He demanded, tears of his own making his eyes shine brighter. “Why were you going to leave again? Do you hate me that much? Am I such an awful person to be bonded to that you’d rather leave than tell me the truth?”

If her heart hadn’t properly shattered earlier, it surely did now, when his voice broke because of his unshed tears. She shook her head firmly, needing him to see as much as she needed him to hear none of this was his fault.

“No, no, Oliver, me leaving was never about you.”

“Oh really?” He said. “And how is that possible?”

She crossed her arms over chest. “It was your family, okay? And Isabel. She caught me at the party, said all those…” She shivered at the memory of Isabel’s words. “She said those very, very mean things to me and that the two of you were getting married to save QC from bankruptcy and… I didn’t want to put you in a position where you had to choose between me and your family and legacy. But yesterday, I spoke with Walter, why I went to him is a very long story, but what’s important is that he told me everything about him and your mother, Isabel and your father and also that it wasn’t true QC was flirting with bankruptcy. I was on my way here right after our conversation was over, there was nothing holding me back anymore.” She paused for a second, breathing through her nose. “Do you remember at the party when we danced? I asked you if we could talk,” he barely nodded but she assumed he remembered. “I wanted to tell you everything that night but… Isabel got to me before I could.”

He stared at her for a while after she was done and he didn’t say anything.

“Oliver, you have to believe me, I wanted to tell you,” she insisted.

He shook his head. “But you didn’t,” he reminded her, his tone cold.

“Isabel kind of beat me to it,” she defended herself, “you were there, you saw what happened.”

“No,” he corrected her, “I’m not talking about today. I’m talking about before. You could have told me before Isabel got to you at the party,” he said, accusingly.

“I wasn’t sure how you’d react,” she told him. “If you’d…” The word got stuck on her tongue. “I didn’t know if you’d want me.”

He took a step back, as if she’d hit him. And she guess she had, at least emotionally. “That’s the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard.”
Before, she wouldn’t have believed it. But now, after how he had kissed her in her kitchen, how he’d wanted to hold her back when she had been about to leave, she could. She believed him. But just because it was something she could believe now, it didn’t mean her fears and insecurities from before were less important.

“Is that so?” She said, glaring at him. “What was I supposed to think after what happened between us? After what you did?”

He gave her a pained look, and his pain was so raw, so evident, she almost regretted bringing back his past. Almost. He shook his head again and turned away from her. He walked to the window and stared out at the city. Felicity watched him, feeling helpless, not knowing what to say or what to do but knowing deep in her heart he was pulling away because he didn’t want her to see him this emotional.

She wiped her tears away and took a deep breath, trying to collect herself. She didn’t know what she was feeling, her emotions were a confused mess, whereas pieces of her heart were scattered inside her chest. She was only sure of one thing. She needed to keep talking, to fill the silence between them. Silence sounded final, resolute. She hated silence. It meant they had nothing to say to each other and she knew it wasn’t true. So, they needed to keep talking, even yelling if it was what Oliver truly wanted, to finally get everything they’d had on their hearts for far too long out.

Oliver obviously disagreed, if the way he was still facing away from her was any indication. So Felicity waited and waited, unwilling to talk to his back but determinate to speak to his face. She needed to see the emotions in his eyes, on his face, even if it was probably going to hurt her even more.

She waited and waited, the silence stretching, seconds turning into minutes, turning into dozens of minutes perhaps. For the longest while they stood there, the pressure building to the point where Felicity could almost feel it, burning the tips of her fingers.

Then, his voice broke the silence and a single word filled the void between them.

“Why?”

She instinctively reached for her arrow bracelet and twisted the fragile chain between her fingers.

His question was very simple and anyone else would have probably asked for details. But Felicity wasn’t just anyone and she didn’t need further explanations to understand what it was he wanted from her.

“My mother registered my mark in the Soulmark International Database, without telling me of course,” she told him. “And your parents were notified a match had been found to your mark and they sent a mediator to me. He offered a place for my mother in a soulmate’s clinic if I accepted to give up on my soulmate’s rights, permanently.” She saw Oliver tense up even more but she didn’t really care. Bitterness and resentment were filling her veins at the memory of her conversation with the mediator, making her blood boil. “According to him, it wasn’t in your family’s best interests to have you bonded to someone like me,” she said, remembering the exact words from that day. “Apparently, you wanted what was best for your family and I just…”

Oliver turned around to face her again.

“You believed him,” he concluded. “You accepted my parents’ money and you took the pill that sent me straight to the hospital for months just because a man told you I didn’t want you.” His words were hard and his tone judgmental. It set Felicity’s blood on fire. He didn’t get to be judgemental. He
didn’t get to questions her choices from before, her beliefs that she was unwanted and not enough.

“You never give me a reason to think otherwise, so no, I didn’t leave just because someone told me you didn’t want me. I left because I truly believed it, because you made me believe it,” she reminded him, her tone angrier than before. Again a flash of pain crossed his eyes at the evocation of his past but she didn’t care this time.

“If some parts of me hadn’t wanted you then I would have taken the Med. But I never did, I never left.” He shot back, sounding just as angry. “I made terrible choices back then, I’ll give you that…”

“How generous of you,” she said ironically.

He gave her a look and went on as if she hadn’t interrupted him. “But you gave up on me!” His voice was getting loud again but it was obvious he was trying to keep himself in check. His jaw was all tensed up, his fists clenched tightly. “You gave up on us.”

“I wasn’t aware there was an “us” back then!” She stated harshly.

He shook his head. “So an 8.8 connection means nothing to you? I know I did wrong, but I would have come around! And you, you didn’t wait, you didn’t try to understand, you just took my family’s money and left!”

She winced at his words, hurt by them and how he was basically reducing her to a gold-digger but she didn’t linger on the pain. She focused on how it stroked the fire in her veins, how it made her anger burn brighter. “Well, I’m sorry I didn’t try to understand why you were screwing half of Star City Oliver, I really am. I’m sorry I didn’t wait for you to come around. And you know what? I’m also sorry I had a life of my own and couldn’t put you above my other problems, real life problems, you know like getting the bills paid, going to college and handle my depressed mother! But what am I saying? A billionaire like you can’t possibly know what I’m talking about, it’s not like you’ve ever had anything to worry about in your life!”

“You know it’s not true!” He yelled. “You know how my parents were, how they still are! You know how it was!”

“Yes, I know that now;” she corrected, yelling herself. “I had no idea what you were going through back then.”

“You would have known about it if you had just tried to listen to me, to understand what I was feeling. Just like you would have known I was coming for you when you took that damn pill!”

She didn’t reply right away, instead she focused on calming her racing heart. She knew he had a point, she hadn’t always been the best listener. But why couldn’t he put himself in her shoes and try to understand her point of view? Why couldn’t he just see he never really made her want to listen to him?

The answer came to her immediately.

They shouldn’t be having this conversation, it wasn’t the right time. Oliver had just learnt his parents had married him to his father’s soulmate. Such a betrayal, coming from the people the closest to him… It had certainly shaken him in his core, made him doubt everything he thought he knew. It was the kind of news that wrecked a world, destroyed a person. On top of that, Isabel, and then Felicity, had dropped the soulmate’s bomb on his lap. And immediately after, they’d started fighting over what had happened. Oliver hadn’t had the time to process the new, he hadn’t had the time to think about it properly, to examine the situation under all its angles. Felicity had had the time. She’d
had weeks to get used to the idea, to think about it, to see things for what they really were. She’d even gotten to hear Oliver’s uncensored perspective, when he had told her about his past. He hadn’t had that chance. He had gone from “please don’t leave me” to “you’re here and okay, you’re my soulmate”. He couldn’t put himself in her shoes, he hadn’t had the time to process anything. The only thing he could do was defend himself as best as he could, hurting her in the process. And just like that Felicity knew they shouldn’t be having this conversation right now. She wanted to talk earlier, but it was easy for her to want that while she was ready and Oliver wasn’t.

She opened her mouth to say something, she had no idea how she was going to tell him that maybe they should just take a deep breath and wait until they had both calmed down to have this conversation but he was already talking.

“And you know what hurts me the most? It’s not that I spent the entirety of my time in the hospital blaming myself for chasing you away only to learn now that you essentially traded me for money. No, it’s not that. What hurts me the most is that even after what happened between us, even after you got to know me, you still wanted to leave.”

“Oliver, no,” she stated firmly shaking her head. They had already been through that - it was yet another sign this wasn’t the right time to talk, he didn’t hear what she said – but no matter how much she wanted him to have some time to process the news, she wouldn’t end their conversation before she was 100% percent sure he knew she hadn’t wanted to leave because of him.

“I didn’t want to leave because of you. It’s just Isabel, she said…”

“I don’t care about what she said!” He yelled, his eyes flashing in anger and Felicity actually took a step back, startled by his outburst for the first time. “Isabel isn’t your soulmate, just like that damn mediator and my parents weren’t! I am your soulmate Felicity. I’m the one with the arrow mark on my chest, I’m the one who thinks and feels. I’m the one who’s actually affected by your choices. I’m the one who ended up almost dead when you started taking the Med, I’m the one who almost got crazy because of the void that was left inside my head and inside my heart after you were gone! You should have believed me, you should have listened to me when I told you to stay and you should have been honest with me when I asked you about us! But you didn’t do any of this. You just chose to leave again and to lie to me and top of that and…” His eyes fluttered closed and his voice failed him. A breath got caught in Felicity’s throat and she tensed up, waiting for what was going to come next. “I’m sorry but…” He opened his eyes again, the pain in them so raw, so evident it made Felicity’s heart ache in her chest. “It’s too much for me to take,” he told her rather abruptly.

Felicity’s eyes felt a wave of panic rise inside her at the look on his face. “What?”

“I’m sorry,” he said, turning around and walking away.

Felicity watched his retreating back, her mind unable to form a coherent thought.

He didn’t look back at her and she stood there, stunned.

How had she gone from wanting to take a break from that conversation to Oliver leaving?

She stayed still for a long moment, at least it felt like a long moment. Maybe it lasted mere seconds, she didn’t know. Her mind was just as frozen as her body, blocked on his last words.

“It’s too much for me to take.”

Fear crept up inside of her, in strong and steady waves, each taking over a piece of her heart. A shiver ran down her spine as she felt cold settle in every part of her body. She was close to physical
numbness while her mind was running a mile a minute. Oliver’s departure was leaving her hanging on the thread of uncertainty. She had been about to ask for a break but he had taken the control of the situation away from her and now she had no insurance they’d ever talk again. All the things she had feared, how he’d leave her once he knew the whole truth, how he’d never forgive her, they could very well happen. Hell, it could be happening right now! He could be leaving, making sure she’d stay out of his life forever while she was still standing in his hotel room, her eyes lingering on the spot he had last been standing in, wishfully thinking the sheer strength of her will would be enough to bring him back.

“I’m sorry.”

She could hear his voice in her ears again. She gulped, getting out of her own mind and its dark maze, filled with her fears, nourished by her insecurities. Slowly, she unclenched her fists. She hadn’t even realised she had been clenching them and she had dug her nails in her skin hard enough to leave crescent marks on her palms. One single tear rolled down her cheek and she wiped it away with her sleeve, shaking her head. Staying in the room was pointless, she knew deep down he wouldn’t come back. She tried to tell herself it could have simply been his way to ask for some space. Maybe he had read her thoughts somehow, and had beat her to asking for a break first. But the look in his eyes, the resolution in his voice… It was telling her something else entirely.

She got back to her room, her ears feeling like that they had been stuffed with wool. She couldn’t hear or see anything around her. She barely heard the bell of the elevator when she reached her floor and almost bumped into a cleaning lady. She was in this weird place between denial and awareness, where she knew what had happened but some stubborn part of her, in spite of looking at the obvious, still categorically refused to see it.

She was brought back to reality by Tommy. He was waiting for her in her room, sitting on her bed his phone in hand, one arm under his head to support it. He jumped on his feet when he saw her. He opened his mouth to say something but something in her attitude made him pause. He cocked his head, watching her carefully.

“That was faster than I anticipated,” he cautiously said. “Felicity?” He insisted when she didn’t reply to him immediately.

“Oliver’s gone,” she told him, staring at him in disbelief. The words felt weird on her tongue.

Tommy’s eyes widened. “What? What happened?”

She shrugged, still feeling dazed. “He said it was too much for him, he was sorry.” She let out a shaky breath and looked up, to meet Tommy’s eyes. “What does that mean?” She asked, afraid to hear Tommy confirm what she feared. “What if he never comes back?”

Tommy chuckled, but it wasn’t an amused chuckle. It was more nervous, and slightly uneasy. “You really don’t understand a thing about the whole soulmate concept, do you?” He said.

She frowned. “I don’t want him to come back because he’s my soulmate and he feels forced to somehow. I want him to come back because he wants to.”

Tommy smiled at her and he put a hand on her shoulder in an attempt at comforting her. “He will want to come to you, his soulmate,” he assured her. He was unwavering in his conviction and some parts of Felicity, the weakest ones, wanted to succumb and believe him. They were ready to jump on every piece of hope and tore them to pieces, until there was none left. But the strongest parts of her were holding them back, preventing them from throwing caution to the wind. Because they knew what life was made of and it wasn’t just sun and rainbows, especially where soulmates were
concerned.

“What are we going to do now?” She asked Tommy.

He didn’t reply right away, a thoughtful look on his face. “You are going to take a shower and then rest, okay? I’m going to find Ollie, make sure he’s okay.”

“He’s gone Tommy,” she reminded him. “He…”

“Felicity,” He cut her off, his tone gentle but firm. “I may not be his soulmate but I still know him better than anyone, including you. I’ll find him, make sure he’s okay and doesn’t do anything stupid.”

She nodded faintly. “Thank you,” she said.

He shook his head. “Don’t mention it, it’s why I’m here.”

He squeezed her shoulder once more before leaving. Felicity let out a long breath once the door was closed. Tommy hadn’t asked her if there was anything she wanted to tell Oliver, for which she was grateful. There had been too many people between Oliver and her and from now on, she wanted things to be only about them. No more intermediaries. She nodded to herself and then turned around. She rummaged through her travel bag and extract the pyjamas she had packed with Thea the previous day. She dragged herself to the bathroom, suddenly feeling exhausted. She knew it was probably because she had travelled through half of the planet in the last few hours but she also knew her fight with Oliver had drained her just as much, if not more. The cold that had settled inside her after their argument was still there, spreading and even the hot water hitting her skin didn’t do much to make her feel better.

Sighing, and feeling slightly defeated, she shut the water down and got dressed quickly. She made her way back to her room. She collapsed on her bed, next to her travel bag. She remained still for a moment before turning on her back and staring blankly at the ceiling. Her thoughts drifted back to her previous conversation with Oliver and she shut her eyes, wishing she could fall asleep and just forget. Everything had happened so fast. The day before she had been getting ready to leave and now she was in Russia. Oliver was married to Isabel and she’d told him she was his soulmate. Thinking about it made her head spin. It was too much. A bitter chuckle escaped her lips against her will. She had just used Oliver’s words, without meaning to. If things were too much for her, she couldn’t imagine how they felt to him. When the silence became too much and she couldn’t bear being left alone with her thoughts anymore, she turned on the TV. She didn’t understand a word of Russian, but at least it wasn’t just her anymore. She sighed, not knowing how she’d ever be able to repay Tommy for everything he had done, with the plane, the hotel rooms, Oliver…

She sent a quick text to Thea and not so patiently waited for Tommy to come back. He knocked on her door after she was done watching the latest James Bond’s movie and she had to admit the Russian dubbing made Daniel Craig just as charming as his British accent made him in the original version. He looked tired and his clothes were slightly rumpled.

“Hey!” She greeted him.

“Hey,” he said, giving her a small smile.

She smiled back and he walked inside the room, taking off his coat. She watched him carefully, his face more particularly. He didn’t look upset, just tired and she could relate to that, considering how tired she felt herself.
“Did you find him?” She asked, the suspense killing her. She was dying to know what had happened.

Tommy ran a hand through his hair and he walked up to the bar, pouring himself a drink.

“Want something?” He offered.

She shook her head. He raised up his glass and took an experimental sip. He swallowed it down, slowly savouring the taste of the alcohol on the tip of his tongue.

“I found him,” he eventually said after the longest while. “He checked out of the hotel and is taking QC’s jet back to the States as we speak.”

Felicity’s shoulders went limp. “How was he?”

Tommy shrugged, taking another sip of his drink. “Honestly? I’ve never seen him more broken and that’s saying something, considering I was here after…” The rest of his sentence died on his lips.

“After the car accident,” Felicity completed for him, knowing where his mind had taken him.

He gave her a brief nod. “But I guess that was to be expected. He just learnt his parents tricked him into marrying his father’s soulmate.” He sighed deeply. “That one I didn’t see coming,” he said. “You didn’t tell me on the plane,” he added, coming to sit down in a chair.

His tone wasn’t accusatory and she knew he could easily understand why she hadn’t told him beforehand. It was something Oliver needed to hear first. Obviously, Oliver would have deserved to learn she was his soulmate before anyone else as well but things had been different on this front. Tommy had somehow already known the truth, so she hadn’t really told him, merely confirmed his suspicions.

“What a fucked up family,” he eventually said and Felicity let out a nervous laugh. That was such an understatement.

“They were always nice to me when I was a kid,” he told her after a while, staring at the bottom of his glass. His eyes were solely focused on the ice and Felicity thought maybe he was trying to melt it with his intense gaze. “After my mom died and my dad kind of lost it, they welcomed me at the mansion. They set a plate on the Thanksgiving table for me, they made sure there was a Christmas stocking with my name on it, just in case my father would decide to leave the country again for the celebrations.” He paused. “They treated me better than they did their own son and now I’m wondering how much of it was just a façade, you know? How much they faked for the sake of the public’s eyes.”

There was a deep sadness in his voice and Felicity immediately reached for his hand, comforting him as best as she could.

“All these years spent with them and I never suspected anything,” he said, taking another sip of his drink. “I knew they were controlling but…” He shook his head, chuckling bitterly. “What am I saying? I never knew them at all.”

He suddenly looked even more tired than he previously did. There were bags under his blue eyes and the features of his face were tensed. Felicity had never seen him look like this, so down and disheartened.

“I can’t imagine what Ollie is going through right now,” he added, rubbing his face with his free hand, as if he could chase his tiredness away with the simple gesture.
“Maybe you should have gone with him, to be with him,” Felicity told him, letting go of his hand to play with one of the strings of her hoodie. She wasn’t a fool after all. She knew in this moment, where Tommy was questioning a few things about his life, he needed his best friend. They needed each other, to support one another.

He shook his head, chuckling. “And leave you here alone? I care about my life, thank you very much.”

Felicity chuckled, amused by his slight attempt at humour. “I can take care of myself,” she reminded him.

He nodded. “I know. But I’m not letting twenty-year-old you alone in Russia nonetheless. You know Oliver would kill me if I did.”

Felicity cleared her throat awkwardly and looked away from him. “Yeah right,” she said, focusing her eyes on the TV again. She was startled by Tommy’s hand on hers.

“Felicity,” he told her softly. “Just because that conversation didn’t go as you expected, it doesn’t mean things are going to stay that way. Ollie needs time, a little bit of space and when he’s ready, he’ll come around.”

She pursed her lips at his particular choice of words.

“I know I did wrong but I would have come around.”

“I never said the conversation didn’t go as I expected. To be honest, I think I was expecting worse.” Tommy chuckled, shaking his head.

“How can you be so sure?” She asked him suddenly. “How can you be so sure everything is going to be okay?”

“Because I’ve been where you are, not so long ago.”

Felicity cocked her head. “I don’t understand.”

“You know how Laurel and I realised we were soulmates when we stopped taking the Med?” Felicity nodded. At first, when she had heard the story she had thought it was impossible. They had been so close for so long, how could they have not felt something? But now, after hearing doctor Lazarev’s explanations, she knew better. The both of them taking the Med had resulted in both their side of the bond being locked up and enable to sense the other’s presence. They had never started to bond, unlike Felicity and Oliver and had never felt any kind of burn.

“Well, when your soulmate has been taking the Med, you very often experience some sort of trauma when they’re back. Trust issues, fear of abandonment, that kind of thing,” he explained.

“I know, my friend Georgia…” Felicity paused, thinking back to how hard it had been for her friend to trust her soulmate. “She experienced something quite similar.”

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“Laurel and I, we were both taking the Med and because we used to be friends, you’d think it was easy for us to start a relationship but… it wasn’t, it really wasn’t. We knew the other’s past too well and it made it difficult for us to move forward. We had both chosen to take the Med, to separate ourselves from the other but just because our mind had decided it, doesn’t mean our heart agreed.” He paused, weighing his next words carefully. “I think everyone’s worst fear is to see their soulmate gone. Either on their own volition or taken from them. When I was on the Med, and Laurel was too, there were still some part of me which hated the situation, which resented her for cutting herself from
me. And that part of me was scared she’d never come back. I didn’t always feel it, but it was there, a shadow to my so called freedom. When we eventually found out the truth, it took some time for the shadow to go. For me to get used to her presence back and more importantly, for me to believe she was here to stay.” He chuckled. “Can you feel the sweet irony of this?” She nodded but he voiced it anyway. “I feared for a very long time to be abandoned by her again even though I’d been just as responsible for our separation.”

“And now, almost five years later, the two of you are going to get married,” Felicity pointed out.

Tommy nodded, pointing a finger at her. “That is exactly my point Felicity. Things will be okay between you and Ollie, eventually. It will take time and it will be hard, but it will be worth it. I can’t promise you the road will be smooth, because it won’t. For a very long time, he’ll look at you as if he’s afraid you’ll disappear if he blinks. He’ll hold your hand just a little bit too tight either to make sure you’re really here or to keep you by his side. And you, you’ll give him a smile when his eyes linger for too long and you’ll hold onto him just as tightly when his grip around you grows stronger. And one day, I promise you won’t have to anymore.” He cleared his throat slightly. “Oliver, he’s pushing you away now, but it’s because a lot is happening to him all at once and he can’t control much of it.”

“I know, I wish he could have learnt about all of this differently,” she confessed. He had learnt life wrecking news and he hadn’t even been sitting while receiving them.

“Me too but you can’t feel responsible for what his parents did to him on the whole Isabel front. If anything, he’s lucky to have you. You found out the truth and told him about it.”

She shook her head. “No. He’s lucky Thea has balls and doesn’t take any of her parents’ shit.”

“Yes, but you were there to connect all the dots,” Tommy reminded her. “But that’s enough heavy talk for one night. Did you eat?”

She shook her head. She hadn’t eaten since their breakfast on the plane, hours ago.

“Are you hungry?”

Her stomach growled in response and a smile stretched Tommy’s lips.

“Pizza?” He suggested.

“Pizza,” she agreed. The day they had called for comfort food. And ice-cream, fluffy blankets and Disney movies but Felicity wasn’t going to tell Tommy all that. Besides, pizza would do the job just fine.

Since they weren’t supposed to leave before Sunday morning, they ate pizza on Friday night and went to bed early, deciding to enjoy their short time as best as they could. They had all Saturday free and they agreed that even though the circumstances weren’t the best and didn’t call for any kind of celebrations, it would be a shame to stay in and do nothing. So they explored as much of the city they could during the day. Felicity thinking about JJ’s love for postcards and getting him a few she thought the little boy might like just like a new hat, to add to Thea’s already huge collection. Those were small gifts, she knew it but they came from the heart. She really enjoyed sightseeing with Tommy, it kept her mind away from Oliver and all the dark thoughts that seemed to follow the memory of him. She was more grateful for Tommy’s presence than ever. Thanks to him, she stopped hearing her fears’ voices and the sadness in her heart didn’t spread too much. They were still there though, she could feel them looking out for a fault in her armour, for just one single breach in the walls she was protecting herself with. She knew the moment she’d loosen up, even just a little bit,
they’d rush into her and overwhelm her to pull her under. She knew Tommy knew what was going
on with her and so he did his best to cheer her up, making sure to never leave her alone for too long,
and to make their time as good as possible. She also knew he wasn’t only doing it for her, but also
for himself. He needed some lightness in his life just as much as she did, the reveals about the
Queens having affected him too.

Their plane took off early on Sunday morning and because of the time difference between Moscow
and Star City they made it back home on Sunday morning. It was one of the weirdest things with
travelling, the possibility to live the same day twice.

“I think I’m going to sleep all day long,” Tommy told her. “Also, no more plane for at least a full
month. I’ve had enough in three days.”

Felicity chuckled as they headed toward the airport’s exit. She knew exactly what he meant. “Yeah
me too,” she agreed.

“But at least it wasn’t all for nothing,” he told her, staring at his phone’s wallpaper, a picture of them
taken in front of Saint Basil’s Cathedral. “I’m going to call Laurel, tell her we’ve arrived. Are you
sure you don’t want me to drop you home?”

She shook her head. “No thank you Tommy, but you’ve done enough. I can take a cab,” she assured
him.

She could see he wanted to insist but the look on her face was enough to dissuade him from doing
so.

“Call me when you’re home,” he told her, his eyes intent on her.

She nodded. “I will,” she promised. She tightened her hold on her travel bag, ready to go.

“You don’t mind if I tell Laurel the whole truth, right?” He called her back.

He had talked to his fiancée on the phone but had kept his explanations relatively vague, respecting
Felicity’s desire for privacy and knowing it wasn’t the kind of conversations to have over the phone
anyway.

“Of course. It’s not like she doesn’t have suspicions of her own, and I don’t want to be the reason
there are secrets between the two of you.”

He bowed his head slightly. “I appreciate it,” he told her.

She smiled and opened her arms to engulf him in a tight hug. “Thank you, for everything,” she
whispered in the shell of his ear. He wrapped his arms around her waist, hugging her back tightly.

“Anytime,” he replied, kissing her cheek before pulling away from her. She gave him another smile
before starting to walk away.

“Don’t forget to call me when you’re home,” he insisted and she raised her thumb up, to tell him
she’d heard him.

She spent her entire cab ride staring at Star City through the window, a content smile on her lips. It
was good to be home. Her smile grew wider at the thought. Home. Never a word had sounded better
to her ears. Never anything had sounded so thrilling and promising at the same time. She was at
home in Star City and now that Oliver knew the truth about her she had no reasons to leave. She
probably would have beamed in happiness, hadn’t she been in a cab. But of course, just like always
when she allowed herself to relax and savour the bright sides of her life, her rational mind kicked in, breaking her happy bubble ruthlessly. She still had a lot to figure out, things were far from being solved. She hadn’t heard from Oliver since their last conversation on Friday and she didn’t know when she’d hear from him again. She hadn’t gone to work ever since her vacation had started. She had quit but Oliver had refused her resignation. She knew though he probably didn’t want to see her at the office the next morning. So yeah, she still had a lot to figure out on that front but she was here to stay now and she’d find a way to fix her relationship with Oliver. She had to.

She was relieved when she finally spotted the corner of her building. It really felt good to be home. She paid the driver and made her way up to her apartment, her heart thrumming happily in her chest in spite of the exhaustion pulling at her bones. She turned her key in the lock and opened the door. She smiled when she spotted Thea’s handbag in her entrance. She tucked her boots off, taking her coat, scarf and beanie off.

“Felicity!” She squealed happily, rushing toward her from the kitchen.

Felicity smiled when she saw the brunette. She had cautiously thrown a dish towel over her shoulder and she was holding a small bottle in one hand, one of the kitten – Nemo she recognised – in her other hand.

“You’re here just in time for breakfast,” Thea told her.

She chuckled. “I can see that,” she said, dropping her travel bag on the floor and following her friend to the kitchen. She picked up Arrow from where she was safely tucked in a blanket on the couch. She melted in Felicity’s hand and the blonde smiled in wonder.

“She didn’t forget about me,” she whispered, petting her head gently.

“Of course not, you save her life remember? And I already fed her, ladies first and all that,” Thea explained. “I’m teaching Nemo courtesy.”

Felicity snorted, holding Arrow closer to her heart. The kitten’s heart was beating quickly against her palm and she sighed.

“To be honest, I didn’t expect you to be home so early,” Thea said. “I thought I’d have time to cook us some breakfast.”

“Don’t bother,” Felicity told her, sitting down on the couch, Arrow in her lap. “I already ate on the plane.”

Thea nodded, getting back to feeding Nemo. “So, how was Russia?” Thea asked, as always going straight to the point. “Your texts were pretty vague.”

“I know, I know… I just didn’t feel like discussing this over texts.”

“I figured, that’s why I didn’t push.”

Felicity bowed her head slightly toward her, in acknowledgement and gratefulness. “When we arrived, they were already married. Oliver’s phone was broken and Isabel didn’t even deny having something to do with it. It’s crazy isn’t it? It’s like she knew I was going to do something.”

“Maybe she didn’t entirely trust your resolve to walk out of my brother’s life,” Thea suggested. “Or maybe she was afraid I’d manage to convince Ollie not to marry her icy ass. If that’s the case, I’m
flattered. She obviously had more faith in me than I did.”

Felicity tilted her head. “How do you know about the whole “walking out” of Oliver’s life thing? I’m pretty sure we didn’t get to talk about this the last time we saw each other.”

Thea’s shoulders went limp. “I may or may have not gone to my parents, demanding explanations after you left. They’re not very fond of you by the way, thank God I know you so well because the way they talked about you…” She shivered. “Well, let’s just say I wouldn’t talk about my worst enemy in those terms. Sorry,” she added when Felicity’s face darkened slightly.

“It’s okay,” she assured her. And it really was. She didn’t care how Oliver’s parents spoke of her, it’s not like they mattered to her in any way. “What happened after you talked to your parents?”

“The conversation didn’t go all that well, as you can imagine, and so I packed a few of my things and left to go at Ollie’s.”

Felicity’s eyes widened. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

Thea shrugged. “You had enough on your plate already,” she said, getting up from her seat in the couch to put the bottle of milk away. “So, how did things go with my brother?”

“You didn’t ask him?” Felicity shot back, knowing she had to have run into him when he had come back to his apartment.

She shook her head. “I didn’t really get to. He came to his apartment, packed a few things and left again.”

Felicity felt her heart clench in her chest. “You didn’t tell me that over the phone either,” Felicity stated. She made sure not to sound accusatory, because she was in fact not accusing Thea of anything.

“I thought you knew,” Thea admitted, her lips pursed in a thin line. She came back to sit down next to Felicity.

“Did he tell you where he was going?”

Again, Thea shook her head “no”. Felicity’s shoulders went limp at that and Thea noticed it immediately. “But I know him well enough to guess,” she added. “He’s probably at our grandfather’s bungalow. It’s been his ever since he passed and whenever Ollie needs to take a break from things, that’s where he goes. He says he can think better there.”

“Did you try to call him?”

Again, Thea shook her head. “No, I could see he needed to be left alone.” Felicity barely held back a sigh of frustration. She didn’t like knowing that Oliver was alone, without anyone to help him or support him. “I’m guessing things didn’t go all that well?” Thea said tentatively.

Felicity let out a long breath. “You could say that,” she confirmed. “We didn’t really talk, just messily yelled things at each other until he excused himself and walked away.”

“Oh,” was all Thea could say.

“Yeah,” the blonde nodded, rubbing the palm of her hands against her jeans nervously.

“And he hasn’t contacted you?”
Felicity shook her head. “I didn’t try to get in touch with him either,” she added. “I’m trying to give him some time and space to figure out things on his own.”

“I think that’s just what he needs.”

Felicity closed her eyes for a second, fighting back tears. Time. She just had to wait and be patient. He would come back before she knew it. At least, that’s what she told herself.

“What happened with your parents?” She asked Thea softly. “Are you okay?” Things were hard for the brunette too, probably much harder than they were for Felicity. She was going through the same thing Oliver was, the betrayal of their parents. It wasn’t nothing.

Thea didn’t reply immediately. Felicity thought she saw a shadow crossed her eyes but her friend focused on the kitten in her lap instead, petting his head tenderly.

“I wish I could tell you I’m not surprised, that I was expecting it but…” She shook her head and sighed deeply. In that moment, she looked much older than eighteen years old. “The truth is I am. I can’t believe what they did to Oliver, what they hid from us.”

Felicity immediately reached for her hand and squeezed it softly. “Hey, it’s okay. They’re your parents, your family. It’s normal to see the best in them, to expect the best from them.”

“I feel like a fool,” Thea said, wiping at her eyes with her free hand. “I should have known better. I should have guessed it… Walter has always been spending so much time at home and Isabel… Isabel too. I really should have seen it coming.”

Felicity squeezed her hand and forced her to look up to meet her eyes. “Thea, thinking like this is doing you no good. And it won’t change anything. You know the truth now and you need to let go of it in order to move forward.”

“I know, it’s just… I can’t help but feel betrayed you know?”

Felicity nodded. “I can’t pretend that I know what you’re feeling Thea, but I still think you should put all of this behind you and focus on your future and the things that make you happy.”

Thea gave her a small smile, to which Felicity replied with one of her own. A comfortable silent settled between the two. Felicity was well-aware Moira and Robert’s actions hadn’t only affected her or Oliver but also Thea. She was still so young and even though she was strong and perfectly capable of taking care of herself it didn’t mean she didn’t need someone to look out for her. It was important Thea knew she wasn’t alone in this mess. For too long, she had faced her parents alone, she’d stood up for herself without any real back-up. Now as she was about to become an adult, to turn eighteen, it was important she knew she could do what she wanted and that she’d be supported. Felicity felt she might be overstepping boundaries. It wasn’t her role to tell Thea all that, she wasn’t family, just a friend, but she’d fulfil it until Oliver came back.

“I don’t want to go to business school,” Thea confessed after a while.

The obvious admission made Felicity smile. “Then don’t go.”

“But I don’t really know where to go,” she added.

“It’s okay,” Felicity said. “You still have time to figure it out.”

“And I want to meet my soulmate,” Thea said. “Before he gets paid to take the Med as well.”
Felicity winced at her words and Thea seemed to notice it.

“Hey, I’m not judging,” she assured her. “Whatever my parents told me, I’m sure it’s not true. I know you Felicity and I know you had your reasons for taking that money.”

Felicity’s eyes got slightly watery. She wished Oliver had told her the same thing. But then again, they had been so caught up in the moment, he hadn’t had the time to rationally think about it, like Thea had.

“My mother needed help, I needed to go to college…” She started explaining but Thea raised a hand to stop her.

“You don’t have to tell me anything. I trust you.”

Felicity let go of her hand and turned slightly on the couch. “About your soulmate,” she started cautiously, “remember when you asked me to check your SID’s account?”

Thea nodded, her eyebrows furrowed in surprise. “Yes…” She said, dragging out the word.

“Well, I kind of did it,” Felicity admitted.

Thea’s eyes widened and she opened her mouth to say something but Felicity was quick to interrupt her.

“I did it in Russia, when I had trouble sleeping,” she said.

She hadn’t had a good night of sleep ever since her last conversation with Oliver. It had been easy not to think about him during the day, with Tommy there to distract her. Nights had been different, because she had been alone with her thoughts and with no way to fight them. She had busied herself as best as she could and had ended up hacking into the soulmark’s database. It had brought back a lot of bad memories to her, memories of a time where Cooper and her would challenge the other, trying to figure out who was the best hacker and after that. She hadn’t been able to sleep after that, the scarred skin on her ribs tingling, reminding her of how exactly messed up and broken she was. As always, it had saddened her that the thing she used to do for fun was now hurting her but she had comforted herself with the thought that she was doing this for a friend. A very good friend.

“And don’t ask me how I did it, you can’t tell the Feds anything about what you don’t know,” Felicity went on and a small smile stretched Thea’s lips.

“Okay,” she chuckled. “And what did you find?”

Felicity looked down. “Nothing,” she said.

Thea frowned. “Nothing?”

Felicity nodded. “Yes, he doesn’t seem to have a SID’s account. I also checked the deleted data, nothing’s ever really deleted, it’s like Facebook, and he never had an account. I didn’t find an account registering a mark matching yours.”

Thea’s eyes widened. “And you managed to do that from Russia, using the hotel’s wifi?”

Felicity shook her head. “There are a few good softwares on my computer, some I used in college and didn’t we agree that you weren’t going to ask me any questions about how I hacked, god that’s such an ugly word…” She bit on her lower lip, looking for another way to phrase things.
“About how I got information on your soulmate?” She settled for.

“Right,” Thea said. “So he doesn’t have an account?”

Felicity nodded. “I’m sorry, I know it wasn’t what you were hoping for.”

“Maybe he doesn’t want to find me, maybe that’s why he doesn’t have an account.”

Felicity shook her head. “If he didn’t want to find you, he’d have started taking the Med or left town. Don’t try to look into this too deeply. Him not having a soulmate account doesn’t have to mean anything.”

“Or it can mean everything,” Thea argued.

Felicity gave her a look. She hesitated for a while before saying. “If there’s one thing the last few days taught me, it’s that life has a way to bring soulmates together, in spite of everything. If I were you, I wouldn’t worry too much.”

Thea nodded, looking down to a sleeping Nemo in her lap. She petted his head lightly, her fingers moving to his chin slowly. He started purring and the sound had a soothing effect on Felicity.

“You mind if I stick around for the day?” Thea eventually asked. “I don’t want to be alone,” she added, her voice lower.

“I don’t want to be alone either,” Felicity told her. “And you can stay here as much as you want.”

They ended up spending the day together. Thea was happy when she saw the new hat Felicity had gotten her and she insisted Felicity show her the few pictures she had taken in Russia. She also insisted she took care of Felicity’s nails. She had really mistreated them lately, biting them almost until they bled in worry. It felt nice to do girly stuff and fill the room with lighter conversations, things not involving soulmates, parents and any kind of important stuff.

Thea left after dinner, they ordered Chinese take-out from a place they both loved. Felicity offered Thea to spend the night at her place, so that she wouldn’t be alone but she declined, Oliver’s apartment being closer from her high-school than Felicity’s place. The brunette called her soon after she had made it back to Oliver’s apartment, both to tell Felicity she had arrived safely and that she had called Oliver, to check on him. She told Felicity he was planning on staying out of town for the whole upcoming week. Felicity tried not to read too much into it. He was taking some time to figure things out, good. She wanted that for him. She was just slightly worried about Q. Inc and what might happen while he was gone. He was the CEO, but the company wasn’t his since his parents were the main investors. That was why he had started side-projects, to diversify his partners and become self-sufficient and independent from his parents’ money. Felicity called Dig right after Thea hung up. He was surprised to hear from her, they hadn’t really talked since the traditional “Happy New Year” stuff and her missing work for days. Dig was Oliver’s bodyguard but hadn’t been able to accompany him in Russia, for some personal reasons and he hadn’t seen him since before his departure. He did confirm Oliver would be gone for the week though, since he had given him the week off.

She made her decision after their conversation ended. She’d go to work normally during the week. She knew there wasn’t much she could do, she was officially just an EA but before she left Oliver had given her much more responsibilities, especially where the company’s side projects were concerned. She’d take care of that and of Oliver’s schedule. She didn’t know if he’d appreciate her going to his company while he was gone, but she didn’t like the thought of Q. Inc being deserted by the both of them for a whole week.
She dropped by the coffee-shop on her way and Sara made the same comment about her being still alive than Thea and Tommy had. She let it go and promised to meet her at the gym for a boxing class after work. And if the look on Sara’s face was anything to go by, Felicity would get her ass kicked. Multiple times.

She walked out of the coffee-shop with her heart fluttering in her chest, a feeling of normalcy warming her insides. It intensified when she reached Q. Inc and saw the familiar shape of the building. The sight tugged at something in her heart and that’s how she realised she’d missed this place a lot. She made it to the executive floor and she powered her computer on without even taking her coat off first. She entered her password, typing it smoothly, with no hesitation, even after all those weeks. She made herself comfortable while her email box charged all her unread messages. She also opened Oliver’s mailbox. It was synched with hers, to make it easier for her to reply to some of his emails when he couldn’t. She sighed when she saw he hadn’t checked it since last Friday. It worried her, she understood he needed some time for himself after what had happened, but leaving Q. Inc like that surely couldn’t be good for business.

She was already starting to class the emails, between those which needed an immediate reply and those which could wait when she heard the elevator’s bell ring. She looked up from her computer screen, and a smile stretched her lips when she saw who was walking toward her.

“I thought Oliver had given you the week off,” she said, walking up to greet Diggle.

“He did,” he confirmed, “but your call yesterday led me to think I’d find you here today.”

She nodded. “And here I am,” she said, gesturing at her office.

“Back for good?” He asked, an inquiring eyebrow raised.

“I hope so,” she replied.

“I bet there is a very interesting story behind all this,” he said, and it was his turn to gesture at her office.

“I don’t know if it’s interesting, but there is indeed a story to explain everything,” she confirmed.

He gave her a gentle smile one that made warmth spread inside her body. Felicity liked Diggle. Ever since she had started working with Oliver, he had always been there, a calm and reassuring presence looking after them. She knew he saw a lot and understood even more though he’d never dare comment on anything before the time was right.

“I can’t wait to hear it, regardless.”

She smiled at him. “In the meantime, you should enjoy your week off.”

“Are you sure you don’t need me here?”

“Positive! I don’t need a bodyguard,” she assured him. “Or a driver,” she added when he opened his mouth again. “Just go be with your son Dig.”

He nodded. “You should come over one night, have dinner with us. It’s been a while since we last did something.”

“You’re right. I’ll give you a call!”

He smiled at her again and she watched him leave feeling like everything was falling back into place.
She was only missing the most important piece, the one that made everything else make sense. Oliver.

She spent the whole morning replying to emails and organising things in order to make it easy for Oliver to catch up with everything when he would be back in town. The afternoon, she spent with Curtis. He was happy to see her back and he helped her catch up on all the things she had missed. He even showed her the prototype of the new power cell. She knew he had been close to a prototype before they left for a well-deserved week of vacation and she honestly wasn’t surprised he was almost done with it now. The guy was a genius and a fast worker. But in spite of that, she still felt something when he showed her the prototype, and when she held it between her gloved hands, she realised she was quite literally holding the future of Q. Inc between her hands.

The rest of her week pretty much resembled her first day back at the office. In the morning, she’d handle all the paperwork, emails, agendas and phone calls. She’d also go over reports, summarise them for Oliver, and classify those which needed to. She was really busy and time was literally flying, she very often found herself wishing to have more hours in a day. In the afternoon, she’d go check on the teams working at Q. Inc, and she’d spend most of her time with Curtis. Things got a little bit complicated when QC’s Applied Sciences department sent some projects they wanted Q. Inc to go over with. Felicity didn’t really know how things were going between Oliver and his parents, whether it was in their personal relationship or professional one. She set the projects aside, knowing it was his decision to make and wishing for him to be back soon.

It did her some good to go to work and live very busy days. It gave her a feeling of normalcy and prevented her from going crazy. It kept her thoughts away from Oliver. He didn’t try to contact her and she didn’t either, guessing he still needed some space. She was worried but it didn’t eat her alive, because she didn’t let it. She threw herself into her work and let it consume her. She found something to busy her evenings so that she wouldn’t think about Oliver and him not calling. She went out with her friends, spend time with Thea and made sure to come home too exhausted to think about anything else but collapsing onto her bed.

She was about to call it a night on Friday when she heard her phone ring. She smiled at the smiling face of Georgia on her screen. The two girls hadn’t seen each other since before Thanksgiving, their busy schedules hadn’t allowed them to make a visit possible, but they’d been in touch, calling each other often and Skyping at least once a month.

“Hey G, how are you?” She greeted her friend cheerfully, picking up her purse and awkwardly wrapping her scarf around her neck with only one free hand.

“You’ll never guess where I am,” her friend told her excitedly.

“Well then tell me,” Felicity teased her, turning her computer off.

“Star City,” Georgia revealed and Felicity stopped moving altogether.

“Really?” She said, trying to sound not too hopeful.

“Yes, really! I had to meet up with some clients. I worked on their house’s design in Vegas and now they’re buying a flat in Star City and they want me to work for them again!”

“Really? That’s amazing! Why didn’t you tell me sooner? We could have arranged something!” Felicity said, walking toward the elevator.

“My trip was supposed to be in two weeks, but we had to change things at the last minute! Do you think we can still have dinner together? Maybe tonight?”
Felicity chewed on her lower lip. She was supposed to meet with Sara for their second boxing class of the week and she didn’t want to cancel it. But there was something in Georgia’s voice, something that told Felicity she wasn’t doing all that well.

“I have a boxing class tonight with my friend Sara, I’ll shorten it and maybe we can meet around 8:30?”

“8:30 sounds perfect,” Georgia said.

“What would you like to eat? I know an Indian restaurant on 15th street, you want to try their curry, it’s the best I’ve ever eaten!”

“Better than Amir’s?”

Felicity chuckled. Amir was the manager of a small Indian restaurant they used to eat at after the end of their shifts back when they were working together in Vegas.

“Yeah, better than Amir’s,” Felicity confirmed and she heard Georgia gasp. “I’ll text you the address.”

“Great! See you later F!”

“See you later G!”

Felicity arrived right on time at the restaurant to meet with Georgia. She hadn’t had time to come back to her apartment, but she had showered at the gym and put on her work clothes again. She had braided her hair, because it had been damp from the shower and she didn’t want to take the risk to get sick. The weather was still very cold. It hadn’t snowed for the last few days, and it probably wouldn’t anymore but the temperatures were still very low.

Georgia was already sitting and a waiter guided Felicity to her. Her friend got up when she saw her and hugged her tightly.

“Felicity,” she whispered. “It’s so good to see you!”

“It’s good to see you too G,” Felicity agreed, pulling away to look at her better. She worried slightly when she saw her face was slightly emaciated and that she had dark bags under her eyes. “Hey, you okay?” She couldn’t help but ask.

Her friend forced a smile on her lips. “Yes, I’m perfect. Come on sit down, we have so many things to tell each other!”

Felicity did sit down but still kept eyeing her friend worriedly. Because of the huge mess her life had become, the last time they’d spoken was a bit after New Year’s Eve. Felicity tried really hard to remember if something had been wrong with Georgia but she came back with nothing. Her friend had been her usual cheerful self, she had sounded happy and rambled about her soulmate’s bliss.

They spent two hours catching up on each other’s life and Felicity couldn’t help but notice how much Georgia avoided speaking of her soulmate. She tried to ignore it but the more the conversation went on and the more she started to fear something had happened between the two of them. And when they were done catching up with each other’s life, they started talking about the past and their days in Vegas.

When they were done eating, Felicity drove them to Georgia’s hotel. She walked with her inside, not wanting to part ways just now. She was always happy when she was around Georgia. She
connected her to her past, something Felicity usually hated. Except she didn’t with Georgia because her friend reminded her of spicy curry after late-night shifts, red hair shining in the sun and crazy Disney karaoke.

“So,” Georgia said, stopping in the hotel’s hall. “Are you going to tell me about you moving out of Star City?”

Felicity blinked. “How did you…?”

“Your mother,” Georgia supplied. “She told me you were planning on moving out.”

She sounded hurt and her tone was also slightly accusatory.

Felicity crossed her arms over her chest in defence. “Well, that depends. Are you going to tell me what’s wrong with you and Ben?”

Georgia opened her mouth to protest but Felicity interrupted her immediately.

“Please G, I know you too well. I knew something was off even before I saw you.”

Georgia adjusted her glasses’ position on her nose. “If we’re going to talk about this, I’m going to need more alcohol in my system,” she sighed.

“The hotel’s bar is still open,” Felicity pointed out.

Georgia gave her a small smile, tilting her head. They made their way to the bar, ordered margaritas and sat down in the back of the room, waiting for the waiter to come with their drinks.

“By the way, I’m not moving out of Star City,” Felicity told Georgia, who had been nervously playing with the hem of her dress.

The red-headed arched an eyebrow in surprise. “But your mom said…”

“I have yet to call my mom and tell her about all the crazy stuff that happened to me.”

Georgia tilted her head and opened her mouth to ask for more details when the waiter came back with their drinks. They both took a few sips and Felicity coughed slightly when the alcohol left a burning trail in her throat.

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you, but everything just happened so fast… It’s not even over yet.”

“What do you mean?” Georgia asked, frowning.

Felicity took another sip from her cocktail before telling her what had happened to her. For the most part. Since she had tried her best not to think about any of it for the last few days, Felicity expected to feel very emotional while telling Georgia about it. She did feel emotional but it was much easier than she’d thought it would, as if she hadn’t gotten used to it now and it didn’t hurt anymore. They were done with their first cocktail and already drinking the second one when she finished telling her friend about her trip to Russia.

“You went to Russia? To stop him from marrying that bitch?”

Felicity nodded, appreciating the term “bitch”.

“And I failed.”
“But you went there! God F, that’s so romantic!” Georgia said smiling brightly.

“But I failed,” Felicity reminded her.

Georgia rolled her eyes. “Who cares?”

Felicity chuckled and took another sip of her drink. She was feeling very good and warm. She knew alcohol was to blame for it but she didn’t really care. It felt good to confess her story to an old friend, who knew her well and had seen her at her best and at her worst.

“I can’t believe Oliver Queen is your soulmate,” Georgia went on, her voice on the verge of too loud. Her cheeks were bright red and her eyes shining behind her glasses. “I mean, yes I can totally believe he is. I most definitely pick something up the day the two of you argued about you hiding stuff from him. I swear I thought the two of you we’re going to end up making out against the wall. Plus there’s also the way you speak of him. You never spoke of anyone the way you do him. But damn… Oliver Queen is your soulmate! Congrats hon, your man’s hot!” She concluded nudging her, giving her a saucy look.

Felicity shushed her, half-chuckling. “Careful, we never know who’s listening.”

“Nah we’re fine! Probably a hundred girls claimed to be his soulmate! Just because it’s true this time, doesn’t mean people are going to believe it.”

Felicity gave her a look.

“Fine,” Georgia said, lowering her voice significantly. “Oliver Queen is your soulmate, I think it’s pretty cool. Not because he’s handsome and rich, even though it most certainly adds to his charm, but because he’s good for you. I mean, you’ve been better, ever since you moved in Star City and started working for him. You smile more, laugh more and I think he has something to do with it. Of course, he has, he’s your soulmate but I don’t think it’s only that. There is something with him that connects with you.”

“Isn’t that the concept soulmates are based on?”

Georgia shook her head. “Technically, yes but it means something different in my head. It means more. Like your connection is more than just the result of a stupid molecule generated by your body.”

Felicity blinked, staring at her friend in disbelief. “How much of this was alcohol induced?”

Georgia smiled at her, brightly. “None of it was, it’s coming from my heart,” she tapped her chest. “I hope the two of you will work things out, soon. And congrats on slapping the bitch, I’m proud of you.”

“Yeah, what can I say? She did try to jump my soulmate,” Felicity replied.

“Nobody touches my girl’s man. If I ever see her, I’ll break her face.”

Felicity chuckled, shaking her head and downed her drink. She leaned back in her seat, settling more comfortably. She was feeling pleasantly warm and content. And she was glad she was sitting, since she knew the world would probably be spinning if she was up on her feet.

“So, what happened with Ben?” She asked, clearing her throat slightly.

Georgia’s face darkened slightly. “God, this is so embarrassing,” she said, clenching her eyes shut.
Felicity tilted her head. “What?”

“We had sex,” Georgia confessed.

A smile stretched Felicity’s lips and she couldn’t help but giggle happily. “That’s amazing,” she said, punching her friend’s knee playfully. “How was it? You two are bonded now, how cool is that? But I’m surprised you’re here though! I’ve heard it’s hard to be away from your soulmate after the bonding, even temporarily!”

When Georgia didn’t reply to her, Felicity leaned toward her, her eyebrows furrowed. She felt worry tie knots in her stomach.

“G?” She insisted, squeezing her knee.

“We didn’t bond,” Georgia told her.

Felicity’s eyes widened and the warmth she had felt abruptly disappeared as she froze in her seat, her hand stilling on her friend’s knee.

“What?”

“We didn’t bond,” Georgia repeated, shaking her head. “It was the most awkward moment of my life, when he pulled away and nothing had happened.” She pinched the bridge of her nose, her cheeks bright red, and Felicity felt her heart clench in her chest at her evident pain. Had she suspected anything like this, they would have never talked around cocktails in a hotel’s bar. But then again, it was Georgia and that was how the red-headed coped with something hurtful. She kept it to herself until she didn’t feel like crying over it again and then proceeded to drown it in alcohol while dismissing it as if it was no big deal.

“What happened afterwards?” Felicity asked. “Did you guys… try again?”

Georgia shook her head. “No, we kind of argued. He blamed me, I blamed him, we yelled and threw things at each other. He left my apartment after that and we didn’t see each other since.”

Felicity’s heart skipped a beat. “When did that happen?”

“A few days after New Year’s Eve. He called me the day after he left my apartment, saying maybe it would be best if we tried to figure out what we both want on our own.”

Felicity shook her head and took another sip from her drink. Things had just become very intense and she needed to cool down a little bit – and yes alcohol might not help with that particular problem but it would help alleviate the sudden heaviness weighing on her shoulders.

“My doctor would tell you to stick together,” she suddenly said. “To find a way, together.”

“Well, it’s difficult to do that when he’s flying planes on the other side of the world, isn’t it?” Georgia deadpanned, ordering another margarita for them both.

“Don’t I know that? Well, my soulmate isn’t on the other side of the world but I went to meet him there and he left.”

“Why do guys always ask for space??”

“We must be one hell of a distraction, if they can’t think when around us,” Felicity said with irony, pushing her empty glass away from her, waiting for the other.
“I know right?” Georgia agreed.

Their drinks arrived shortly after and they clinked their glasses together.

“To being a distraction,” Felicity said.

Georgia smiled. “To being a distraction,” she repeated, bringing her glass to her lips.

Felicity took a sip from her drink before trying to get some of her seriousness back.

“But honestly, how are you feeling? About the not bonding thing?”

Georgia shrugged and played with the lime decorating her glass. “We knew it could be hard for us to bond because of him taking the Med for so long. But hey, I got two orgasms so it wasn’t all for nothing,” Georgia said faking a cheerful tone and Felicity rolled her eyes at her.

“You don’t have to be like this with me, you know?” She told her.

The red-headed arched an eyebrow in question.

“Like this,” Felicity repeated, gesturing at her. “All cool and pragmatic. It’s okay to be scared and hurt, I won’t judge you for feeling like this.”

“I know you won’t,” Georgia assured her. “I also know you won’t judge me if I get drunk on margaritas to forget about this mess. It’s been messing with my head for days now, I need to let it go, just for one night.”

Felicity nodded, leaning toward her, a playful smile on her lips. If her friend needed help to forget about what was bothering her, she’d be glad to offer her help.

“Do you remember the first time you made me drink margaritas?”

Georgia giggled. “Yes, you spent the night at my place because you were too afraid your mother would smell the alcohol.”

Felicity nodded, chuckling. “Well, she did have a powerful bullshit radar on her good days.” Her good days being the days where Donna wouldn’t feel the absence of her soulmate too much, where it wouldn’t weigh down on her too hard.

“Yeah I remember! But knowing her like we did, she probably would have congratulated you and asked if there was some left!”

Felicity giggled. “True!”

They downed their drinks while chatting playfully, looking for comfort in the other. Felicity was very, very buzzed after she was done with her third glass, and if the colour of Georgia’s cheeks was any indication so was she. The blonde was pulled out of the conversation by her ringtone.

“Hello,” she said, trying to sound normal and failing miserably, making Georgia giggle. She shushed her, pressing a finger to her lips.

“Felicity?”

She almost dropped her phone.

“Oliver?” She slurried on and Georgia straightened in her seat, her eyes wide opened. “Is that you?”
“Yes, I’m at your place. Where are you?”

His voice was tired and he sounded slightly worried.

“I…” She hesitated, trying to fight the hold the alcohol had on her. “I’m with Georgia, at her hotel!”

“This guy has the best timing ever,” the red-headed teased her. “We were talking about earlier Oliver,” she added through the phone, with problems to articulate every word.

“G, please stop laughing,” Felicity told her, hitting her friend’s knee with her scarf, which only served to make her laugh more and the blonde couldn’t help but laugh too because seriously, what were the chances? For the first time in a few days she had allowed herself to think about him and their situation and it was that night he’d picked to call her.

“Are you drunk?” He asked her.

Well, so much for her trying to sound normal.

“I don’t know if I’m drunk,” she told him. “But I won’t deny having put a consequent amount of alcohol in my body tonight.”

“Felicity…” He started but she cut him off immediately.

“They make very good margaritas, right Georgia?”

“Yes they do,” the red-headed confirmed, loud enough for Oliver to hear her over the phone.

She heard him sigh on the other side of the line and she could just picture him with his head slightly bowed, pinching his nose with his fingers.

“Give me the address, I’m coming over to pick you up,” he told her.

“I don’t need you,” she shot back. “I can take care of myself.”

“I’m not asking for your permission,” he shot back and she scowled unhappily.

“Fine, no need to get all bossy. We’re at St. Francis Hotel, it’s very fancy,” she said, patting the leather of her seat.

“Yeah, I know that place. I’m coming over, wait for me!”

She bit back the “yes dad” comment that was burning her tongue and hung up instead.

“He’s coming,” she informed Georgia.

“Do you think Ben would come and pick me up too if I called him?”

Felicity shook her head, the absurd wish making her laugh. “Didn’t you say he was on the other side of the country?”

“He could come back for me,” Georgia argued. “You did travel to Russia after all.”

Felicity chuckled. “It wasn’t the same thing. Come on, I may not be your Ben but I can bring you to your room just as well as him.”

“Yes!” She squealed in delight. “Felicity, my knight in shining armour.”
“And very high-heels,” the blonde said after getting up. “Why is the world spinning?” She added, before sitting back down.

“Because you put a consequent amount of alcohol in your body,” Georgia reminded her very seriously, repeating her words from earlier.

Felicity didn’t reply to that and just bent forward, to take her shoes off. She struggled a little bit with the buckles but managed to undo them. She looked up and saw Georgia had done the same thing with her shoes. Together, arm-in-arm, they walked to her room, getting weird looks from the hotel’s customers because of their shoeless feet and inebriated state. It took G some time to open her door, she had a hard time putting the magnetic card in the lock. They stumbled inside the dark room and Georgia dropped her shoes somewhere and Felicity followed her to her bed.

“Thanks for tonight,” the red-headed whispered, collapsing on her bed, her eyes shut tightly.

“You’re welcome, although I’m pretty sure I didn’t do anything special.”

“You were with me.”

Felicity smiled at her and leaned forward to drop a sloppy kiss on her forehead. “I love you G.”

“I love you F.”

Felicity walked, although reeling would be a more appropriate word to describe her gait, to the door. Before walking out, she said.

“Call Ben tomorrow.”

Georgia didn’t reply but Felicity knew she wasn’t sleeping yet and had heard her.

She made it back downstairs, still carrying her shoes. The world wasn’t spinning as much as it had when she had first gotten up but she still felt somehow disconnected from it. She was buzzed, so pleasantly buzzed and it felt very good. She winced slightly when she felt the cold of the tiled floor under the sole of her feet, which were barely protected by the tights she was wearing under her dress.

“Felicity?”

She looked up from the patterns of the tiles which had been fascinating her for the last minutes and a smile stretched her lips when she saw Oliver. He strode toward her and cupped her elbows with his hands, stabilising her.

“Are you okay?” He asked her.

She tilted her head, still smiling at him. She was feeling his warmth coming to her from where his hands were touching her bare skin. And his warmth was so much better than the alcohol induced one she had been pleased to feel during the evening. She hadn’t been in his presence more than fifteen seconds and she was already feeling so good, at peace.

“I think you have a superpower,” she told him instead of answering his question. It wasn’t the first time the thought crossed her mind. She had already thought about it when he had helped her recover from her panic attack.

She saw him arch an eyebrow. “What?”

“You always make me feel so good, you must have some kind of superpower.” She blinked and then
went on. “I’m good Oliver,” she assured him. “I’m perfect,” she said, dropping her shoes to cup his cheeks.

“And bare feet,” he pointed out, looking down at her shoes.

“So? Is being bare feet an obstacle to happiness?” She said, teasing.

He sighed and leaned down to pick up her shoes. “What if it is?” He challenged her, letting go of her to help her put on her coat and scarf again.

“Then help me put my shoes on,” she asked him once her coat was on, her hands flying back to him their place lower, around his neck. “And I realise it’s very Cinderella like but who cares? Thea already considers herself my fairy godmother! But we might have a problem with Tommy because he’s my white knight in shining armour meaning you are kind of jobless and what are you doing?” She asked, interrupting her babble, a frown forming on her face.

He put her shoes in her purse before handing it back to her. Then, without warning, he scooped her up in his arms and she squealed in surprise, automatically wrapping her arms around him. She felt her stomach protest against the sudden movement and her heart pick up in her chest.

“Hi,” she whispered once her stomach had settled once again inside her. Their faces were barely a few inches away from the other. That’s when she noticed the cold look in his eyes, the distance in his blue orbs. In spite of the alcohol clouding her judgement, she felt something weigh down on her stomach and she was pretty sure she was going to be sick, for entirely different reasons than when he had pulled her up.

“Let’s get you home,” he stated, looking away from her. She barely nodded her approval and tightened her hold on him. Her head may be feeling heavy because of the cocktails she had drunk but she could still feel this physical proximity between them was not something he was enjoying. And somehow, she was aware it might be the last time he was holding her like this against him.

“Sounds like a good idea,” she told him, her throat tight with emotions.

“Do you remember where you parked your car?” He asked impatiently, his hold on her cold and practical.

“In the parking lot,” she told him, fighting against the urge to settle further into his warm embrace. His arms seemed like they’d been made to hold her but she wouldn’t succumb to perfection only to get deprived of it later.

She heard him sigh heavily and realised she had probably said that out loud. She tensed up, feeling awkward and he took upon him to avoid her eyes and look straight ahead of him. His hold on her tightened and he walked them out of the hotel. She shivered when the cold air of the night hit her.

“It’s cold,” she whined and he wordlessly held her closer to him. She regretted not being lucid enough to be able to appreciate his solid presence against her and the hard lines of his chest.

They wandered in the parking lot for a while, Felicity couldn’t have been more precise, just like she wasn’t able to tell Oliver where she had parked. But eventually, he found her rental car and helped her settle inside, securing her belt inside, still without saying a word. The silence was loaded between them and she wished she’d drunk enough to pass out. But then, he might not be there when she woke up and that was a very depressing thought. She’d rather have cold and distant Oliver with her than no Oliver at all. He circled around the car and sat in the driver seat. Felicity held back a childish giggle when she saw him look so huge in her mini-cooper, and like he didn’t know what to do with
his legs.

“Your car is too small,” he growled, turning the ignition on.

She shook her head. “You keep saying that. And that my bed is too small too. Didn’t it occur to you you’re the problem? That you’re too huge?”

“I’m not too huge,” he argued, sounding slightly frustrated.

“Oh yes you are! Huge height, huge shoulders, huge hands, huge everything!” She rambled, staring at him.

He gave her a look and at least her inebriated body had the decency to blush slightly at what her just as much inebriated mind had just said.

“Just sleep okay?” He told her, a frown creasing his forehead.

She shook her head. She felt sleepy, she could feel slumber calling, no scratch that, slumber was yelling at her to come and just let go. But she didn’t want to, she wouldn’t give in.

“Felicity, close your eyes,” he insisted.

“No,” she said stubbornly, pouting like a petulant child with her arms crossed over her chest. “If you wanted me to just shut up and sleep then you shouldn’t have bothered coming. I would have been just fine by myself,” she angrily said, tired by his attitude.

“Well excuse me for still being mad,” he said with irony.

“Well, you could have kept on being mad away from me,” she informed him. She was this close to ask him to pull around and let her go.

“I’m here now,” he stated.

“It’s a free country, you can leave if you want to.”

“Did I say I wanted to?”

“No,” she argued, “but I might want you to if you keep being an ass!” She sighed in frustration, pinching the bridge of her nose. She didn’t want him gone, absolutely not. She wanted him to stay because he was her soulmate she loved him and missed him but in the meantime he was so mad right now and she couldn’t handle it… She was feeling a headache coming, one that an argument would certainly not help.

“Just sleep Felicity,” he eventually said, the streetlights illuminating his face. “We’ll talk tomorrow.”

She sat stubbornly in her seat, her arms crossed over her chest.

“You’re not going to sleep, are you?” He asked tentatively after five minutes.

“No, I’m not,” she confirmed. His behaviour, cold and detached, was hurting her but God help her, closing her eyes and opening them to him gone would hurt a lot more.

“You need to sleep,” he told her.

“I need a lot of things, just add it to the list.”
“Felicity, please…”

“No!” She almost yelled and the pounding in her head increased.

“Why?” He yelled back and she jumped in her seat.

She pinched her lips together and her exhausted heart decided to go with honesty. She had nothing to lose after all.

“Because you might not be there anymore when I wake up,” she confessed, her voice low and broken.

She thought she saw him suddenly become serious but she wasn’t sure. It was late at night and she was tired. She had a headache and he had made her mad too.

“You can close your eyes Felicity,” he told her, his tone voluntarily reassuring. “I’m not going anywhere.”

“You promise?” She insisted.

“Yeah, I promise,” he confirmed and she held his gaze, searching for the truth. When she found it, she nodded and settled more deeply in her seat. They weren’t okay, far from it but he was staying. She eventually succumbed to the darkness, helpless to resist its pull any longer.

She woke up when he deposited her carefully on her mattress. Her coat was gone, so was her scarf. She tried to sit up but Oliver stopped her.

“Hey, hey go back to sleep!”

She shook her head, feeling slightly confused. She was recognising the walls of her bedroom, the fairy lights above her bed but it felt as if she was watching everything from afar, as if she wasn’t completely there. And she guessed she wasn’t, that some parts of her were still asleep, numbed by the alcohol she had drunk.

“I need my pyjamas,” she said, reaching for them under her pillow.

Oliver got up from where he had sat down on her bed.

“Do you need help?” He asked as she tried to figure how to get in her hoodie.

She teared her tights when she got out of them and struggled to lift her knitted dress above her head and she realised a bit too late she had put her sweatpants the wrong way round. She decided to let it go. It didn’t really matter and she really wanted to sleep. She got back in bed, burying herself under her covers. Oliver came back to her, holding a glass of water and something else in his hand.

“For your head,” he said and she realised it was aspirin.

“Thank you,” she uttered, gulping the pills down. He wasn’t as warm as he usually was but his coldness had melted a little bit and she was too tired to demand more of him. She knew he wouldn’t be able to give it to her anyway.

Oliver left again, to take the glass of water away and she lied down, for good this time. The lights were still on but she closed her eyes nonetheless, ready to sleep. She never slept in the dark, she was never alone in the dark. But then as she was feeling herself drift away again, she sensed his eyes on
“Goodnight Felicity,” he whispered.

“Oliver,” she called him again, turning on her other side.

“Yes?”

“Don’t forget about your promise,” she told him, holding his gaze until he nodded. Then, her head fell on her pillow again and she closed her eyes to sleep.

She woke up the next morning with a slight headache, a furred tongue and a burning hatred for margaritas. God, why had she accepted that third glass?

“Things always come in threes, good or bad Fliss.”

She could hear her grand-mother’s voice in her ears, and see how her smile would soften when she’d used her pet name. Not a day went by without her telling Felicity a proverb although the blonde was pretty sure she hadn’t been talking about alcohol when she shared that one with her. Felicity rolled in bed, holding a pillow close to her heart. The events of the previous night were kind of blurry. She remembered Georgia and talking with her and drinking with her and Oliver and… Oliver!

She almost fell off her bed in her attempt at disentangling her legs from her sheets and comforter. She kicked them off carelessly and rushed out of her bedroom. She came hurtling in the living room and found Oliver in the kitchen, cooking breakfast. He looked up from the pan in front of him and she looked at him in disbelief.

He wasn’t here, he couldn’t be… Could he?

“You’re here,” she breathed out, still staring at him.

“Well, I did promise I would.”

She blinked. “You’re really here.”

He nodded and she let out a small, relieved breath.

“I need to go to the bathroom,” she said.

She saw him frown and she realised he didn’t need to know that. But he seemed to understand the underlying meaning of her words.

“Go, I’ll still be here when you come back,” he assured her.

“Okay,” she said, walking backwards, her eyes riveted to him.

But she did turn around to look at where she was going when she knocked the wall on her way out. Her cheeks flustered in embarrassment, she bolted away. She rushed to the bathroom and took care of her business before brushing her teeth. She splashed water on her face when she was done, to
finish waking herself up. She took aspirin, to chase her headache away. She let out a small breath and her eyes met their reflection in the mirror. That’s when it hit her.

Oliver was in her apartment, cooking breakfast.

“Don’t freak out Smoak,” she ordered herself, undoing the braid she had done after her boxing class. It had barely survived the night and she threaded her fingers through her heavy curls. “Keep it together,” she muttered. “He’s here, so what? It’s no big deal, no big deal at all! He’s been here countless times and you’ve been at his place too! So don’t panic, everything’s gonna be okay.” She frowned, trying to remember if she had embarrassed herself in front of him the previous night. God, she hoped she hadn’t said anything inappropriate. She groaned at the thought.

“You better not think about that Smoak and act normal,” she told herself.

She walked back to the kitchen slowly, nervously playing with the hem of her sweatshirt, her heart fluttering in her chest. Oliver was still there and he had put pancakes in two plates, one for her and another for him.

“Here,” he said when she came back, pushing a steaming cup toward her. “Sugar and cream with a little bit of coffee,” he teased her, his smile not as playful as it could be but still, it was there.

She took the cup from him and brought it to her lips. She smelt the sugary scent of the coffee, letting it awoken her senses.

“I don’t know how you can call yourself a coffee addict when what you drink is no longer coffee,” he teased and she gave him a look.

“Be nice,” she warned him, taking a sip.

He smiled hesitantly at her and she smiled back, just as hesitantly.

“What? Is it not good?” He asked her, frowning.

She set her cup on the table, slowly. “No, it’s perfect,” she told him. “It’s just… Are we really going to do this? Small-talk?”

He sighed, taking a sip of his own cup of coffee. “I was hoping we could keep the heavy topics for after breakfast,” he admitted.

“I don’t like pretending, or acting like everything is okay between us when it’s not.”

“And I appreciate it, but if we start talking now, there won’t be much eating done and you need to eat, you must be starving.”

Her stomach growled at just this moment, proving him right.

“I might be a little bit hungry,” she said, taking a bite of the pancakes he had cooked.

“Then eat.”

She did and for a while they were surrounded by silence, only interrupted by the occasional sound of chewing and sipping. And it was slowly driving Felicity crazy, there was a reason why she was always talking. She hated silence. Some people found it comfortable, she found it awkward and stressing. And so she talked.

“When did you come back?” She asked him.
He gave her a look. “You’re not going to let go of things until after breakfast, are you?”

“I don’t know, what do you think?” She replied, teasing him slightly. “Besides, if you do most of the talking, I can keep eating,” she added and to prove her point, she took a mouthful of pancake.

He chuckled. “I came back on Wednesday night. I spent Thursday and Friday meeting with lawyers and my parents.” He sighed. “Those weren’t fun days.”

“Care to develop?”

Her tone was light, as if it wasn’t a big deal at all. But she knew it meant a great deal to them. If he chose to answer her, it’d mean they were on the right path, they were on the road to healing. If he chose to ignore her question… Well, it would be bad.

“I can get an annulment since there was fraud on Isabel’s part, I didn’t know she was my father’s soulmate and I got into this marriage under false pretences. I was lied about the financial situation of the companies.”

“Great,” Felicity happily said. Then she paused. “That’s great, right?”

He tilted his head. “You bet it is! She won’t get anything from me. Also, Q. Inc’s mine now, or it will be.”

Felicity blinked. “Really? But I thought your parents owned most of it?”

Oliver nodded. “Yeah they do but they’re going to sign over to me their shares of the company.”

Felicity’s eyes widened. “You’re kidding right?”

She couldn’t fathom a world where Moira and Robert Queen would give up on one of their precious companies.

“Nope,” he said, insisting on the “p”. “I think they’re trying to buy my silence, they don’t want their little secret to be uncovered.”

Felicity stared at him blankly. “Did you threaten them to go talk to the press?”

He shook his head. “Maybe. It’s more like a trade. I’ve given up on my shares of QC, they’re giving me Q. Inc… I don’t want to have anything to do with them anymore.”

“And they were okay with that?” She asked in disbelief.

He huffed back a bitter laugh. “No, they weren’t but they also knew I had the upper hand this time.”

“So you did threaten them?”

Oliver winced. “I don’t like putting things that way. Let’s just say I made them see things from my perspective, and wait is that judgement I’m hearing?”

She chuckled, shaking her head “no”.

“Pride,” she corrected and it made him smile, a smile that showed his dimple and made her heart melt in her chest. His first real smile to her in a very long time.

“With our side-projects, Q. Inc can sustain itself. When Curtis is done with his battery, we’ll expand that side of our researches, we’ll diversify our partners and hopefully our business will grow.”
“Wait, wait,” she interrupted, moving her hands in a “slow down” motion. “We? Our?”

Knots formed in her stomach because of the hope his words had just given her.

“Yeah, I…” He hesitated and he let out a breathy chuckle, one that told her he was suddenly feeling nervous. “You came back to Q. Inc this week and I thought it meant you were back for good.” His shoulders went down a little. “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have assumed that…”

“No, no,” she interrupted him. “I’m back for good, if you still want me with you.”

He nodded. “I do.”

She nodded too and the knots inside her loosen up completely and she was overwhelmed by relief. Plain and utter relief.

“Good,” she replied. “That’s great!” Her voice was shaking slightly, but for once it wasn’t because she was on the verge of crying and it felt good. Very good. “But we still have a lot to talk about,” she reminded him.

“Yeah, I know. I wanted to tell you I’m sorry I left when we were in Russia. It wasn’t correct and fair to you to leave things that way. But I was just so overwhelmed by everything, I couldn’t take it anymore…”

“I figured. I was just about to ask you for a break, to give you some time.”

That made him smile. “Always thinking alike I see.”

It made her smile too because he was right. Even with the Med between us, they’d always been connected to one another, always been able to understand what the other needed.

“Still, I shouldn’t have left the way I did, and I’m sorry for that. I was so upset by the wedding, and by how Isabel had jumped on me right after it, I wasn’t thinking clearly. I’m also sorry for the things I said, I didn’t mean most of them.”

“It’s okay,” she assured him. “We weren’t in a right place at this moment, me just like you. I also said things I didn’t mean and I’m sorry for that.”

He smiled at her and squeezed her hand, an acknowledgment and acceptance of her apology. She did the same with him. They remained a moment without saying anything, just staring at one another and holding hands, saying a multitude of things without using words. That’s when Felicity took Oliver in, really, for the first time since she had seen him again. His scruff was longer, his hair rumpled. There was dark, heavy bags under his eyes and she knew he probably hadn’t had a decent night of sleep in a while. He looked slightly slimmer, as if he hadn’t eaten properly either and she felt her heart clench in her chest at the thought of him being in pain and her being unable to help him.

Suddenly, Oliver got up from his chair and walked to the sink. She got up from her chair as well, but instead of following him, she chose to put some distance between them and went to lean against the couch, their breakfast long forgotten. He reached for something on the counter next to the sink and turned around to face her. Her heart dropped in her chest when she saw what he was holding.

Her box of the Med.

“Why a ten?” He asked.

“Our number has changed,” she explained and when she saw him frown she knew he didn’t
understand. “Us being close, it started the,” she hesitated, cleared her throat. She felt slightly embarrassed and she knew it was stupid, he was her soulmate it was okay to talk about that kind of stuff with him but she couldn’t help it.

“It started what?”

“The bonding process,” she eventually let out, her voice low and her cheeks bright red.

“Oh!” Was all he said as he looked down toward the box between his hands.

“Yeah,” she confirmed. “Oh!”

“What…”

“9.4,” she replied immediately. “Last time I checked, it was 9.4.”

Oliver whistled and she didn’t know if he was impressed or shocked.

“That’s high.”

Neither, he actually sounded both happy and nervous, as if she had handed him a super great gift, a gift so great he didn’t know what to do with it.

“I had suspicions you know? On New Year’s Eve, you said you didn’t want to be the other woman. I was never asking that of you, I’d never ask something like that from you. But I had all those doubts swirling in my mind and I guess I just… I wanted you to give me a reason not to get married. Something to fight for.”

“And I didn’t,” she stated. “I’m sorry, if I had known what I know now, I…”

He raised a hand to stop her. “I still wish you would have said something,” he told her. “But you know, I had a lot of time to think and I realised it wasn’t fair to ask that of you. I should have been a good reason enough to fight. My happiness and well-being should have been enough.”

Felicity measured his words. She agreed with him, he should have wanted to fight for himself. It didn’t mean she wasn’t to blame for what had happened to them though, just that he had failed himself somehow, the same way she had.

“Why weren’t they?” She asked.

He looked at her and sighed. “Thea doesn’t understand this but I never saw obeying my parents as a burden. I saw it as my redemption.” He paused for a second and she could see his emotions shining in his blue eyes, completely bare for her to see. “I was a terrible person in college. An awful son to my parents and an even worse soulmate to you. And after I lost you, after the car accident, I tried to be a better person, even if it was too late. And I thought that if I couldn’t be a better soulmate to you then I’d be a better son to my parents. It was the wrong choice, I see it now. It led me to make horrible decisions and…”

“And now, you’re on the right path again,” Felicity told him. “Fighting for yourself, for your family…”

“For you,” he added, his voice unwavering, absolute certainty shining in his eyes. It made her heart pound in her chest.

“You shouldn’t be making decisions because of me,” she said. “We still have so much to talk about,
“You’re right,” he agreed. “I suggest we start with this,” he added, dropping the box of the Med on the kitchen table.

Felicity chewed on her lips. She still hadn’t stopped taking it. She had wanted to but had found herself unable to.

“I know I’m going to sound slightly authoritative but…” Oliver cleared his throat before going on. “I don’t want to see you close to one of these things ever again.”

Felicity chuckled nervously. “Slightly authoritative, uh?”

He gave her a look. “Felicity I’m serious. Never again.”

She nodded. He was right, of course he was right, she knew that but it did nothing to alleviate her fears.

“I wanted to stop taking it but…” She paused, biting on her lower lip.

“But what?”

“If I stop, there’ll be nothing between us anymore.”

He frowned. “Yeah, that’s kind of the point of you stopping it.”

“I know but… There are just some things I don’t want you to see or feel.”

The skin on her ribs tingled and a picture of her half-naked and tied up to a metallic bed crossed her mind. Shame overwhelmed her. She didn’t want him to see her like this, to feel what she had felt that day and she knew he would if she stopped taking the Med. He’d hear Cooper’s voice in his head and he’d see her and she didn’t want that. She really didn’t because she didn’t want to have to deal with the pity that was sure to follow.

He seemed to understand her reluctance was coming from something more because in a blink of an eye, he was standing in front of her, hovering over her. She could feel the heat radiating from his body but she looked away, not willing to meet his eyes.

“Felicity,” he said softly, his hands landing on her hips. “Felicity look at me,” he asked her but she refused. One of his hands slipped under her tank top and travelled up to her ribs. Goose bumps broke on her skin and she gasped when his fingers stroked the scarred skin tenderly, the tips brushing the lacy crop top she was wearing underneath her thank top. “Is it because of this?” He asked her.

“Yeah, between things,” she admitted, her throat tight because of a lump of emotions. She didn’t want him to see how Isabel had humiliated her back at the party as well.

“I don’t want to see that either to be honest,” he whispered. “But I need to Felicity, I need to know.”

“I already told you about it,” she said finally looking up, her eyes shining with tears.

“I don’t want to see that either to be honest,” he whispered. “But I need to Felicity, I need to know.”

“I already told you about it,” she said finally looking up, her eyes shining with tears.

“When it happened, I felt it,” he confessed and her next breath got caught in her throat. “I didn’t know what was happening of course, but I felt it. For a second, your side of the bond was back and I saw darkness and terror. It filled my nights with nightmares for weeks, I was sure you were dead.”

She knew her side of the bond had thought against the Med that day and that the walls had almost broken. She wasn’t all surprised to hear he had felt something but it still stunned her, the naked pain
she could see shining in his eyes. He wasn’t pitying her, he was sharing her pain. He was feeling it as if it was his.

“But I didn’t die,” she whispered.

“Yeah,” he confirmed, tucking one of her curls behind her ears. “It took some time, but I convinced myself you weren’t dead. I thought I’d have felt more if you’d passed.”

“I really thought I was going to die,” she confessed and her broken voice filled his eyes with tears.

“You’ve been carrying the weight of what happened that night on your shoulders for far too long,” he told her, cupping her cheeks, his fingers caressing her ears. “Let me help you, okay?”

“Okay,” she agreed, her hands wrapping around his waist. She pulled him toward her and soon found herself caught between the back of the couch and his solid chest. She didn’t mind it one bit, enjoying the feeling of his hard body against her soft curves. “Only if you let me do the same for you,” she whispered against his chest.

He nodded, giving her a small smile. “Do we have a deal Ms. Smoak?”

“Yeah, I think we do,” she replied, chewing on her lower lip nervously. The movement brought his eyes to her lips before they fluttered back to her own eyes.

He leaned down toward her, sealing their lips together to seal their deal.

Felicity froze and stopped breathing, knowing this kiss was very different from their previous ones.

It wasn’t a tradition, it wasn’t desperate.

It was sweet and hopeful.

It marked a beginning, not an end.

All of the sudden, she relaxed into him and wrapped her arms around his neck to keep him in place. His own hands travelled down to her thigh and he lifted her up and set her down on the couch. It made her giggle.

“You’re too small,” he whispered against her lips, his hands remaining on her thighs and starting a fire wherever his fingers teased her skin through her sweatpants, the clothing doing very little to keep her from feeling his crazy warmth.

She rolled her eyes at him and leaned forward to connect their lips again. The second kiss was more teasing, more tempting. He nibbled at her lower lip, waiting for the opportunity to devour her. She gave it to him when she moaned, loudly, after he pressed his body further into hers, his taut muscles fitting perfectly against her softer ones. He slipped his tongue inside of her mouth, quickly reacquainting himself with her, learning her taste all over again, playing with her tongue until she recovered enough of her mind to respond and kiss him back just as passionately.

One of his hands moved to her hip while one of her own found his chest, his heart. She spread her fingers, feeling his heart pound against her palm and his soulmark, it had to be where it lay on his skin, pulse. It made him moan and she wondered what reaction she’d get from him if she touched him without the barrier of their clothes. He moaned again, louder, when she tightened her grip on him. It stroked the fire burning in her veins and she kissed him with renewed vigour, slipping her tongue inside his mouth, learning him again. There was some desperation in her movements, and she knew it was because she felt pretty desperate herself. Desperate to be close to him, to hold onto him
and never let go.

She felt her strained bond hummed in approval inside her head. It started fighting against the walls holding it prisoner and she felt a jolt of electricity coursed through her body when Oliver’s hand lowered her sweatpants enough to stroke the skin of her hipbone. He pulled away from her, to speak, and she took advantage of the situation, to pepper kisses along his jaw, his raspy stubble tickling her skin in the best way possible.

“Your mark,” he gasped, his breathing erratic. He tilted his head to look at his hand on her hipbone, forcing her to pull away from him and stop kissing him.

“What about it?” She asked, her breathing just as uneven as his.

“It’s where it used to be?” He asked, staring down in wonder. Her eyes followed his and she smiled at the contrast of his tanned skin on her creamier one.

“Yes,” she confirmed, tightening her grip on his heart and bringing him back to her. Their lips brushed against one another as they shared a breath and she felt her side of the bond yearning to be free, the walls trembling against his ardent desire for freedom.

“I want it back,” he told her.

“Kiss me,” she replied in a breath.

His hold on her tightened slightly and his mouth collided with hers again. He kissed her, just like she’d asked him. He kissed her with everything he had, everything he was. It was no longer a hopeful kiss. It became a promise, for their future. They’d figure things out, as long as they stayed together. They’d heal, together. He poured all that in his kisses and she felt it tug at something deep inside her. It echoes inside her and made her toes curl in her slippers and her side of the bond fought harder for its freedom. He unleashed his passion on her until she forgot about everything else but him. He was the air she breathed, she tasted his mouth, smelt his familiar scent, even though his cologne had slightly worn off, felt his skin. His fingers started stroking her hipbone and she felt the area starting to burn and she didn’t know if it was because he was touching her there or because she was fighting against the Med. She didn’t know and she didn’t care. All she wanted was kiss Oliver, again and again. She wanted to get lost in him, in them. She knew they still had a lot to talk about but she didn’t care. Right now, he was the only thing that mattered. He was back with her and she loved him and…

A flash of white light exploded between her closed eyelids and she tightened her hold on him, keeping his mouth on hers while the burning feeling reached its peak. She moaned against his mouth and she felt him moan too and she knew this couldn’t be one-sided. But she kept kissing him nonetheless, their intense and deep kisses turning into sloppier, lazier ones.

“Felicity,” he whispered between two kisses.

“Oliver,” she whispered back, her nails scratching the back of his skull.

“Felicity listen,” he said, pulling away from her, leaning his forehead against hers.

She kept her eyes closed and did as she had been told.

“I don’t hear anything,” she said after a while.

And it was true, her kitchen was silent, except for the pounding of their hearts and their erratic breathings.
“Then look,” he said and she opened her eyes.

They fall on the dark spot slowly appearing on her skin.

A dark spot with the imperceptible shape of an arrow.

She looked up to meet his eyes.

Blue crossed blue and she felt it.

The small buzzing.

The little bundle of emotions.

His emotions.

“I can feel you,” she whispered in awe.

“Me too,” he nodded.

“But I thought I’d…”

“Feel more?” He completed. “Yeah me too.”

He sounded slightly disappointed. No scratch that, he felt slightly disappointed. She could feel it. A playful smile stretched her lips. Her side of the bond wasn’t entirely free, it was only the beginning, the first breach in the wall. She wanted to destroy that wall, the wreck it and finally be free. She wanted more of Oliver, she wanted her mark back on her skin, a dark arrow shaped like the symbol of infinity. She wanted nothing more than melt in her soulmate’s embrace and savour his warmth and solid presence, after years of separation but she knew she couldn’t, she knew the time for them to forget about everything but them wasn’t now. They needed to talk, to sort things out. She didn’t know where she found the strength to pull away from him but she did. It was probably one of the hardest things she’d ever done in her life but she did it anyway. She tore her lips from his and leaned her forehead against his, to slow down her breathing and calm her racing heart down.

His hands fell from her body to hold on the couch and how own hand cupped his cheeks, rubbing his stubble lightly. She closed her eyes for a second and she couldn’t help but seek the thin thread of their connection. It was fragile, fluttering but it was there, it was theirs. It used to be a buzzing in the back of her head, now it was barely a hum but she knew it was only a matter of time until it got stronger. The thought made her stomach twist inside her, in happiness. She wanted him, she wanted them.

“We need to talk,” she whispered.

“I know,” he whispered back, obviously reluctant to break their bubble just yet.

She didn’t want to either but they had to. Her hands trailed down to his shoulders and she pushed him back slightly. Then she circled around her couch and sat down, on a corner. She brought her legs to her chest, as if she was trying to protect herself. He sat down next to her, turning slightly so that he could face her.

“There’s so much to say, I don’t know where to start,” she said after a moment of silence.

“I don’t really know either,” he admitted, shifting slightly.
“I just know I don’t want to fight, not again,” she confessed, telling him how she felt in her heart. “I know you’re still mad but…” She hesitated. “I don’t want any more yelling and screaming and hurting each other.”

For the longest while he said nothing and just stared at her. It made her feel nervous and she feared he wouldn’t be able to contain his anger. But then he let out a deep sigh, one that made his shoulders drop and made him look tired, weary.

“I don’t want any of this anymore,” he admitted. “Fighting with you it’s... Exhausting. It feels like fighting with myself.”

“I know,” she agreed. It made sense after all. The two of them were soulmates. Together they were a whole.

“And sometimes, the fight against myself is real,” Oliver went on. “Because as much as I’m mad and want to stay mad there are some parts of me that just...”

“Miss you,” Felicity completed. She knew the feeling all too well. It was also why she had busied herself so much during the past week. Because she had wanted to forget about what it was her heart was missing. His presence. His voice. His smile. His everything.

“Exactly,” he said.

“So no more fighting?”

“No more fighting,” he agreed. “Just an open-hearted talk.”

She nodded, feeling a wave of sudden uneasiness crash inside her. They were about to bring back painful memories, to talk about unpleasant things. It would be hard and she could only hope it would be worth it. She could tell Oliver related to the feeling. He looked uncomfortable and something told her he was feeling just as ill-at-ease.

“Let’s start with the beginning,” he eventually suggested. “You know pretty much everything there is to know about me before you started taking the Med but I don’t know much about you or your past.”

It was true. She hadn’t been good at opening up about her past. She had told him a few things, the things that mattered the most to her, but he didn’t know the full story. He was missing a few essential pieces.

“Well, my dad was gone. My mother... Sometimes she was there, sometimes she wasn’t,” she sighed. “I guess I don’t have to tell you how it feels when your soulmate takes the Med.”

He shrugged. “We weren’t bonded, unlike your parents. I’m pretty sure what I felt was very different from what your mother felt.”

Felicity pinched her lips together, holding her knees closer to her body. “What did you feel?”

He sighed and looked away from her, a shadow darkening his eyes. “I can’t really describe it. It was a void, dark and cold and I was aching, all the time. It was manageable but I could still feel it, the pain. It was always with me, eating me up more every day.” He looked toward his hands in his lap. “I was all alone with myself, incomplete and most of the time, I wasn’t enough.”

She tilted her head. “What do you mean?”
“There’s a reason why soulmates are an unbreakable pair. They complete one another and they can’t be without the other. Separating them it’s like…” He paused looking for the right words, “cutting someone’s legs,” he eventually, looking slightly defeated. “How can they move forward without legs to carry them?”

“With prosthesis,” she immediately supplied and he gave her a look.

“In that case, the Med would be the prosthesis but it doesn’t really make things better, does it?”

She shook her head, thinking about the burn, about how she had herself suffered from the separation.

“I’m sorry Oliver,” she said, twisting the fabric of her sweatpants between her hands. “I wouldn’t have taken the Med if I hadn’t been a hundred percent sure you wanted me gone. I thought you’d start taking the Med too, right after me.”

“No, never,” he stated firmly.

“I know, and I’m sorry,” she told him, tears filling her eyes. She looked down, avoiding his blue eyes, her cheeks burning furiously. She had caused him pain, the kind of pain she had herself witnessed during most of her childhood and the thought of Oliver feeling even a quarter of her mother’s pain was enough to make her sick. She knew, deep down, she hadn’t done to him what her father had done to her mother but it was close enough and she hated herself for it. She knew he could feel it but he didn’t say anything, letting her process it and find a way to accept it. She sighed, focusing on her breathing until her stomach settled inside of her. Oliver gave her some time to collect herself before he asked her to keep telling him about her past.

“High-school was high-school with its usual bullies in desperate need of a punching ball. Not that they ever did any physical punching, no, it was emotional punching all the time. Things got more complicated when my grandmother passed. My mother couldn’t keep a job and when my grandmother was still alive, we considered putting her in a soulmate’s clinic but we didn’t have the money so we forgot about that idea.” She sighed, looking for a way to summarize the situation without diving too deep in the detail. She didn’t want him to feel sorry for her, to pity her. Yes those years hadn’t exactly been fun but the past was the past and nothing couldn’t change it. “I had to get a job, it’s actually where I met Georgia, and I sort of became the parent my mother couldn’t be. When I got my acceptance letter to MIT, I was so happy…” She smiled softly at the memory. “But then, I realised I couldn’t go. Mom needed me more and more, she had those moments of black-out where she’d get lost in her memories and act as if my dad was still around… I was scared of those moments because she could have crossed the street and get hit by a car only because she wouldn’t have seen it… I still didn’t have the money to put her in a soulmate’s clinic so I was ready to give up on college and my scholarship to take care of her. That’s when the Mediator came to me.”

“The Mediator sent by my parents,” Oliver said.

“Yes,” she nodded. “I was very angry when I learnt my mother had created an account for me without telling me. I hadn’t done it myself for a reason…”

“Because you had enough on your plate already?” He asked.

“Yeah, that and the fact I wasn’t your biggest fan back then.”

He looked toward his lap again, his guilt written all over his face.

“He said I wasn’t the person you needed, that you knew everything there was to know about me, that you’re aware of him coming to me…” She sighed. “And more importantly, he told me it was
what you wanted… I didn’t accept his offer immediately but in the end… I wanted better for my mother and for myself too. She needed help, the kind I couldn’t give her and I needed out of Vegas, I needed college. I thought me leaving would make everyone happy. Your parents, you, me… I was wrong and I’m sorry,” she said, wiping at her eyes with the sleeves of her hoodie.

He leaned back, settling more deeply in the couch. For a while, his eyes were lost in front of him and she knew he was trying to put himself in her shoes, he was trying to understand how things had been for her and probably trying to guess what he would have done in her place.

“I’m sorry you had to make that kind of choice,” he eventually said, looking up to meet her eyes.

“And I’m sorry for the way I acted and how I pushed you away… It’s all my fault, I…”

“Oliver, no,” she interrupted him, leaning forward and grabbing his hand. He immediately intertwined their fingers together and she held onto him more tightly. “I’m not telling you this to stroke your guilt. If anything, I’m to blame too because I wasn’t always the best listener. But this is not a game where we’re trying to figure out who’s the guiltiest.”

“I know but…”

“No buts,” she interrupted him again. “We both made mistakes that much we can agree on. Now, it’s time to work on finding solutions.”

“Can you ever forgive me for what I did?” He asked her, tightening his hold on her hand and reaching for her free one as well.

She looked down toward their joined hands before looking up to meet his bright blue eyes. She could see his distress in them, clear as day and its intensity made her heart clench painfully in her chest. His question was a loaded one but she wasn’t afraid of it. She already knew the answer.

“Of course I can, I already have,” she told him softly, truly meaning it. “We’ve both grown so much, I’m not a teenager anymore, you’re not an idiot…”

He chuckled slightly, his eyes slightly watery. “Idiot? I think you’re being too kind.” She smiled at that. “And I want you to know, there haven’t been anyone else, not since the accident. It changed me a lot,” he told her and she nodded, her grip tightening on his hands. “I guess spending so many months in a hospital bed helped me put things in perspective…” He shook his head. “After the accident, I knew it would be you or no one else. My engagement to Isabel was purely business, there never was anything more between us and there never would have been.”

“But what if we’d never met?”

He shrugged. “You or no one else,” he repeated. She looked down toward their joined hands again, emotions tightening her throat. She could feel his honesty, it filled her bones with sheer certainty. Her or no one else. She believed him. “I just wish I had realised that sooner,” he whispered.

“She or no one else. I believed you.”

“Me too,” she admitted and she felt him lean down to press a kiss on the crown of her head. “I’m sorry,” he whispered against her hair, “so sorry.”

They stayed like that for a while, him whispering apologies against her hair and her feeling them in her bones. She felt his emotions stretch inside her, the little bundle growing bigger. They reached the wounded parts of her heart, fixing a little something that had been broken so long ago. The thin thread of their connection got thicker, stronger and she felt more of him come back to her. She breathed more easily, feelings parts of her that were his, coming home. Her side of the bond welcomed them all with opened arms, thrumming happily in her heart and buzzing excitedly in her
head. She was feeling a bit more complete and though they still had a long road to go, she knew it was the best beginning they could hope for.

Oliver squeezed her hands and she knew it was an invitation for her to continue telling him her story.

“College was college,” she said after a while, his chin now resting on top her head. “I was happy with what I was studying, people were nicer, friendlier. Mom and I worked things out, it took some time but she eventually got better and I got her back completely.” It made her smile, the memory of the day she and her mother had moved in their small apartment in Boston. “Then, there was…” The words got stuck on her tongue.

“I know,” he said, feeling her discomfort. “Cooper,” he said, tightening his hold on her. The name made her wince, bringing back a flow of memories and sensations she didn’t want to deal with.

“And you came here.”

“Yeah, I did,” she said, looking up. He pulled away from her and gave her a small smile. “Everything in Star City felt familiar, as if I had already been here and I guess I had, somehow.”

“Through me,” Oliver guessed.

“Through you,” she agreed. “I didn’t suspect anything about us at the beginning and now that I know the truth I feel like a fool. I mean, our closeness, your mother’s hatred toward me… All the clues were there and I wasn’t able to pick them up.”

“I didn’t pick them up either,” Oliver reminded her softly.

She pinched her lips together, daring to ask something that had been on her mind for a while now. “You really didn’t feel anything?”

He shook his head. “I was attracted to you, still am actually but… My side of the bond never really reacted to your presence. From the moment you started taking the Med, there was this wall between us, opaque, impassable and unbreakable.”

“My side of the bond reacted to yours. A little before Thanksgiving, I started feeling a burn.”

Oliver frowned concern filling him. “A burn?”

She nodded. “Yeah a burn. I felt it around men, some women too, it was very uncomfortable,” she added, remembering how unpleasant it had been.

“Did you feel it around me too? What caused it?”

“No, I didn’t feel it around you. On the contrary, your presence alleviated it. A brush of your hands against my shoulder and it was gone,” she explained, smiling fondly at the memory. Sometimes even the most pleasurable things were the simplest. “I guess some parts of me knew why but I was very much in denial back then and so I just… I decided not to think about what it could mean. But it started to worry me and so I set up an appointment with a specialist at the hospital.”

“That was your doctor’s appointment? The one you had to leave the office early for?”
She nodded surprised that he remembered such a small detail. “Yeah, the doctor explained a few things to me. He said the burn was a way for my side of the bond to communicate with me and that it basically meant “Hey Felicity your soulmate’s there and he’s the only one who can touch you.”.” Her attempt at humour drew a smile on Oliver’s lips.

“I like the way your bond thinks,” Oliver teased her and she gave him a look. He got serious again and asked. “Did the burning thing stop?”

“Yeah it stopped when I started taking the appropriate dose of the Med for our new number. Doctor strongly discouraged I did but…”

“You did it anyway,” Oliver concluded and she looked away, regret pulling at her. He sighed heavily. “Why didn’t you tell me the moment you knew? Or after your doctor’s appointment?”

“The night I found out…” She paused looking for the right words, for the best way to voice how she had felt. “It was a very emotional night and… I couldn’t tell you. I just couldn’t. I still wasn’t really sure whether or not you knew about your parents sending me away, I knew you were forced into an arranged marriage but not why… Everything looked very complicated and I was scared and I… I needed some time to process the news before I could share it with you. I just needed to think about it.”

Oliver gave her a brief nod. She could feel how tensed he was next to her, it was a big problem for him that she had kept the truth from him but she knew he understood her reasons, at least partially and for that night.

“And after the doctor’s appointment?”

She sighed. “I almost left Star City that night. The doctor, he… he really scared me saying taking the right pill wouldn’t help me with the burn if I stayed near you and… I freaked out and decided to leave. You have to understand, deciding to stop running after all this time… It was hard, really hard. I was scared, scared of how you’d react, that you’d hate me or that you wouldn’t want me and I know you’re going to say it’s ridiculous,” she said when he opened his mouth to say something. “But back then it didn’t sound so stupid to me. It made sense.”

He sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. “I’m your soulmate Felicity. I can understand your lack of faith in me, but I can’t understand your lack of faith in that bond between us,” he explained, gesturing between the two of them.

“My father was my mother’s soulmate and I haven’t seen him since I was a little girl,” she told him. “So you know, the whole soulmate thing is kind of an overrated concept to me.”

A shadow darkened his face and a flick of sadness and pain crossed his eyes. “I’m not your father,” he stated simply.

“Yeah…”

“Felicity, if you don’t believe in us, then… We’re riding for a fall.”

“But I do believe in us,” she argued. “We wouldn’t be here now if I didn’t.”

“Yes, but you don’t completely trust me,” he insisted.

“So do you. It’s something we need to work on. Trust.”

“And communication,” he added. “No more lying, no more keeping secrets.”
She nodded, holding his gaze. “Yeah, I promise.”

“Me too,” he said softly, giving her a small smile. “So, where were we?”

“Me wanting to leave,” she reminded him. “I didn’t, obviously and I decided to tell you the truth. But I was still technically bound to silence by the contract I had signed so…”

“You waited again and asked for Laurel’s help,” Oliver completed.

“Yes,” she confirmed, glad to see he was quick to put two and two together. “The appointment wasn’t really satisfying. She assumed my mother had signed the contract with me, which she didn’t, making it invalid because I was still a minor when I signed it.”

“But you thought it was valid.”

“Yeah I did. So I contacted the mediator your parents sent me a few years ago, to have him help me get back in touch with your parents but he “betrayed” me and told your mother I’d asked for an appointment. That’s when Isabel, being her usual kind and pleasant self, came to me and…” Felicity sighed, a lump forming in her throat. She hated that Isabel’s words still had such a strong effect on her but there was nothing she could do about it. She’d been hurt that day, deeply. Isabel had dug all her insecurities and fears and set them on fire.

“Felicity,” Oliver said, putting a hand under her chin to lift her head up. “What did she say?”

Felicity shrugged, moving her head away from his hand. “She said you were marrying her because of the financial situation of the companies, that’s why I didn’t tell you anything. I didn’t want you to choose between me and your legacy.”

“That’s not only what she said,” he pointed out, crossing his arms over his chest and looking at her expectantly.

“That’s what influenced my decision to keep my mouth shut,” she told him.

“Felicity, what else did she say?”

“Does it really matter?”

“Yes, it does! Because I can feel how much it still hurts you.”

She gave him a look. “It’s not fair,” she said. “You using our connection against me.”

“I’m not using it against you but for you. I want to make things better, comfort you but I can’t if I don’t know what happened. And you can look at me with these big eyes of yours as much as you want, I’ll know what happened. You can tell me now, or wait for our connection to grow stronger. Personally, I’d rather hear it from you. No secrets remember?”

She frowned. God she hated it when he was pushy like that. “Hey, I’m not lying, I just don’t want to talk about it.”

“Fe-li-ci-ty,” he sighed, sounding slightly frustrated.

“Fine,” she eventually let out. “She told me about how unworthy of you I was and she spent quite some time explaining me how my normalness and randomness would be no fit for your amazingness. If I didn’t know better, I’d think she had a crush on you or something. She talked about how naïve, deluded, ugly and weird I was, how I would only be an embarrassment to you or how I was only a
victim begging for people’s pity and affection. “This is real life Felicity,” she said. “Girls like you don’t get the boy.”

He blinked and for the longest while he kept staring at her, his blue eyes roaming over her face.

“Felicity, she was wrong, you know that right?”

“I don’t know if she was right or wrong but I know I shouldn’t have listened to her. You said something in Russia that was very true. You said I kept listening to what people said and not what you were saying. If I’d come to you, if I’d had listened to you, you’d have never married her and all this mess could have been avoided. I’m so sorry…” She tried to look down but he caught her chin before she could.

“You need to trust me more,” he said, his voice soft and low.

“I know,” she whispered back. “Gonna start working on that, right now.”

“Good,” he nodded. “Because what I’m about to tell you is very important.” He took a deep breath and cleared his throat. “You were made for me the same way I was made for you. When it comes to us, being worthy of the other doesn’t mean anything. Because no matter what happened, it will always come down to this. You and me.” She opened her mouth to protest but he interrupted her. “But I know what she told you still hurts, so hear me out. You’re beautiful, whether your curls are wild on top of your head because you just woke up or they’re tied up in a high ponytail. You’re kind and loyal to your friends and your family. You’re strong every second of every day that you spent standing and smiling. Sure, sometimes it would be best if you had a better brain-to-mouth filter but even when you don’t have one you’re sweet and funny. Isabel is a bitter woman who sees you through jealous eyes because she knows she’ll never have what you will. She’ll never be able to be with her soulmate, he’ll never stand up and fight for her and it has left a sour taste in her mouth. She hates you because you’ll have the life she’s always wanted but will never have. You can’t let her rancour hurt you, she’ll enjoy it far too much.”

“And pleasing Isabel is the last thing we want, right?” She told him, her eyes watery and her heart pounding wildly in her chest.

Oliver chuckled. “Yeah, exactly.” He tucked a strand of her hair away from her face and said. “Felicity, just in case my point had gotten lost, you are you and you is what I need. It’s what I want.”

She closed her eyes. “I don’t deserve you,” she whispered and opened her eyes again to see him giving her a confused look. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry I took the Med all those years ago and separated us for so long. We’ve lost so many years because I was so stupid and blind…” She sighed. “I’m sorry I caused the accident that almost killed you, I’m sorry I was going to leave again…” She shook her head, feeling too emotional after his beautiful speech, one she didn’t feel she deserved, not after all the things she had done wrong and especially not because she could still feel his pain and his own insecurities.

“Felicity,” he said calmly, tears of his own making his blue eyes shine. “I did wrong too and if you can forgive me then I can forgive you too.” He took a short break, to gather himself up. “I’m not going to lie to you. It hurt me when you left and it still hurts some parts of me, especially now that I know exactly how close I was to lose you again and probably forever. I may understand why you did what you did but…”

“It still hurts, I know.”

“I wasn’t really afraid of anything before you started taking the Med. I was young, reckless and
unconscious. Now, I’m different. I fear the void, the cold, the loneliness. I fear that you’re going to
leave again and…”

“No!” She interrupted him, cupping his cheeks between her hands. “No,” she repeated. “Never
again. You’re stuck with me Queen, get used to it!”

“Yeah,” he said, his voice shaking lightly.

“I’m here to stay Oliver,” she said, leaning her forehead against his. She cared about him too much,
he meant too much to her, she’d never be able to leave him. She focused on the bundle of his
emotions, filled with insecurities. She poured all her certainty, all her determination to stay by his
side, in their connection, wanting him to feel everything in his heart and in his soul, to feel her
everywhere, the same way she had felt his emotions stretch inside her earlier.

“I’m not leaving, Oliver.” She whispered that promise and she heard a breath got caught in his throat.
“And I’m ready to tell you every day until you don’t need to hear it anymore.”

“I don’t think I ever will,” he confessed, keeping his forehead against hers, breathing her in.

“Then I’ll say it every day until the end.”

His hands grabbed her waist and he dragged her closer to him, pulling her in his lap. She ended up
straddling his thighs and she reached for his shoulders, to keep her balance. He tightened his hold on
her, pulling her into him. He buried his face in her neck, his stubble rasping against her tender skin.
Then, he shuddered. A deep shudder that she felt at the base of her spine. She moved her arms from
his shoulders to his neck, holding him tightly against her. His emotions were a confused mess, a
perfect mirror of their own. They were both torn between the pain from the past and the hope for the
future. And so they stayed like that for the longest while, letting the other’s presence comfort them
and anchor them in the now, in the present moment where they’d finally found the other. Felicity
focused on Oliver’s breathing tickling her skin, on the steady beat of his heart against her chest and
his warm embrace. She let it soothe her, a small smile stretching her lips as she was experience the
healing effect of a soulmate’s touch for the second time in her life.

After a while, Oliver moved his face to press a kiss against her throat. She hummed happily and he
pulled away, staring at her with his bright blue eyes. She stared back, smiling at him in wonder, her
hands coming up to run in his hair.

“What now?” She couldn’t help but ask. “What do we do?”

He sighed heavily and she knew she had shattered their bubble with her questions.

“Do you mind if we keep this to ourselves for a while?”


He shook his head. “No, but I think it’ll be best if we figure out us on our own. Things will be pretty
tensed, especially with the separation of the companies and the truth about my faked relationship
with Isabel…” He sighed. “Let’s not add oil to the fire, okay?”

She nodded. “Yeah right… How are you going to handle that by the way? The whole Isabel thing?”

“I have to say I haven’t given it much thoughts. It’s going to be hard enough to announce the new
situations of the companies… A media storm is ahead of us, and it’s not something I want you to be
exposed to.”
Felicity nodded. She didn’t particularly want to be caught in the middle of a media battle but she knew people would get passionate about Oliver leaving QC and keeping Q. Inc for him. The Queens were the most important family of Star City. Drama between them meant more media, journalists, paparazzo and stuff. It had started already, since Thea going to live at Oliver’s hadn’t gone unnoticed by the press.

“I don’t want you to go through this alone,” she stated. “I want to help you.”

“You can’t really help me with PR stuff,” he pointed out.

“I’m your EA, remember? Where CEO-you go, EA-me go.”

He chuckled. “They’re not our alter egos,” he teased her.

She rolled her eyes at him. “And what about your parents?”

He cocked his head. “What about them?” He asked, his tone suddenly harsher.

“Don’t tell me you don’t think they let you leave with Q. Inc a bit too easily?”

He shook his head, scratching the back of his head. “I wouldn’t say it was easy. Our conversation featured a lot of yelling.”

She gave him a look.

“They probably think I’m going to fail at managing the company,” he told her. They’re waiting for me to fail and come back crawling to them, begging for help.”

She felt his anger flare inside of him, the still fragile thread connecting them trembling because of it.

“But I won’t,” he said. “I won’t fail.”

Felicity sighed, not knowing how to phrase her next sentence. She didn’t want to sugarcoat how she felt about his parents but she didn’t want to be too blunt either.

“I wish there was a way to fix things between us and your parents but…”

“You hate them.”

“I don’t like them,” she corrected, though he was right. She did hate them and more importantly she didn’t trust them. She remembered all too well Robert’s threats in the elevator and it made her fear for the future, for their future. “And I don’t think I’ll ever be able to forgive them for what they did. Yes, we made mistakes, but they used them to their advantage, they lied to us and manipulated us and…”

“Felicity, hey!” Oliver interrupted her, his hands, cradling her face. “I know I’ll never be able to forgive them either. As far as I’m concerned, they lost me the day they decided to chase you away forever.”

Felicity looked down, her shoulders going limp.

“Come here,” Oliver said, pulling her back into him and this time it was her turn to bury her face in the crook of her neck.

“Things are going to be crazy for a while but we’ll get through this. Together.”
“Together,” she repeated, her hands trailing down and wrapping around his waist, her voice muffled by his skin. She felt his pulse jump when her lips pressed against him as she spoke. It made her smile and she felt her still partially strained side of the bond purr happily. At least she thought it purred.

“And in the meantime, we’ll work out you and me. Take our time to forgive, to heal. Take our time to be with each other, to figure out what we want.”

She hummed happily, though she knew deep in her heart things wouldn’t be that easy.

“I like the sound of that.”

“Me too,” he confessed, pressing a kiss to the top of her head and cradling her impossibly closer.

Chapter End Notes

\\\\PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE\\\/

Remember the story is not over yet! I don't know how many chapters are left but I do know it's far from being over and some confrontations still have to happen. So, even things seem to resolve themselves quickly in this chapter, keep in mind the story isn't over :)

So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)
Chapter 15 - When the time comes, baby don't run, just kiss me slowly

Chapter Notes

Hey guys!!!

I know it's been a while, please don't hate me! A lot of things have been going in my life and I haven't been able to give the fic my full attention. I was actually planning on posting a week ago, on July the 17th, but after the tragic events that followed the 14th of July my country's National Day (for those who don't know, I'm French) I didn't feel like writing for a couple of days (I can never stay away from my keyboard for too long) and so I didn't finish the chapter as I had planned so therefore I didn't reply to the comments and I couldn't post last Sunday. I'm really sorry about that but I hope you understand my reasons :)

Speaking of schedule, you know I don't like planning my updates because I hate working with a deadline but from now on, I want to try and update every two weeks. Since my chapters are usually around 14k / 15k words, I think it's reasonable enough to take two weeks to write them and reply to all your wonderful comments :)

Speaking of comments (I really need to work on my transition but it's late here and I'm tired), I wanted to thank you for the amazing response the last chapter got! I was thrilled beyond words when I saw your comments and now the fic has 2000 kudos which is crazy and so... Thank you guys, you rock! :)

With no further delay, the new chapter! I hope you'll like it :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 15:

“Oh I’m not sure what this is gonna be

But with my eyes closed all I see,

In the skyline, through the window

The moon above and the streets below

Hold my breath as you’re moving in

Taste your lips and feel your skin

When the time comes, baby don’t run, just kiss me slowly”

- Parachute, Kiss me slowly.”
Felicity stayed in Oliver’s lap for the longest while and he didn’t mind one bit, if his blissful feeling of contentment was any indication. The blonde was happy their connection was coming back, piece by piece, allowing her to catch a glimpse of what he was truly feeling. She knew they still had a long way to go. This could only be the beginning, given how weak and fragile the thread between them still was. And yet, Felicity couldn’t bring herself to care. So what if the road ahead of them was long? As long as they were taking it together, she was ready to walk a thousand miles.

But today there would be no moving forward. Well, not any more moving forward, since they had already taken a few giants’ leaps, when they had talked openly about their feelings, when they had started to fight against the Med – and Felicity had to admit, kissing Oliver was the best way of fighting – and more importantly when they had finally decided to give their relationship a chance. Felicity still had doubts about them, it was impossible to get rid of years of fears and insecurities in one conversation and with a few kisses, no matter how good of a kisser Oliver was. So yeah, she still had doubts but they were largely eclipsed by the exhilarating confidence filling her veins now that they were together, all barriers down. Well, almost all barriers since the Med still partially strained her side of the bond. It would take a few days for its effects to completely wear off and Felicity was looking forward to the moment where their connection would finally be fully back. The mere thought of what it would entail was enough to make warmth spread inside her.

No more moving forward for the day meant staying and enjoying the present tense which was completely fine with Felicity. She adjusted her position in Oliver’s lap, bringing her hands from his waist to his neck. She wrapped them tightly around him, her fingers running through his sandy blonde hair in a soothing gesture. He mimicked her movements with his own fingers tracing meaningless patterns on her back through the fabric of her clothes. The regular motions, added to the small puffs of air he was blowing in her hair as he breathed, helped her relax. She felt calm settled down inside her and she welcomed it with opened arms, needing some peace after everything she had been through, emotionally speaking, in the morning.

She dozed off, feeling perfectly safe and warm and comfortable in his arms. His reassuring presence, his solid pulse near her ear brought her to the edge of slumber and she quickly found herself in this blissful state between sleep and awareness where she wasn’t quite awake nor asleep at the same time. She felt calm take over his own feelings, the thread between them not buzzing because of emotions travelling between them in strong waves, but humming quietly as emotions and sensations now felt like the sweet caress of the wind. She knew he wasn’t asleep though, nor dozing off. He was wide awake and conscious, pressing a kiss to the top of her head regularly, the motions of his fingers on her back never faltering.

Eventually, their new-found peace was interrupted by their almost empty stomachs, which were quick to remind them they had barely eaten the breakfast Oliver had made them. Reluctantly, Felicity pulled away from Oliver, falling on her side on the couch, mumbling about futilities of life getting in their way.

“I thought I’d never live the day where I hear you calling eating a futility,” Oliver teased her, squeezing her side.

She groaned some more non-sense and she heard Oliver chuckle as he got up from the couch.

“I’m going to reheat the pancakes,” he told her and she nodded her approval, her stomach growling loudly to support her.

She heard Oliver rummage through the kitchen.

“It seems we’re not the only hungry ones,” he informed her after a few minutes.
“Hm?” She said. “Aouch!” she added when he dropped two packages on her stomach.

Claws were pulled out and gripped the fabric of her top and she opened her eyes to see two small kittens staring at her with bright blue eyes wide-opened. They both mowed expectantly at her and she chuckled, the sound being paradoxically weak and high-pitched. Nemo travelled to her face, stumbling a few times because her chest was trembling with her laughter. He licked her chin, increasing her chuckle and she sat down, gathering him in one of her hands and grabbing his sister in her other. She fed Arrow first while Oliver watched the pancakes. He excused himself to go to the bathroom in the middle of it.

“Wow, you must really believe in me and in my mostly non-existent cooking still,” she teased him.

“Didn’t we talk about trusting each other more?” He replied, a playful smile on his lips.

“Oliver, I can fail at boiling water,” she reminded him.

“You got this Felicity, I know it,” he added, disappearing in the hallway.

She looked down at Arrow, the kitten currently in her arms who was finishing his bottle of milk.

“It’s a good think I can make your bottle, don’t you think? You’d have died of starvation otherwise.”

By the time Oliver came back, she was done with feeding the kittens and he served them pancakes while she washed her hands. They settled on the couch, plates in their lap, eating while doing a rewatch of old Big Bang Theory episodes, which was one of Felicity’s favourite TV show, between Doctor Who and Stargate. They commented the show while they ate, teasing one another lightly and things were just like they used to be when they were just two friends hanging out together. She felt happy they were finally back to a more common territory. She wouldn’t trade all the progresses they had made but it felt nice to have some things back to normal.

When they were done eating, she spread her legs on the couch and they ended right in Oliver’s lap. His hands automatically landed on her, holding her close to him.

“So,” she started, as he began rubbing her tibias. “What are your plans for the rest of the day?” She asked.

He sighed, his shoulders dropping slightly.

“You had to go and remind me there’s life waiting for us outside,” he deplored.

She shrugged unapologetically. “Sorry,” she told him, smiling at his slightly defeated look.

“Tommy has gotten tickets for us to go watch the new game tonight,” he told her. “He says it’s because we haven’t been together a lot lately, but I know he wants to talk to me, get me to figure things out with you,” he explained.

Felicity smiled. “It’s a good thing we figured things out this morning already then,” she said. “That way you can enjoy your time with your best friend!”

Oliver chuckled, shaking his head. “Oh you know Tommy, if I tell him things are better between us, I’ll get a speech about keeping things that way instead of getting a lecture about being a stubborn moron.”

“Hey,” she said reaching for his hand. “You were never a moron. You needed some time for yourself, I understand that, I’m sure Tommy does too.”
“Well, I did act slightly moronically,” he reminded her.

“So did I, so did Tommy. When you look at it, we’re one hell of a bunch of morons!” That made Oliver laugh. “But seriously, you don’t have to worry about Tommy or what he’s going to tell you. He’s rooting for us, has been since the beginning, remember?”

“Yeah…” Oliver agreed, rubbing a hand over his face. “That’s kind of weird, isn’t it?”

“Having someone rooting for two real people? One of them being his best friend?” She tilted her head, playing with one of her wild locks. “Yeah, kind of,” she agreed.

Oliver gave her a sheepish smile, one that she couldn’t help but return. His hands on her legs travelled down to squeeze her thighs. “I also want to speak with Thea. The two of us haven’t really gotten a chance to talk yet and it needs to change.”

“You didn’t talk to her when you came back?”

He shook her his head negatively. “No, I dealt with my parents then came straight to you. Come to think of it, I have yet to drop by my apartment!”

Felicity frowned, her mind trying to put together all the information he had given her. “But you said you came back on Wednesday… Where did you sleep?”

“Hotel,” he answered. “I needed some more time alone, to get myself ready before I went to confront my parents. Seeing Thea, talking to her… It would have only served to make me emotional, which I didn’t need.”

“You needed a clear head,” she said.

“Yes,” he admitted. “Now, it’s time me and Thea talked.”

She nodded. “She needs you. As much as I’ve tried to comfort her, I’m not you. She needs her big brother, now more than ever.”

Oliver pinched his lips together and Felicity felt a wave of guilt crash through him, making the thread connecting them tremble and a shiver run down her spine, which didn’t go unnoticed by Oliver. She shrugged it off, some parts of her worrying slightly. Her side of the bond still wasn’t entirely free and yet she felt his emotions very intensely. She wondered how things would change after the last remnants of the Med had left her body. Would she be able to bear the intensity of their connection if it were to grow stronger? How having such a strong bond, almost a 10, would impact their life? Would they become super dependent of the other? Would they crave each other’s presence all the time? Would they get lost in each other?

She shook her head and tried to push back her questions and worry. Now wasn’t the time to think about their connection and what it entailed.

“I feel like I’ve abandoned her somehow… I haven’t been much present for her,” Oliver confessed, regret laced deeply in his voice.

Felicity leaned toward him, reaching for his hand and when she did, she stilled his movements on her legs. “Hey,” she said, trying to get him to look at her, which he did after a while. “She knows you’ve had a lot going on, she understands and she doesn’t blame you because she knew you’ll be by her side in the end.”

Oliver gave her a small smile.
“I want you to believe this,” she added, looking at him expectantly, waiting for his acknowledgement of her words.

“How can I ever thank you?” He eventually said.

She tilted her head, not understanding the meaning behind his words. “Thank me for what?”

“For being there for her when I couldn’t,” he explained. “She’s my sister and…”

“She means the world to you,” Felicity completed, feeling his love for Thea in her bones, all warm and vibrant. “I know. And you know she means a lot to me as well, meaning I’ll always be there for her.”

“Just like I’ll always be there for you,” she thought but the words remained unspoken.

Oliver nodded his approval, understanding what she didn’t say.

“Well, she’s very lucky,” he concluded, giving her another one of his small smiles, the ones that made her blush and want to look away from him.

“What are you going to do for the rest of the day though?” Oliver asked, his hands still rubbing her calves, drawing meaningless but somehow soothing patterns.

She shrugged. “Rest mostly,” she told him, feeling like she would need all her strengths if she were to go through for the crazy weeks ahead of them. “Oh and call my mother! Tell her I’m not moving out of Star City, I think she’ll be glad, she likes it here.”

A shadow crossed Oliver’s eyes and she bit on her lips regretfully. The topic of her leaving was still a sensitive one and maybe she shouldn’t have brought it up in front of Oliver so casually. It wasn’t like she had meant to sound so casual but again, she had been thinking out loud, the words flowing out of her mouth naturally.

“Does your mother know? About us I mean, does she know?”

Felicity’s shoulders went limp. She didn’t think he would appreciate to hear that yes, her mother indeed knew about them but they had promised each other honesty and so honesty was what he was going to get.

“For the longest while, she didn’t know,” she told him. “I didn’t tell anyone, as always dealing with my problems on my own. But then, she found me after your parents’ party. I wasn’t in a very good shape after Isabel’s speech and I told her everything. I had kept this secret for myself for so long, and finally being able to tell someone, finally being able to let it all out was… It was very liberating.”

Oliver remained silent for a few minutes and she waited for his reply on edge, fearing what he might say.

“I wish I had been the one you talked to that night,” he confessed then, his voice barely above a whisper. It broke her heart altogether, bringing back unpleasant memories. She had wanted to talk to him too that night. How different things would have been, if she had…

“I wish I had talked to you too,” she replied, her throat suddenly tight with emotions again.

He squeezed her hand. “How did she react?” He asked then, eager to relieve them of the tension that had suddenly blossomed between them.
Felicity sighed. “She thought I should speak with you, that it’d be best for us but she still respected my decision and supported me as best as she could.”

Oliver nodded and a struggle apparent in his blue orbs. She felt his reluctance, his hesitancy to speak what was on his mind.

“What is it?” She asked softly.

He shook his head, trying to tone things down. “Just something you said,” he replied.

“What?” She insisted, meeting his reluctance with sheer determination.

“You said your mother liked it here, in Star City but… Do you?”

Her eyes widened at his question. She stared at him, astonished and speechless for a few seconds. It took her some time to regain her composure and when she did she couldn’t think of a better answer than showing him the stuffed marmoset carrying three arrows, the mascot of the basketball team Tommy had gotten her for Christmas. It was wearing a blazer with her name flocked on it. The stuffed animal usually laid on her couch and it was currently located behind her back. She carefully deposited it in Oliver’s lap, on her legs.

“This is my home,” she told him simply.

He smiled at that, a warm smile that reached his ears and made something twist inside of her.

He left soon after, to her deepest regret. She wouldn’t have minded if they had stayed in the safety and privacy of the bubble they had formed in her apartment, a bubble that was only them. But he had things to do and she understood better than anyone how important they were for him. He kissed her goodbye before leaving, a chaste press of his lips against hers that was still enough to make butterflies flutter in her stomach. It occurred to her then that as much as she had enjoyed going back to a more familiar territory of their relationship, she didn’t mind at all this kind of evolution – that she would go as far as calling it an upgrade.

She lingered for a second in her hallway, a dreamy smile on her lips. Then, she shook her head and moved toward the bathroom, knowing her day had started in the best possible way. She showered quickly and got dressed. When she was done, she went to the kitchen and poured herself a cup of coffee, one of the kittens trying to climb up her leg to reach the fringes of her cardigan. His little claws, it was Nemo, were out and Felicity winced when they dug inside her thigh. She nudged the little adventurer away, noting for later that wearing fringes around kittens wasn’t that much of a great idea. She distracted him and his sister with a stuffed mouse before settling down on her couch, her cup lying on her coffee table and her phone in hand, her mother’s number dialled.

She picked up almost immediately.

“Felicity honey! I was about to call you, it’s been a while since I last heard of you!”

Her tone wasn’t reproachful but Felicity couldn’t help but wince at her words anyway. She knew Donna worried a lot about her and by not calling her in a while, she had done nothing to make things better for her.

“I’m sorry mom,” she apologised sincerely. “I’ve been really busy lately and…”

“I didn’t know looking for a new apartment could take so much time that you didn’t have any more left to call your mother,” Donna said, this time with disbelief and irony.
“Well, I haven’t been spending that much time looking for a new apartment,” Felicity confessed. “I sorted things out with Oliver.”

A silence could be heard on the other side of the line. That wasn’t really the kind of reaction Felicity had expected from her mother. Ever since she had started to be helped by professional doctors, she had been more like her old self, a bubbly and vocal woman, shrieking when she was happy, and almost growling when she was mad.

“What do you mean you sort things out with Oliver?” She asked, her voice tight.

“It’s a very long story but to sum it up, I told him the truth about us and we decided to give our relationship a shot.”

That was a really big summary of things.

“I don’t understand,” Donna protested, confused and Felicity could picture her pitching her nose in her head. “Three weeks ago, you said you couldn’t tell him the truth and now you’re telling me he knows and that you’re together. What happened to “I can’t make him choose between me and his family”? What changed?”

Everything, Felicity wanted to tell her.

“I was lied to mom,” Felicity explained. “His marriage to Isabel was never a mean to help the companies. It was a scheme of his parents. I don’t want to dive too deep into the details because this is not my story to tell, but rather his. All you need to know is that we’re together now, at least we’re trying,” she concluded clumsily, the words sounding weird even in her own ears.

Donna let out a shaky breath. “I don’t know what to say hon… I’m – I’m so happy for you!” She eventually said, her voice slightly higher than previously. “Are you happy?”

Felicity didn’t need to think about her answer.

“Yes, I am, mom. You know how I feel about him,” she added, playing with the spoon in her cup of coffee.

“Yeah, I know,” Donna confirmed. “Have you stopped taking the Med?”

Felicity eyed her box of the Med. It was still on her kitchen’s counter, where Oliver had left it earlier.

“Yes, I have,” she replied, a small smile stretching her lips.

“Oh baby I’m so glad! It’s all I ever wanted for you!”

“For me to meet my soulmate?”

“No, for you to be happy. What else could a mother wish for her daughter?”

Felicity’s smile grew bigger.

“I love you mom,” she whispered softly, her heart getting warmer in her chest.

“I love you too!” She replied just as softly. “So does that mean you’re going to stay in Star City?”

Felicity thought back to her earlier conversation with Oliver, her eyes falling on the marmoset the kittens were currently playing with, having set their stuffed mouse aside. Star City was her home, she had no doubts about it. It was where she lived, where she worked. It was where she had made
friends, good friends and where she had met her soulmate. A strong feeling of belonging rose up inside her chest.

“Yes, I am. It’s my home now.”

“And do you think it could be my home too? Is there enough place for two Smoak ladies?”

“Mom?” Felicity asked, frowning.

“You know how I told you being back in Vegas wasn’t how I thought it would be?”

Felicity nodded, remembering the conversation they had had about it when Donna had come to visit for Thanksgiving. She then shook her head at her own silliness. Her mother could not see her nod through the phone.

“Yes, I do,” she confirmed.

“Well… I guess I’ve changed too much since I last was here. I don’t... I mean, I’m not the same woman anymore, I don’t enjoy working as a cocktail waitress with high-heels and short dresses the way I used to.”

“It’s okay mom, people change!” Felicity told her.

“And you live in Star City baby and I want to be close to you!”

“And the fact that your mysterious boyfriend lives here doesn’t hurt either?” Felicity teased, a small smile stretching her lips.

“Felicity,” Donna chastised her but her daughter could her the smile in her tone. “Make decisions according to your heart, not someone else’s,” she advised.

“Easier said than done,” Felicity replied.

Donna chuckled lightly. “I want to be close to you. You said it yourself, Star City is your home. It’s Oliver’s too and surely there’s nothing wrong with me wanting to be near my daughter and her soulmate and their beautiful babies!”

Felicity choked on her breath. “What? Babies?” She shook her head though her mother couldn’t see her. “No babies planned for now! None, do you understand?”

Donna chuckled more. “Oh baby, you know what they say “a girl can dream”!”

“Mom,” Felicity started, pinching the bridge of her nose in frustration.

“Okay, alright hon, I’m stopping!”

Knowing her mother like she did, Felicity knew she wasn’t going to stop and so she decided to quickly orientate the conversation somewhere else. Somewhere safer.

“What would you like to do in Star City mom?” She asked her. “I have a spare bedroom in my apartment, it’s all yours if you want it!”

“Thank you baby! I’m done being a cocktail! It’s time I trade my sparkling dresses for something more... Sober?” Felicity smiled, knowing in her heart her mom would never be truly “sober”. “You know I wish to open my own restaurant? Or a bed and breakfast! That could be nice!”
“But you’re no cook!” Felicity argued. She knew where her culinary skills – or thereof lack of – came from.

“But I’m a good waitress!” Donna reminded her. “And I’ve worked in hotels enough to know how the business works.”

“With what you money would you start your business?”

“I — I don’t know,” Donna admitted. “If we lived together we could share the rent and the bills. I could save up enough money to make a loan. I don’t know, I haven’t given the project some thoughts yet.”

“We’ll find a solution,” Felicity said, her mind already working. “Together.”

“Yeah,” Donna agreed. “I’d like that. But I don’t want to be a burden for you Felicity,” she quickly added, regrets tainting her voice. “I’ve been one for far too long. Daughters don’t take care of their mothers, unless they’re old and crippled, which I’m not!”

“You were never a burden mom,” Felicity assured her. “You know I love you.”

“And I love you too and it’s my job to watch over you. Your job is to focus on yourself and give me grandchildren!”

“Mom!” Felicity yelped, jumping in her couch.

It only served to make Donna laugh more. Then there was some noise on the background which made Felicity frown. She thought she recognised a male voice but Donna was quick to hush him down, whoever he was.

“I’m sorry baby but I have to go, someone’s waiting for me!”

“Someone?” Felicity tilted her head, feeling like questioning her mother a little bit.

“My mysterious boyfriend,” Donna replied casually.

Felicity sat up straight. “What? He’s visiting you? Wow! Things are getting pretty serious between you two!”

“Yeah, I don’t know,” Donna replied quickly, sounding eager to change the topic. “I’ll talk to you later babe, I really need to go!”

“Alright, alright! Talk to you later mom!” Felicity said, hanging up.

She put her phone on her coffee table, lingering on her conversation with her mother. She was happy to see her relationship with her boyfriend was lasting. Felicity couldn’t deny it had done her some real good to be with this man – whoever he was. Felicity had to admit, she hadn’t thought they were already at the “I’m visiting you in another city” phase of their relationship but then how could they move forward if they only met when Donna was visiting Felicity? And maybe Donna seeing him while in Star City could be considered a part of the “I’m visiting you in another city” phase of their relationship. All in all, the only thing Felicity cared about was her mother and her well-being and it seemed that she didn’t have to worry about it. Her mother was making a spectacular recovery and though the process had been long and fastidious at the beginning, she could see now how quickly she was evolving now. Donna was making more and more choices to make her life better, she was understanding herself better and she didn’t need Felicity anymore to watch over her and reassure her all the time. Even better, when she had visited her for Hanukah, Donna had informed her she had
been granted more liberties by her doctors at the soulmate’s clinic. Now she didn’t need a nurse to check up on her and make sure she was taking the Med nor did she need to come to the clinic once a week. She still had to visit her therapists a few times a year but she had made enough progress for them to be comfortable allowing her more space.

Thinking about all that brought Felicity back to her mother’s project and her desire to open her own business. All she needed was the money to start up and Felicity wanted to help her but she didn’t really know how. Of course, she still had a pretty sum left from what the Queens had given her to pay her off. As a student, she had kept that money in fear of a relapse from her mother, just in case. But now that her mother was getting better and she was settled in Star City with a steady job, she had been thinking about giving that money away to a charity, not wanting to keep it. Maybe she could give it to her mother, to help her. She nodded to herself, liking the idea but thought against sharing the news with her mother. She would have to speak with Oliver about this before doing anything. She didn’t like how she had gotten that money and she wouldn’t use in a way that could cause a drift between them.

She busied herself lightly for the rest of the day, resting mostly like she had told Oliver she would – she took a nap on the couch, with the two kittens curled on her stomach and it had been the best nap she had ever had. She also cleaned her apartment and she felt slightly conscious when she realised how messy it had been while Oliver was there. She shook the feeling away and focused on picking up the dust, basking in the feeling of the quiet humming of their connection in the back of her head.

Felicity slept in the next morning, not that she was complaining. It had been a while since she had last woken after ten am. She started her day lazily, feeding the kittens while drinking a cup of coffee and eating a muffin she had baked – if putting pre-made dough on a plate and then in the oven could be called baking. Before she could go on with her day – and yes, binge watching a show on Netflix was a perfectly decent activity, especially for a lazy Sunday – she got a call from Georgia. The two girls stayed on the phone for almost two hours. Georgia had called her soulmate and they were planning to take a vacation together, to try and fix whatever was broken between them. Felicity felt like a weight had been lifted from her shoulders when she heard that. She had been worrying a lot about her friend. Now she knew she wasn’t out of trouble yet but hearing they were going to work on it made her feel incredibly better.

It also brought her back to her own situation. She hadn’t had time to speak properly about her doctor’s appointment with Oliver but she knew that what had happened to Georgia and her soulmate could very well happen to them. Or not happen, depending on how they were looking at things. Point being, it was possible bonding would be difficult for them, because she had taken the Med for a very long time. She had no idea how he would take the news. They weren’t remotely close to take that next step in their relationship and she didn’t want to jinx things by talking about it but she wanted them to prepare themselves for that eventualty, so they would be ready to face it, if things ever came to it. And she really needed to stop thinking about bonding process and Oliver in the same internal monologue because it was making her thoughts drift in a world where his lean body, firm chest and incredible six-pack – well she guessed it was incredible, she had yet to see it and no, she hadn’t spent that much time wondering about it – were ruling everything else.

She almost choked on a breath when his emotions grow louder inside her head a sign, she had learnt before, that he was focusing on her. Mild interest peeked inside him and she mentally slapped herself, cursing their connection, which allowed her almost no privacy. Mortified, she forced herself to think about cute kittens, which wasn’t that hard since she had two very cute specimens in her lap. And when her phone buzzed fifteen seconds later, she groaned.

--
1:12 pm
You okay?

OQ”

She typed a quick reply, blushing furiously.

“1:13 pm

Stop spying on me! That’s rude! You’re rude!

FS”

“1:14 pm

And you’re babbling. Through texts.

What were you thinking about? Me perhaps?

OQ”

She paused for a second, her thumbs grazing her screen but not actually pressing down hard enough to type something.

“1:16 pm

Are you flirting with me?

FS”

“1:17 pm

Perhaps...

OQ”

She stared at her phone for a good minute, completely dumb-founded.

“1:18
You’re just so rude…

FS

--

She didn’t wait for his reply and just got on her feet. She reached for her coat and keys, all thoughts of binge watching anything on Netflix gone from her mind. Instead, all she could think about was the bowl of fresh air she absolutely needed. She wasn’t disappointed on that front since it was freezing outside. Okay, maybe not freezing but she had been born and raised in Vegas so her opinion on temperatures was obviously biased.

Her steps led her to Sara’s coffee-shop and it made Felicity laugh. It had been a while since she had last been here. She ordered her usual, with a piece of chocolate cake that brought her back to the day she had first met Oliver. A small dreamy smile lingering on her lips, she climbed upstairs and waved at Iris, who was busy studying, books opened in front of her.

“Felicity hey!” She greeted her happily in spite of the tired look on her face.

“Iris! Working hard?” She said, gesturing at the books.

The brunette sighed. “Yes, I have to make the most out of my time!”

Felicity knew Iris wanted to be a journalist. She had been studying while working for Sara, thanks to evening classes. She was close to graduating now and if everything went well, she would be done by the end of the schoolyear. And if Felicity remembered well, she was supposed to start an internship in a local newspaper in February until May’s end.

“You mind if I sit here?” Felicity asked, pointing at a chair.

“Oh no, be my guest!” She checked her watch. “Damn, I hadn’t realised it was so late. My lunch break is almost over…”

“Don’t worry, I won’t disturb you,” Felicity promised her. “I’ll just sit here, sip my coffee and watch you work. And I mean that in a not creepy way, of course!”

Iris chuckled. “Of course. Have you seen JJ on your way up?”

Felicity shook her head “no”. “Knowing him like I do, he’s probably playing under some table,” she said, looking around and smiling when she spotted dark curls and bright red sneakers under a table. He hadn’t seen her yet and she decided to not go and disturb his game. He was calm for now, something Iris surely appreciated.

“Where is Barry? I thought he had his weekend off.”

“He was supposed to but he’s covering for detective Lance. He’s out of town for the weekend!”

Felicity choked on her coffee. She coughed and coughed and Iris gave her a look.

“You okay?” She asked tentatively, reaching out for her.

“Can you repeat what you just said?”

“You okay…?” Iris repeated hesitantly.

Felicity shook her head, wiping at the corner of her mouth with a paper towel. “No before that!”
“Lance’s out of town for the weekend?”

“Oh my god,” Felicity let out under her breath.

It couldn’t be a coincidence, could it? Sara’s father being out of town just when her mother’s mysterious boyfriend was visiting her? How come she hadn’t seen that one coming? It wasn’t like her mother had had plenty of time to meet someone in Star City during her two visits.

“I need to speak with Sara,” Felicity said, looking around for the familiar blonde.

“She’s showing the place around to the guy who is going to replace me after I start my internship,” Iris explained.

Felicity frowned, turning back to look at Iris. The brunette was looking around her, at the coffee shop where she had been working for so long with a sad look on her face.

Felicity reached for her hand and squeezed it. “You know you’re irreplaceable Iris, right?”

Iris smiled at her. “Yeah right! I’m sorry,” she said. “It’s just that… So much has happened to me here, so many good things… It’s hard to say goodbye.”

“It’s a good thing you still have a few weeks ahead of you then,” Felicity told her, trying her best to comfort her. Iris offered her a small smile in reply.

Felicity turned around then, when she heard Sara’s voice. She was talking about rush hours and customers’ placement. She smiled when she spotted Felicity and Iris and made her way to them a tall and lean dark-haired man following her closely.

“So Nathan, you already know Iris and allow me to introduce you to one of her most loyal customers, who also happens to be my friend, Felicity Smoak,” she said, nudging Felicity so that she would accept the hand the guy had extended toward her.

“Nice to meet you, welcome aboard the SS Star City’s coffee shop! Contrary to popular beliefs, customers aren’t sharks and they don’t bite,” she joked, shaking his hand. She was glad when she didn’t feel any burn. Now that her bond was free, almost completely free, and connected to Oliver’s again, she knew she would never feel it again.

Nathan chuckled at her words, his hand lingering in hers. “It’s very nice to meet you too Felicity! Sara told me a lot about the regulars and your portrait made me look forward to meeting you.”

“Oh really?” She said, eyeing Sara suspiciously and taking back her hand from him.

He offered her a bright smile made of perfectly white teeth. “Yeah, really!” He confirmed.

Felicity felt herself blush but fortunately, Sara came to her rescue by taking him away, in order to pursue their visit.

“What was that?” Felicity immediately asked Iris.

She shrugged, getting back to her books so quickly it looked suspicious.

“Iris,” Felicity insisted. “What was that?”

“A meeting I believe!”

The blonde gave her a look and Iris’ shoulders went limp.
“Okay, I’m not supposed to tell you this but Sara mentioned you being distant lately and I agreed and then she said she thought you were a bit sad and she decided to spice up your life a little and help you meet someone. She said you could use a little fun, nothing too serious.”

Felicity’s heart skipped a beat in her chest.

“Please don’t be mad,” Iris begged her, chewing on her lips worriedly.

Felicity laughed, shaking her head lightly. “I’m not mad,” she promised, getting on her feet.

“Where are you going?”

“I need to speak with Sara officer,” Felicity joked.

“Felicity! I wasn’t supposed to tell you she’s trying to set you up!”

“Don’t worry, I’ll get the truth out of her and then tell her she doesn’t need to set me up with anyone,” Felicity assured her, winking at her playfully.

“I don’t see any good coming out of that conversation,” Iris deplored.

Felicity just smiled at her before walking away. When she passed by JJ’s table, she bent forward.

“Hey buddy!” She said.

“Hey F’Licity,” he replied, barely looking up from the screen of his mother’s phone.

She got up again, shaking her head. She would probably take the boy out with her afterwards. That way Iris wouldn’t have to watch him while working and he’ll do something else than playing Candy Crush.

She made her way downstairs and over to Sara and Nathan, who were talking with Stella, another employee.

“Hello again Felicity,” Nathan greeted her.

“Hi again!” She said, her eyes riveted on Sara. “Can I borrow you for a second?” She quickly asked. “I won’t be long.”

Sara gave her a look but followed her nonetheless.

“You alright Felicity?”

“Yeah, why wouldn’t I be? My friend is trying to set me up with her new employee, what is wrong with you?” She added, slapping her arm playfully.

Sara’s eyes widened. “Iris is a traitor!” She said, sounding scandalised.

“And you’re not very subtle!” Felicity told her.

Sara crossed her arms over her chest. “Okay, I’ll admit Nathan was a bit too obvious but I did it for you! I’m worried about you!”

Felicity smiled softly and put a comforting hand on her forearm. Her muscles were tensed but a soft stroke of Felicity’s hands showed her she wasn’t mad and so she relaxed.
“I appreciate it, really, but you don’t have to!”

“Are you sure? Because you’ve been acting a bit weird slightly, going from being distant to travelling to Russia with Tommy!”

Felicity pinched her lips together, looking for a good explanation without revealing too much about her situation with Oliver. And by situation she meant relationship.

“Alright Sara, I’ll give you that the next few weeks have been kind of complicated and I know I haven’t been myself but it’s over now, I’m better and you don’t have to worry about me anymore, okay?”

Sara shook her head. “Felicity, we may not have known each other for a very long time but I know you enough to know if something was wrong, you would keep it to yourself.”

“Before, maybe. Not anymore, I’m trying to change!”

Sara studied her for a minute, trying to guess whether or not she was telling the truth. Eventually, she said.

“So it’s a “no” on casual and fun dating with my new cute employee?”

Felicity chuckled. “Yep. Firm and definite “no”. I’m actually seeing someone,” she added, because although she hadn’t known Sara in a long time, she knew she wasn’t one who gave up easily. She wouldn’t stop trying to “spice up her life”, Iris’ words, until she won.

Sara’s eyes widened. “Are you kidding me?”

Felicity shook her head, dead serious.

“Holy moly! I didn’t see that one coming! Who is he? Do I know him?”

“No, no, Ms Lance, we’ve decided to keep our relationship a secret for now.”

Sara’s eyes widened even more. “So, I know him! Oh my god, is it Oliver? Did he finally dump that woman he calls “soulmate”?!”

“What? No!” Felicity denied vehemently, her heart skipping a beat in her chest. “Where did you get such a ridiculous idea? Me and Oliver, together? Please!”

Sara eyed her suspiciously. “What’s with you people and keeping your relationships hidden? It sucks!”

“Speaking of hidden relationships,” Felicity went along, too happy to finally have an occasion to take the conversation away from her and Oliver. “I think our parents are dating,” she announced unceremoniously.

Sara’s jaw dropped. Figuratively speaking of course. “Are you trying to change the topic?”

Felicity shifted her weight on her feet uncomfortably. “Depends… Is it working?”

“Damn right, it is! Our parents are together?”

“I think so,” Felicity confirmed. “I mean what are the odds that your father is out of town for the weekend at the exact same time my mother is being visited by her mysterious boyfriend whom she met here, in Star City?”
“I’d say they are pretty slim,” Sara replied her lips pinched together tightly. “I didn’t suspect anything at Christmas.”

“Me neither,” Felicity admitted.

“What do we do?” She asked abruptly and Felicity was taken aback by her behaviour.

“Are we supposed to do something?”

Sara ran a hand through her blonde strands. “I – I don’t know. Our parents are dating and that’s… Unexpected. I didn’t think my dad was ready for that yet,” she admitted, sighing.

Felicity nodded. She knew the death of his soulmate, Laurel and Sara’s mother, was quite recent, it had only happened a year ago. It had affected him deeply, you couldn’t lose your other-half and then go on with your life as if nothing had happened but not as deeply as the loss of his soulmate had affected Barry’s father for example. Maybe it was because Lance had had time to get himself ready for it, whereas Barry’s mother had died suddenly in a car accident. Maybe it was because their connection had been less strong. Felicity didn’t really know. She just knew that, just like not everyone who had lost their soulmate became a psychopath like Cooper, not everyone broke down the way her mother had.

“Maybe we should just let them do what they want…” Felicity said, playing with the tip of her ponytail.

“Yeah right…” Sara agreed. “Do we tell Laurel?”

“You mean share our suspicions with her? It’s not like we know for sure.”

“Yeah, whatever!” She replied moodily. “Do we tell her?”

Felicity shrugged. “I don’t know… Are you alright?”

Sara shrugged. “Perfect! Now if you’ll excuse me, I have to go back to Nathan.” She started walking away, leaving Felicity completely unsettled. She turned around quickly and added.

“Don’t tell Laurel anything.”

Felicity rolled her eyes and went back upstairs, fulminating. Iris had already put her books and stuff back in her bag, her break was over. On her way to her, Felicity bent forward, looking for JJ.

“Hey,” she said, snapping her fingers to get his attention.

He looked up from the phone’s screen.

“Wanna go play with the kittens? Pretty sure it’s more interesting than playing with candies you can’t even eat!”

JJ giggled. “You’re afraid because I’m better than you,” he told her with his thin voice.

“Sure, I’ll remember that next time you ask me for a life,” she said, faking leaving.

“Wait wait, F’licity! I wanna see the kittens.”

“Then come,” she told him, extending a hand to help him out from under the table. When he was up on his feet, he pulled at the hem of her shirt to make her bend again. He dropped a sloppy kiss on her cheek, one that made her grin.
“Good afternoon F’licity,” he said.

“Good afternoon little monster,” she replied, running a hand through his hair. He giggled and she smiled, getting up to face Iris again. “I can take him with me if you want, make sure he stays away from any kind of screens.”

Iris smiled. “Are you sure you don’t have anything better to do?”

“Yes,” she confirmed.

“Then okay,” Iris said, taking her phone back from JJ and handing his coat and scarf to Felicity. “Be nice, okay? Mommy will come and get you when her shift is over.”

JJ left Felicity to hug his mother tightly. She hugged him back and the picture of them made Felicity’s heart swell in her chest. After that, she helped him get dressed and they started walking back to her apartment. It wasn’t that far from the coffee shop, for an adult with average legs – and yes, no matter what Oliver said about her being small, Felicity considered the length of her legs average – but for a small kid like JJ, it was a lot to walk. That’s why she knelt in front of him, halfway to her apartment, and offered to piggyback ride him. He was too glad to accept, his small arms wrapping around her neck and holding on to her scarf tightly – though not tightly enough to strangle her.

They chatted lightly on the way, Felicity finding herself answer a lot of questions such as “Daddy said you studied computers and that you’re smart. Could you build me an armor like Tony Stark’s?” or “The lady in The Incredibles says a hero shouldn’t be wearing a cape but mommy made me this really nice cape and I want to keep wearing it, what do you think?” and her favourite, after he decided that wearing a cape was very cool, “Do you think mommy would make a cape for Nemo? He’s going to be my partner-in-crime!”

Felicity gasped. “What? What about me? I thought I was going to be your partner-in-crime!”

He shook his head, giggling in her ear. “You’re a lady, I have to save you!”

“You mean the damsel in distress?”

He nodded vigorously. She patted his head lightly, shaking her head in spite of the smile threatening to stretch her lips.

“You and I are going to have a talk about gender equality.”

He giggled more, nuzzling her ear and she decided to let it go. For now. They made it back to her apartment and JJ was very happy to finally be able to get down. Felicity too. The boy wasn’t heavy but she didn’t have Oliver’s muscles. She stretched a little bit, satisfied when she felt the slight tension in her back fading away.

“F’licity, can we put some music on?” JJ asked, sitting on the floor and trying to take off his sneakers, his little hands struggling with the knots of his shoelaces.

“Sure,” she agreed, coming to help him. “I think I still have the playlist of Disney songs I put together for you on my laptop!”

He gave her a bright smile and ran to the living-room once he was free of his shoes.

“Kitty cats!” He happily said.
“Don’t run,” Felicity advised, following after him. “You’ll just scare them. You have to be gentle, remember?”

He nodded, kneeling in front of the couch where Arrow was trying to sleep and her brother was trying to get her to play with him.

“Gentle,” JJ repeated, his hand coming up to pet Nemo’s head. The small kitten took a few steps back, obviously taken aback by the presence of someone he wasn’t used to. Felicity watched him as he smelt JJ’s hand before he deemed him okay and started licking his fingers. The little boy started giggling and Felicity watched the scene with a fond smile on her lips.

“Tickles,” JJ said.

“The spot under kittens’ chin is a very soft one for them,” Felicity told him, walking toward her computer and powering it on. In the meantime, JJ followed her advice and soon enough Nemo, started to purr.

“It’s too bad they don’t sing in Nemo,” JJ said after Felicity had started the Disney playlist.

“They don’t sing in Nemo?” She repeated, arching in eyebrow. “What about “Just keep swimming, just keep swimming…””

“No, not that,” JJ protested, covering his ears with his hands.

“Just keep swimming, swimming, swimming,” Felicity sang on, ignoring the little boy in front of her.

“What do we do? We swim! Oh ah oh oh, I love to swim!”

“F’licity stop,” JJ asked and she winked at him.

“You didn’t like my Dory’s impersonation?”

He shook his head and she pretended to be offended. “Wait until I catch you little monster,” she warned him, taking a step in his direction.

He raised a finger and she stopped. “Don’t run F’licity, you’ll scare the kitty cats.”

Her eyes widened and for a second, she was at a loss for words. She opened her mouth to say something but was interrupted when Robin Williams’ voice came through her loudspeaker. She started singing from the top of her lungs, taking JJ’s little hands in hers and dancing with him. When the song was over, they both fell on the couch, breathless.

They played a little with the kittens after that, until it was time for the two balls of fur to take a nap. They watched them sleep for a few minutes, it was crazy how effortlessly cats could fall asleep, until Felicity decided to indulge JJ and let him be her knight in shining armor, promising herself not to bring this up in front of Tommy. Like ever. She used one of her flowery headbands as a crown and wrapped herself in a sheet.

“You look very pretty,” JJ told her.

“You don’t look so bad yourself,” she replied, smiling at the pillows she had taped on his pull-over as a makeshift armor.

He smiled at her and she handed him a ruler. “A knight needs a sword,” she said.

“Yes! Now I’m going to save you!”
They played for a little while and Felicity found herself surprised when she realised she really was having fun. Some might say that playing with a three-year-old could be boring but Felicity disagreed. She had never had a little brother or sister to play with and she was happy to have JJ to catch up on all the things she had miss.

They were in the middle of a game, where JJ was valiantly fighting against the evil dragon couch when someone knocked at the door.

“Who could it be?” Felicity wondered.

“The dragon’s friends?” JJ suggested. “I’ll fight them!” He added bravely, already taking a step toward the door.

“No!” Felicity yelped, grabbing his arm. “I’ll go,” she said. “I’m the princess and therefore I’m the one who should welcome whoever it is that wants to get inside my kingdom.”

JJ gave her a look and she ran a hand through his hair. She took a step toward the door, forgetting about the long sheet she had wrapped herself in. She stumbled on the edge, letting out a small scream, and caught herself on a door’s handle nearby. Catching up her breath, she disentangled herself from the traitorous sheet, throwing it over her shoulder. She looked through the peephole and smiled when she saw Oliver on the other side. She had been so engrossed in her game with JJ, she hadn’t felt him come closer. But now, she could feel him, the humming of his emotions inside her being louder than before, but without being a bother.

She opened the door and Oliver took a step back in surprise, a puzzled look on his face. He took in her dishevelled appearance, the sheet still partially wrapped around her and carelessly thrown over her shoulder, her crown and her red cheeks.

“Am I interrupting something?” He asked, reaching out to grab the sheet on her shoulder.

“You just missed my lover,” she teased him. “We spent a wonderful afternoon playing in the sheets,” she added, pretending to fan herself.

“Oh really?” He said, tilting his head. “Is that why you stopped replying to my messages?”

“What can I say? He did a great job at keeping me busy!”

Oliver chuckled and she replied to it with a smile of her own.

“All jokes asides, I did meet someone at the coffee-shop.” She saw Oliver frown and she went on quickly. “We might need to tell our friends about us. Sara tried to set me up with someone because she was worried about me.”

Oliver’s reaction to what she had just said was quite something. She had spoken quickly and it took him some time to process it all but once he did his astonishment at Sara’s behaviour was easily replaced by sheer jealousy. It flared up, rising its ugly green head.

She patted his chest lightly, a smile stretching her lips. “Don’t worry, I made it clear I wasn’t interested.”

“You better have,” he replied, his voice slightly growly, which only increased her amusement – and somehow made her feel slightly hotter. He then leaned toward her, his hand pulling on the sheet to bring her closer... When suddenly, JJ arrived, running as fast as a cannonball and shouting.

“Uncle ‘Liver!”
They broke apart, looking down toward the small child.

“Are you here to help me defeat the dragon?”

Oliver considered him for a few seconds then he said. “Well, I thought I could catch up on some work with Felicity,” he explained, gesturing toward the shoulder bag he was carrying. “But defeating a dragon is far more important so… Let’s do this!”

“How about Uncle ‘Liver helps you bake a cake since it’s almost four in the afternoon? When it’s ready, we can eat it while learning how to train a dragon,” she added, showing him her DVD of the *How to Train Your Dragon*.

“Yes, a cake!” JJ said, throwing his fist up in victory and running toward the kitchen.

“A cake?” Oliver said. “You want to feed this monster sugar?”

“This monster and *me*. You’re here and I intend to put your cooking skills to good use!”

“Damn, is it too late to leave?” He joked, pretending to take a step back. Her hand shot up and grabbed the first thing it could, in that case the handle of his bag.

“I’m afraid it is Mr Queen,” she replied, smiling at him.

“Oh then I guess I’ll have to get used to you,” he said, leaning down toward her.

“You better,” she replied, pulling him down the last few inches separating them. The kiss was soft and gentle but it still made butterflies erupt in her stomach and her cheeks burn bright red.

“Hi,” she said shyly, after Oliver had pulled away again.

“Hi,” he said back.

“Uncle ‘Liver, are you coming?” JJ asked petulantly, coming back in the hallway to get them. “What are you doing?”

Felicity immediately released Oliver and he took a step back away from her.

“Just hugging,” Felicity blurted out. “To say hello,” she added, her heart skipping a beat in her chest.

“Can I get a hug too?”

“Of course, right after you take off your armor soldier!”

He nodded and ran toward the living-room again.

“That was close,” Oliver commented and she gave him a look before following after JJ.

She helped him taking off his pillowy armor and gave him the promised hug right after. Then, he went to help Oliver with the cake. He invited her to help and she politely declined.

“I’m sure I’d find a way to ruin all your hard work,” she explained.

“You know,” Oliver said, staring at her fridge. “For someone with so few cooking skills, your fridge is surprisingly full.”

“It’s because I always find people to cook for me,” she replied.
He turned around, one of his eyebrows arched.

“What?” She said. “Maybe I wasn’t lying earlier when I mentioned my lover,” she teased.

He rolled his eyes at that. “Or maybe you’re cooking isn’t that bad and you’re just enjoying the view,” he added, pointing at himself and JJ.

She chuckled. “You got me cornered Queen,” she said. “Watching you wearing an apron is one of my favourite things in the world.”

He cleared his throat rather loudly and turned around again, getting what he needed from the fridge. Felicity watched them, a fond smile stretching her lips. They started the movie while it was cooking in the oven, JJ tucked between Oliver and Felicity and when it was ready, they ate in front of the TV. The blonde had been right, baking a cake and then watching a movie had helped JJ calm down and he was all quiet when Iris came to pick him up, less than an hour after the movie was over.

“Thanks again for taking him,” Iris said when Felicity opened the door to greet her. “I hope he behaved well and oh! Oliver. Hello, I didn’t know, you’d be here,” she added, shooting Felicity a confused glance.

“We baked a cake mommy,” JJ said, from his place in Oliver’s arms, handing Iris the box with the pieces of cake Felicity had put away for him to take home.

“Hi Iris,” Oliver said in greeting, releasing JJ. “It’s good to see you!”

“It’s good to see you too,” she replied, her eyes going from him to Felicity then back to him.

She left quickly after that and Felicity leaned her back against the door after closing it.

“So what now?” She asked Oliver, since his emotions were an indecipherable calm.

Felicity sighed and her shoulders dropped slightly. “Farewell weekend and days of rest,” she complained.

Oliver tilted his head, fighting back a smile, clearly amused by her. “I’m sorry,” he said, following her to her kitchen.

“No, don’t be,” she replied. “It’s better if we’re ready for tomorrow,” she told him, collecting her laptop.

“Yeah,” he agreed, getting his own from his shoulder bag. “It still feels weird, you know? To think, I’m not working for my parents anymore.”

“You’re your own boss now, congratulations Mr Queen!”

He elbowed her and she took a step away from him.

“Hey! Be nice!” She warned.

“I should be the one telling you this,” he shot back, taking a chair and sitting down. She did the same, putting a respectable distance between them. They were deep into the blissful, playful side of their new-found relationship and so his presence was a great source of distraction. They couldn’t afford that since business talk was very serious.
They went through what had happened at the company while Oliver had been absent and he explained to her that the projects belonging to QC and which had been sent to Q. Inc for development would be sent back first thing the next morning.

“Fair enough,” Felicity agreed. “And it would leave us with Curtis’ side projects to sustain the company.”

1. Inc was a small company. Between the two of them, the Research and development teams, the account, the HR and the security teams, there was a total of thirty-seven employees.

“Well, we all have to start from something,” Oliver told her.

“I know,” she replied. “We’re lucky the battery is almost ready though.”

“Yeah, once the product is finalised, it’ll allow us to expand our business!”

Felicity nodded, going over the dozens of ideas Curtis and she had come up for the battery. They had already gotten in touch with a wealthy medical office developing new medical device led by a Doctor Caitlin Snow, in Central City. In spite of this great news, which was building toward a contract between the two of them, a frown distorted her features, one that didn’t go unnoticed.

“What’s wrong?” Oliver asked.

She shook her head. “Nothing, I was just thinking about Martin Walker.”

“What about him? You…” He hesitated. “You’re worried,” he stated and there was no denying it from her side since she knew he could feel it.

“Well, he’s our main investor for the battery, our main support. We have others, but he’s the most important one.”

“I’m aware of that,” Oliver said.

“And I don’t know, I guess I’m just scared of what his reaction will be once he knows you lied about your soulmate.”

Oliver’s shoulders dropped and he lost the small smile that had been on his lips ever since he had walked in a few hours ago. She felt his emotions change, going from happy and hopeful to worry in a second.

“I didn’t think of that,” he said. “Well, try not to think about it would be more accurate but it doesn’t really matter.”

She nodded. “I want to think he won’t take it too badly but… A lie is a lie and I know I’m not a businesswoman but I also know if I were I’d have a hard time trusting a partner who’s lied to me. Besides, you know how obsessed he is with soulmates. A lie about this… He’s going to hate it.”

“I know, I know,” Oliver agreed, pinching the bridge of his nose, suddenly looking extremely tired. “I’m just hoping the vision we have for the future of technology will prevail.”

“And I think it’s great,” Felicity told him. “But I also think we should look for other important partners and supports. Just in case.”

“Why do I have a feeling you haven’t just been thinking about it?” Oliver started.

“Well, maybe because I haven’t,” she said, opening the website of Palmer Technologies on her
Oliver sighed, and crossed his arms over his chest.

“Just hear me out, okay?” She said, feeling he already hated where this was going. “Ray Palmer is a wealthy, genius, philanthropist who happens to share the same vision you do for the future.”

“If he’s so great, what didn’t you tell me about him earlier?”

“Because you asked me to focus on finding partners on the West Coast,” she reminded him. “I spoke with him at your parents’ party…”

“Yeah, I was there,” he cut her off.

She gave him a look. “Will you please stop that?”

He exhaled slowly and she rolled her eyes at him.

“So,” she started again, “I spoke with him at the party and he sounded really interested. You should give it a try. Contact him, you don’t have anything to lose.”

“Are you sure you don’t want me to do this because you’re secretly hoping he’ll sign your copy of *Forbes* magazine with him on the front page?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” she replied immediately, blushing furiously.

“You’re keeping it in the first drawer of your desk at work,” he reminded her and she slapped his shoulder, not hard enough to hurt him though. He had the decency to fake a wince of pain.

“Alright, alright, I’ll contact him,” Oliver said, reaching for her hand. His thumb caressed her skin and she felt herself melt. Slightly.

“You know you’re cute when you’re blushing.”

She shook her head. “I hate you.”

It was his turn to shake his head. “No you don’t,” he replied, tugging at her hand so that she would come closer to him.

“Unfortunately, I don’t,” she agreed, letting him pull her toward him and connect their lips together. He kissed her softly and she let him, intertwining their fingers together. She was the one to pull away and he pecked her lips one last time before letting her go.

“But do you think he’ll sign my copy if I ask him nicely?”

That made Oliver laugh and she couldn’t help but laugh with him.

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When her alarm went off the next morning, Felicity groaned angrily and shut it down roughly, not wanting to get up. She rolled in bed, burying her head in a pillow. She sighed heavily regretting going to bed so late the night before. Her catching up on work session with Oliver had turned into eating dinner together which had then turned into a making out – cuddles session on her couch while
watching whatever was airing – she hadn’t paid much attention to the screen. It had stretched far into
the night, hence her being tired.

Felicity rolled in her bed again, sighing softly as flashes from the night before came back to her,
Oliver smiley face caught in the dim light in her living-room, his laugh she had provoked echoing
against the walls. The two sides of their soulmate’s connection had been separated for so long, they
had promised to take their time to mend their relationship. But it wasn’t what was happening. It was
merely a couple of days since she had stopped taking the Med and they were already growing very
close to each other, both physically and emotionally. Everything was easy between them: talking,
hugging, teasing and kissing. It was all natural because it was meant to be. Problem was it was also
very easy to get lost in each other and it scared Felicity a little bit. It frightened her, whenever she
thought about just how easy it was to get lost in their delirious happiness and forget about the things
that had been broken and needed to be fixed.

Her second alarm went off – she had two because she was pretty hard to wake up, especially when
sleeping deeply – and she knew it was time for her to get up and go on with her day. She did so,
jumping out of bed in spite of her tiredness. She got ready feeling like this new day was going to be a
great one, Oliver’s emotions buzzing inside of her, a welcomed bundle she had quickly gotten used
to again – one of the numerous things that had been really easy. She hummed throughout her whole
morning routine. The sun was out and it was worth smiling, even though it was still cold outside. She
stopped by Sara’s coffeeshop on her way to Q. Inc getting one for John and Oliver as well as herself.

She arrived a bit before them and put the steaming cups on her desk. She sat behind her desk,
scrolling through the electronic messages they had gotten over the weekend while waiting for them
to arrive. She was on her feet before she even heard the bells of the elevator ring, her senses having
grown more aware of Oliver’s presence, curtesy of their connection.

Since they had decided to keep their relationship to themselves she handed him his coffee in the most
platonic and professional way, avoiding to touch his hand in the process and quickly turned toward
John to hand him his own.

“I wanted to get coffee on the way but Oliver said you had it covered,” he told her. “Apparently he
was right!”

She gave him a smile in response.

“So, is this something I should getting used to?” Diggle asked, waving a hand at both Oliver and
Felicity. Still, neither of them seemed to get what he meant.

“The two of you here at the same time. Should I be getting used to it?”

Oliver and Felicity exchanged a look, not really knowing what to say. Diggle had been the closest
witness to the gap that had appeared between them, more than any of their other friends actually and
that was because he worked with them and saw them on a daily basis.

“Yes,” Oliver told him courtly, holding up his gaze. Felicity watched them stare at each other. She
watched them have one of these silent conversations they had with their eyes, the ones they had
started having when their professional relationship had turned into something more – a friendship
based on understanding and respect.

Diggle seemed satisfied with what Oliver’s eyes conveyed since he turned around to let them get to
work. They dived into what was waiting for them immediately, there was a lot to do, especially
surrounding the separation of Q. Inc from QC. Oliver had already planned a staff meeting to explain
the situation to everyone first thing in the afternoon.
They were going over a few documents when Diggle walked in Oliver’s office, without knocking which was quite unusual. It was the first clue that hinted something was going on. Felicity rose from her seat, scanning Diggle’s face. There was something in his eyes, something dark and worried that triggered her own worry. She had never seen him like this, he was always so calm and collected and now he looked almost 
**distraught**. Whatever was happening must have been very serious if it had shaken him that much.

“What’s wrong?” Oliver asked immediately, picking up the signs the same way Felicity did.

“Put on the news,” he just replied, shaking his head in denial.

Felicity frowned and leaned toward the keyboard. She pressed a few strokes and put on the news channel. Her heart leapt in her throat when she saw the headline under the speaking anchor woman.

**BREAKING NEWS: SPLIT BETWEEN THE QUEENS**

“Today, Robert and Moira Queen revealed in a press conference held at Queen Consolidated that their son, Oliver Queen, was taking control of company Queen Incorporated and that soon the only common point between the two companies would be the name “Queen”…”

The words stopped reaching Felicity as an edit of the previously mentioned press conference replaced the image of the anchor woman. The blonde stared at the face of Robert and Moira Queen without hearing a word they spoke. Blood rushed to her ears and she felt as if lead had been poured inside her stomach.

“Please tell me this isn’t happening,” she whispered, turning around to face Oliver, who glanced back at her, a helpless look on his face.

“It’s happening,” Diggle answered for her. “And it’s on every news channel of the country. Your parents apparently had a very interesting story to tell about a greedy soulmate of yours who turned you against your family.”

Felicity’s eyes widened. Surely, she had misheard him. But then, she felt a tremor shook Oliver’s emotions and she felt her worry increase considerably. Maybe she hadn’t misheard John’s words after all.

“What?”

“You really haven’t been paying attention to the news, have you?”

Felicity shook her head. “We were actually working,” she replied.

“God this is my fault,” Oliver sighed, running a hand through his hair nervously. “I should have known they’d do something like that.”

“So we’re assuming it’s real and not some kind of nightmare?”

“It’s a living nightmare,” Oliver corrected, reaching for his phone. “We need to know what they said during that press conference, can you find it?”

She nodded, already getting to work. “Of course,” she replied. “If it’s online I can find it,” she quickly added.

Oliver stepped away to speak with Diggle probably to explain the situation to him. Felicity ignored them and focused on her task. She realised after a few seconds that her fingers were shaking slightly.
She knew thing could be really bad, it only depended on what Oliver’s parents had told the press.

“I should have seen it coming,” Oliver’s louder voice said. “Felicity, we need to move the staff meeting, schedule it during the lunch break. I need to speak with everyone working for this company before it gets out of our hands.”

Felicity nodded, biting back a snarky comment. Things were already out of their hands. She put on the interview for him to watch and moved to her desk to send a message to everyone working at Q. Inc, informing them the staff meeting had been moved. She watched Oliver watch the press conference then, her heart clenching in her chest as she felt waves and waves of blazing anger and sheer disappointment coming from him. It was the first time he shared strong negative emotions with her and it had a powerful effect on her. She felt her own anger bubble up in her chest and when he walked out of his office and she jumped on her feet.

“How bad is it?” She asked him, already knowing it was really bad but needing to hear him say it nonetheless.

“They’re trying really hard to discredit us,” he sighed, suddenly looking ten years older. “I’m pretty sure they want to scare our partners away,” he added, avoiding what was obviously the cause of his burning anger. He may be looking collected to the outside world but she knew better and she could actually feel how his blood was boiling in his veins. There was something more, she was sure of it, even more since Diggle had hinted at it earlier already.

“Oliver, please,” she told him.

He sighed. “They just… Said things about us. Twisted the truth of our story, made it look like I’m a naive, bewitched, love-sick guy and you’re…” He hesitated and she completed his sentence.

“The witch?”

He scratched the back of his head. “We’re going to fix this, okay? Everything will be alright.”

She ran a hand through her hair, her nails scrapping her skull. Oliver, feeling her distress, reached for her and pulled her closer to him.

“How?” She asked, a lump of emotions forming in her throat. She was in this weird place where what was happening still felt somehow unreal to her since she had barely seen the news and yet, the rawness and sheerness of Oliver’s emotions were there, taunting her, yelling at her it was really happening and she needed to get a grip on herself.

“I don’t know, but we’ll figure it out,” he told her, brushing away a few strands of her blonde hair that had fallen in front of her eyes.

“You better know what to do soon,” Diggle advised, staring at his phone’s screen. “The internet is already going crazy over your parents’ declarations. It seems popular on that Twitter thing you got me to subscribe to Felicity.”

“What?” Felicity asked, her heart jumping in her chest. It was trending on Twitter? Didn’t people have better things to do? “Show me,” she added, her hand reaching out for Diggle’s phone.

“No,” Oliver said, catching his friend’s arm to stop his movement. “We don’t need that kind of negativity, it would only cloud our minds and take our attention from what needs it most. Right now, we need to focus on the company and on reassuring those who work here.”

Felicity swallowed, nodding. She wasn’t going to pretend she wasn’t hurt, because she was. She
wasn’t going to pretend she wasn’t dying to read what people were saying, because she was. But Oliver was right. What mattered most right now was the company. The way he would react to this, the way she would react to this, it would tell the kind of people they truly were, whether it was the self-centred or caring kind.

The staff meeting lasted for a very, very long time. People were worried what the separation of the companies meant. Many were worried they would lose their job that the company would sink and take them all down. It took Oliver all his diplomacy and patience to reassure each of them, remind them how hard they had worked to become self-sufficient, just in case they would need it. But now that they did, they were scared because everyone knew without QC’s support, Q. Inc was just a small tech company and only God knew how ruthless the business world could be to small companies. Felicity had always known Oliver cared for his company. She had always known he only wanted to do great and make his business thrive. She had always known he wanted to be a good boss, the kind people weren’t afraid to come to. She had always known it but it was a whole other thing to witness it.

She was in awe of him for the entire time the meeting lasted. She was in awe of him when he carefully picked the right words to reassure each of the present employees, doing his best to sound as calm and collected as they needed him to be at this very moment, where everything seemed so uncertain. She was proud of him when he found in him the strength to put his anger and disappointment over this new betrayal from his parents aside and let his good sense step in. He showed everyone in the room, and not only her, what a good CEO he was. He did what was expected of him and he did it so well, most of the minds had been completely put to rest by the end of the meeting. Of course, some remnants of worry was still lingering but only time would ease those fears.

Since almost everyone had heard of the press conference and what had exactly been said by Oliver’s parents, a few questions were asked about them. They confirmed they were indeed soulmates, something they had just recently learnt, and asked for the respect of their privacy. Neither Oliver nor Felicity felt like they owed them a bigger explanation. They would release a statement of their own soon and that would be the end of it. When the staff meeting was over, Felicity knew they would be the heart of all conversations within the company and then everyone would try to speculate and guess how true Oliver’s parents’ declarations were. The thought of that only was enough to make her stomach twist. She excused herself to the bathroom and Oliver let her go, knowing she needed some time alone but still recommending she didn’t google herself, which she promised she wouldn’t do.

She locked the door behind her and went to sit on the toilet’s seat. There, she exhaled, her shoulders dropping. She leaned over, burying her face in her hands, rubbing her eyes, not giving a damn about her make-up. She was exhausted and weary, both physically and mentally. She knew having a soulmate didn’t mean happily ever after. Her parents were proof of that, she had grown up with that knowledge. But apparently, Oliver’s parents seemed to think she hadn’t learnt her lesson well and had taken upon themselves to show her just how messy and complicated a life with your other half could be.

During the whole meeting, she had focused on Oliver. She had needed reassurances as much as everyone else but more importantly, she had needed to block people’s eyes on her. She had promised Oliver she wouldn’t google herself and she wouldn’t do it but she needed to know what had been said so she google the press conference and listened to her portrait by Moira and Robert. Just like Oliver had told her, they had twisted the truth behind their story, making her look like a greedy bitch who had been too happy to accept money to disappear and had come back when she had realised there was more to gain. She didn’t understand how they could be so mean and act so despicably. She was only twenty for God’s sake! What kind of monster did they actually want her seem to be? And what was she supposed to make of what they had said about Oliver, their own son, their own flesh
and blood? He had been hauled over the coals just as much as she had. His parents, the people supposed to always have his back, to always protect him, had depicted him as a very easily influenced man and barely competent business man, claiming he wouldn’t last a few weeks without their support. How could they do this to their own child? It was beyond Felicity. She shook her head burning tears coming up but not falling.

A quick glance at the social media told her Diggle had been right earlier. The split between the Queens was discussed all over the country. She knew Oliver’s phone had exploded with phone-calls and notifications throughout the day, so much that he had had to turn it off before the staff meeting – just like they had had to turn the office’s phone off as well. She was relieved she had an unlisted number, had one since her abduction by Cooper, because it meant she wouldn’t get unwanted calls from journalists and news reporter. In spite of that, her phone had blown off with notifications from the various social media she had subscribed to and she had gotten a few calls and texts from her friends as well as her mother and Thea. She sighed, turning her phone off. She would reply to them later. She got up and walked to the sink. She splashed water on her face, hoping to cool her skin a little bit.

She was on the verge of freaking out, she knew she was and she didn’t know how to avoid it. She had been dragged into this mess by the Queens and there was no escaping it. She would have to face the storm and pray for the best and it brought her little comfort to know that Oliver was on the same boat as she. He had told her he was going to call Tommy, ask him to recommend him a good PR team, the only one Oliver knew being the one working at QC, for his parents. But what could they do? Release a statement, a firm refutation? Would it change anything? Most of the damages had been done, Oliver had been right, they had tried really hard to discredit them and Felicity wasn’t entirely sure they hadn’t succeeded.

There was a knock on the door, one that got Felicity out of her dark spiral.

“Felicity?” Oliver’s soft voice called from the other side. “Open the door please,” he asked her, his tone gentle.

She sighed. He had felt her distress and had come to try and make her feel better. But she could feel his own distress and his own fears threaten to overwhelm him and he had been so strong ever since Diggle had walked in his office to drop the Queen bomb on their lap, he deserved a shoulder to lean on, someone to be strong for him. And that someone was her. That thought helped steeling her spine. She took a deep breath trying to get a grip on her emotions, trying to convince herself they would find a way out of this mess. If she believed in it enough, then making it a reality wouldn’t be that hard.

“Give me a minute,” she replied, staring at her reflexion in the mirror. Her cheeks were red, her eyes were shining brightly with unshed tears. She didn’t look as awful as she felt and she dubbed it a small victory.

“Alright,” he replied, and she heard his footsteps carry him away.

She took a deep and settling breath forcing herself not to think about what was waiting for her beyond Oliver.

She walked to the door and opened it. She walked out and met Oliver in his office. He was looking at the city through the large window in his office, from which they could see QC’s tower. She walked and stopped beside him, looking at the busy streets. Everything looked calm from up here and she wished they never had to leave the office again. Sighing, knowing it was impossible, she turned to glance at Oliver. He had loosened up his tie from around his neck and rolled up his sleeves. He looked as much tired and weary as she was and she knew it was a barely a reflection of how he
true felt inside.

“Are you okay?” He asked, not tearing his gaze from the city to look at her. It didn’t worry her
though, she knew he was getting lost in himself.

“I was thinking maybe we could… Stay here you know? Stay here forever. That way we can avoid
the craziness that is sure to be waiting for us outside.”

Oliver chuckled, though his heart wasn’t really in it. “It sounds like a great idea but I’m afraid the
couch in my office won’t make for a comfortable bed.”

“Damn it…” She cursed. “We’ll have to get out then?”

He nodded, this time, turning to look at her.

“I’m so sorry,” he whispered and she frowned in confusion. “I wanted to keep our relationship a
secret because I didn’t want you to be dragged in the mud and this happened…”

“Oliver,” she said, her hand coming up to cup his forearm. “You couldn’t have known!”

“I should have known,” he insisted. “I know my parents, I know how they are, the things they do. I
should have seen this coming but I didn’t and I’m so sorry.”

“Oliver, even if you had known, what could you have possibly done to prevent this?”

“I don’t know, attack first?”

“And do the very same thing that makes them despicable people?” She challenged. “No,” she shook
her head. “You’re better than that, you’re above them.”

“Perhaps. But we’re still the ones ruined by this.”

She bit on her lower lip knowing he had a point.

“We’ll get help,” she eventually said. “Release a statement, and hope it will be heard,” she added.
“Did you call Tommy?”

He nodded. “Yeah, he sent someone from his PR team, said the guy could be trusted.”

She smiled encouragingly, knowing he needed her to be strong right now. Whatever doubts she had,
she needed to keep them to herself. “Great, that’s great!”

He shrugged. “Yeah… We can ready ourselves for a late night at the office.”

“I don’t mind,” she replied. “I kind of like my boss.”

The ghost of a smile stretched his lips and they both turned to look at the city again. Star City
suddenly seemed so much bigger and slightly intimidating to Felicity. She considered it her home but
at this very moment, it didn’t feel particularly good to be home.

“I’m proud of you,” she whispered after a while and she felt a warm feeling coming from him
settling inside her. His very emotional reaction to her words. “The way you handled things earlier…
It was amazing.”

“I’m proud of you too,” he replied.
She tilted her head, surprised. “Why?”

“Well, you usually run when problems arise…”

She exhaled, chuckling. There was a little bit of truth in his words, that’s why she saw no point in denying him. “Well, I do want to run now,” she confessed.

“Me too,” he whispered back and yet, his hand reached for hers and his fingers threaded with her own.

“But we won’t,” she stated, squeezing his hand. “Not this time.”

He nodded, opening his free arm. “Come here,” he offered.

She didn’t need to be told twice. She stepped forward and let him engulf her in his warm embrace. He kissed the crown of her head tenderly and she closed her eyes, savouring the feeling. She felt some peace settle inside him and she smiled against his chest. The whole soulmate touch thing really wasn’t an overrated thing.

“Why are you smiling?” He asked, his lips brushing her hair.

“It feels good to be here,” she explained, squeezing his fingers so that he would understand she was talking about him and his arms.

He pulled away slightly and leaned down to tentatively brush his lips against hers.

“I couldn’t agree more,” he replied before she raised up on her toes to close the gap between them.

Chapter End Notes

SO...

What did you think of the chapter?
Don’t hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)
Hey guys!!!!

Here's the new chapter!!! You should notice that I upped the rating. The ending scene isn't that explicit but I'd rather be safe than sorry. That being said if you're not comfortable with reading about two people doing a lot of kissing (and some other stuff) I suggest you stop reading after Oliver and Felicity start watching a movie. Also this is a new baby monster of 18k words so... Enjoy :) (it seems that I'm unable to stick to normal lengths such as 12k or 14k words...)

I wanted to thank you as always for the amazing response this story is getting and the tremendous support I'm getting. I also wanted to apologise, I didn't reply to the comments on the last chapter. I originally intended to do it tonight but some stuff prevented me from doing so and I can't stay up late because I have to get up really early tomorrow, for personal reasons. I could have delayed the update but I did promise a few friends I'd publish tonight so... Here's the chapter. I will, obviously, reply to the comments left on the previous chapter tomorrow.

New characters are introduced in this chapter: one is present, the other is mentionned. I really hope you'll like what's happening here and what will come next!

Happy reading!! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 16:

“Tears stream down your face
When you lose something you cannot replace
Tears stream down your face and I
Tears stream down your face
I promise you I will learn from my mistakes
Tears stream down your face and I

Lights will guide you home
And ignite your bones
And I will try to fix you.”

- Coldplay, Fix you.
“Felicity, for the umpteenth time please drop your phone,” Thea demanded, her wearing out patience evident in her tone.

“Nope,” the blonde replied, stressing the “p”.

There was a strumming sound when Thea pulled on the curtains just enough to let her head pop out.

“Lyla, tell her to drop her phone.”

“Please, don’t involve me in this,” the older woman replied, raising her hands up in the universal sign meaning “I’m out of this”.

Thea squinted, eyeing her suspiciously. “Aren’t you here to protect her?” She asked.

Lyla tilted her head, giving her a reprimanding look that made her look like a mother scolding her child. Felicity had to bite the inside of her cheek to hold back a laugh.

“No,” Lyla corrected patiently. “I’m here to watch over her and protect her if the circumstances require I do.”

“But can’t you see she’s hurting herself?” Thea said exasperatedly, pointing at Felicity and her phone.

“I swear to you I’m not,” Felicity told her for what felt like the umpteenth time. It probably was since Thea had asked her to drop a lot. “This article is actually kind of great.”

The brunette rolled her eyes at that. “Define “kind of great”.”

“Well, it’s an anonymous blog. Not that anonymous because the person who handles it, he or she, is a journalist in Star City, born and raised in the city, but they didn’t say where they worked or who they were so, you can say it’s anonymous, just not completely ano—“

“Felicity!” Thea called, raising her voice a little, “The article!”

“Oh yeah right,” the blonde said, tucking a few strands of hair behind her ear. “It’s not that bad, really. Sure, it’s kind of creepy because what’s written makes me think they’ve been spying on us for a while now but I guess that’s what you get when you get close to the Queens and…”

“You’ll get used to it,” Thea shrugged. “Or not,” she added, sharing a look with Lyla that Felicity didn’t lose time trying to figure out. “But what’s the article about Felicity? Except you and Ollie that is.”

“They’re listing all the reasons why people should have known Oliver and I are soulmates.”

That seemed to pique Thea’s interest. “Oh really? And pray tell me what those reasons are. Not that I don’t already know them myself, because I do, I just want to see if they got them right,” she added in an attempt at justifying her interest.

“Are you sure you want me to read it to you? It could hurt us, you know?” Felicity teased her, sharing an amused look with Lyla.

They’d met several times since she had stricken up a friendship with Diggle and Oliver, their son’s godfather. Lyla used to work for a federal agency but had recently quit, her work hours keeping her away from her family more than she was comfortable with. Missions in a foreign country could get complicated when you were bonded to your soulmate and aching to get back to them. She now
worked for a security company and Oliver had hired her after his parents had decided to include the media in their business and the paparazzi had decided to become a much more present constant in Felicity’s life – one she most definitely wouldn’t have minded not getting. Oliver kept saying it was only temporary, that things would eventually calm down but the blonde highly doubted it. They were vultures, she couldn’t even bring herself to call them journalists, they weren’t, and had found a new prey to shred.

Her.

Who said being Oliver Queen’s soulmate only came with advantages?

At least, Felicity now understood why Disney had ended Cinderella’s story after the wedding with the prince. Nobody would have wanted to hear the story of the new princess being dragged in the mud and called a gold-digger.

Not that Felicity considered herself a princess.

Maybe a little bit but the innumerable puns about the Queen’s name were to be blamed for her now slightly scrambled neurons.

“Felicity, please, the article,” Thea insisted from behind the velvet curtain that was hiding her.

“Alright, alright,” the blonde eventually caved in. She cleared her throat before beginning her reading.

“The Royals: episode 1 and 2

5 HOURS AGO by Star-City-Lover

Since the press conference held at Queen Consolidated on Monday, January the 16th of 2017 that made the schism between the Queens public, I’ve been debating with myself whether or not I should write something about it. I usually leave the gossips to my colleagues at the newspaper but you can’t call yourself Star-City-Lover and just ignore the city’s equivalent to royalty (pun totally intended).

About Queens’ drama and drama Queens

On Monday, January the 16th of 2017, Moira Queen, 49, and husband Robert Queen, 50, revealed in a shocking interview that son Oliver Queen, 27, had become the one and only CEO of company Queen Incorporated – Q. Inc. In addition, they also said that, contrary to popular beliefs, long-time business partner, Isabel Rochev, 30, wasn’t Oliver Queen’s soulmate.

And if that surprises you then I don’t know what to do with you. [Click here to show picture] Oliver Queen and fiancée Isabel Rochev attending a fundraising for Star City’s General on May the 9th, 2015.

I’ve seen oysters with more chemistry than these two together. Just saying.

Moira and Robert Queen expressed their fears and concerns toward their son which they think unprepared to be on his own and also toward his soulmate, the real one this time, who they say is his executive assistant Felicity Smoak, 20.

On Tuesday, January the 17th of 2017, Oliver Queen and Felicity Smoak released a small statement confirming their relationship status and asking for the respect of their privacy – which I personally
found so much classier than the shady lines thrown at them by Queen’s parents.

Before I go on and comment on this drama between the Queens, you should know I’m team Oliver all the way. The boy does have a tumultuous past but we’ve all been young, made mistakes we’re not proud of and we particularly hate it when they’re brought up. But time has passed and Oliver Queen went from Ollie to Mr Queen to our greatest pleasure.

I’ve always admired Moira and Robert Queen. They have dedicated their lives to their company and when they were not working, they were trying to make Star City a better place. But just because they did good things in their lives doesn’t automatically mean they’re nice people. I’ve always found them cold and calculating – I mean, we all remember how they were quick to give away money to the most important charities within the city when rumours about budget cuts at QC arose. My suspicions about their calculating tendencies were confirmed this week. It seems that I was correct since they themselves admitted they told people Isabel was Oliver’s soulmate because it implied seriousness and stability and would reassure their business partners.

Seriously, who does that?

And spoiler alert: it didn’t work.

I can’t say I’ve always admired Oliver – the boy did pee on a cop’s car once – but I can say I’ve admired him ever since his car crash, in March 2012. Though the circumstances surrounding that tragic accident remain obscure, he still fought very hard to walk again, graduate from college and then become a decent CEO for Q. Inc. You might think he is not fit for the role and that’s okay, he has plenty of time to prove himself, but his determination to become a new man deserves our respect. At least, it earns him mine and I can’t wait to see the kind of job he’ll do now that he’s running Q. Inc on his own. His parents don’t think he is able to do it and maybe they were right to call him “weak” and “easily influenced”, especially if he accepted to let them claim someone who wasn’t his soulmate was actually his soulmate but you know what? Just try to say “no” to Moira and Robert Queen once and then we’ll talk. In the meantime, I’ll be watching him conquer the corporate world.

Team Oliver all the way, remember?

Olicity is the new black

[I’ve seen people call them Foliver but I personally think Olicity sounds much better so… Olicity it is for me.]

I don’t know much about Felicity Smoak, and frankly until last Monday, she was just a cute blonde working for Oliver Queen to me. But now, it has been confirmed that she actually is Oliver’s soulmate. I’ve read many things about her, many articles were paraphrasing what Moira and Robert Queen said during their press conference. I don’t know if any of it is true and that’s why I’ve decided to trust Oliver. If she really was such a horrible person, he wouldn’t be with her, simple as that. Soulmate or not, he would have dumped her, especially considering he was part of an anti-soulmate group from 2004 to 2012. I know I said I wouldn’t be holding his past against him but being part of an anti-soulmate group for so long does say something about someone’s opinion. Now, one can argue she is manipulating him and he’s lacking a will of his own so much he’s not denying her anything but… I don’t buy it.

Because that would mean she’s also manipulated everyone around them and I highly doubt a 20-year-old could do that.

So, Felicity Smoak is Oliver Queen’s soulmate, Olicity is a thing, get used to it.
I really feel stupid because we all should have seen it coming, the signs were there all along and yet we failed to see them.

Here, 5 things that should have tipped us off

Let’s start with the most obvious one:

1. Her job

Felicity Smoak graduated from MIT class of 2016 and has a master degree in both Computer Sciences and Cyber Security. I’ll let you guess who the valedictorian was that year… Hint: she’s blonde and wear square glasses. Aside from that, she was also ranked 2nd in the National Information Technology competition.

Not your typical executive-assistant’s resume, right?

I realise I’m pretty much implying she got her job because she’s Oliver’s soulmate – which is something frowned upon according to the girls’ code but hey, the girl is really smart and I’m pretty sure she helps him make smart decisions. It wouldn’t be the first time couples become partners [looking at you Robert and Moira].

Let’s continue with the second most obvious one:

2. Their chemistry

Remember when I said Oliver Queen and Isabel Rochev had less chemistry than oysters?

Well, I think this picture of Oliver and Felicity speaks for itself.

[Click here to show picture] Oliver Queen and executive assistant Felicity Smoak dancing at the inauguration of Star City Museum’s new aisle, on November the 5th, 2016.

3. Their dates

Olicity has already been on numerous dates right before our eyes.

How dare they?

[Click here to show picture] Oliver Queen and executive assistant Felicity Smoak having lunch, on October 12th, 2016.

Now, you won’t make me believe this was just two people having a very platonic lunch together. I may or may have not been to the restaurant in question and one of the waiters may or may have not told me they were regulars and always looked pretty cosy around each other.

[I know shipping people in real life is weird but I kind of ship them! I mean, look at her face! And don’t get me started on how he looks at her, okay?]

4. Flommy and Thelicity are real!

For those out there who have met their soulmate, just like I have, you know the connection between the two of you makes it easy to get along with their friends and beloved – except for the in-laws, I’m afraid there’s no magic cure to make your future in-laws love you. BUT, the fact that your soulmate is going to like your friends isn’t just some kind of rumour, it has been statistically proven.
A study conducted by scientists working for the Krast foundation established that 89% of soulmates get along well with close relatives, brothers, sisters, cousins and 92% with close friends.

Now Felicity Smoak has stricken up a friendship with not only Tommy Merlyn, Oliver Queen’s best friend since forever and forever but also Thea Queen, Oliver’s baby sister.

I guess Olicity can be added to the stats.

5. **Tensions between F and M?**

Quick question: what would happen if the girl you paid off to stay away from your son, the girl you consider a gold-digger and kind of hate were to come back into your son’s life?

I really hope you’ll never find yourself in such a situation, but if you do, I bet there will be some tensions.

Rumour has it there was quite a lot of tension between Felicity Smoak and Moira Queen. There’s no Smoak without fire [see what I did there?] and inside sources from the Museum’s inauguration confirmed that not only the two of them had what looked like a very heated conversation but Moira also made sure to forbid Felicity entrance inside the building. Mean…

[Click here to show picture] Moira Queen during her speech at the inauguration of Star City Museum’s new aisle, on November the 5th, 2016.

Now I surprisingly find myself looking forward what’s going to happen next between Star City’s royals. Well, what can I say? They do take family drama to a whole a new level. But can we at least agree that Olicity sounds much better than Foliver? Please? That’s one debate we can easily settle.

Your faithful servant,

Star-City-Lover.

*Keep up with everything new in Star City by subscribing to this blog.*

Felicity took a deep breath after she was done reading and looked up from her phone’s screen to meet Thea’s eyes. There was a thoughtful expression on her face and she was pinching her lips so tightly they looked like a thin line.

“The person behind this blog is definitely a woman and she has a heavy crush on my brother,” she eventually said, disappearing behind the velvet curtain again.

Felicity glanced at Lyla who shrugged. “But didn’t you like what she, or he, wrote?”

“It’s a she Felicity,” Thea insisted, “definitely a she. She’s probably one of those girls he used to be with before…” Her voice faded as she realised what she’d been saying.

“Smooth Thea,” Lyla commented, giving Felicity a sympathetic smile to which the blonde just shrugged in response.

“I’m alright,” she explained, sharing the article on twitter with a simple hashtag. #Olicity.

Not five seconds later, Thea had retweeted it with a hashtag of her own. #Thelicity.

“Thea,” Felicity called through the curtain.
“What?” She replied. “I did say it wasn’t that bad.”

“Go back to trying on dresses instead of stalking me on Twitter.”

Felicity heard some rustling sound and then Thea opened the curtain again, completely this time.

“Alright ladies, what do you think of this one?” Thea asked, turning around so they could appreciate her red short sparkling dress.

“I’m here to watch over you, not give fashion advice,” Lyla said, easily getting out of the conversation.

“Felicity?” Thea said, focusing solely on her.

“Hm…” The blonde bit the inside of her cheek, looking for the proper way to speak her mind. “It’s a beautiful dress but… I’m not sure Oliver would be comfortable with a cleavage like this.”

“Well, if Oliver wanted to give his opinion, the only thing he had to do was to come with us instead of pulling off extra hours.”

Felicity rolled her eyes at her words. “Thea, you understand this contract with Palmer Tech is a big deal, right? If we can sell them the battery for their watches and phones it will be a huge step in the right direction for Q. Inc. Ray Palmer trusting us will incite other companies to trust us as well and before you know it our new battery will be everywhere.”

Thea tilted her head slightly, turning to admire her reflection in the mirror. “If it’s so important why didn’t you stay with Oliver?”

Felicity bit on her lower lip. “Because you left me no other choice but to go with you?”

Thea chuckled. “True,” she agreed. “Also, you’re right about this dress. I think I’ll take the golden one. With the feathers. I love feathers.”

“Excellent choice,” Felicity nodded, eyeing Lyla discreetly until the older woman showed her approval as well with a firm nod and her thumbs up.

Thea sighed. “Carl had to pick the week of my birthday to go to Berlin,” she murmured before disappearing against the velvet curtain again.

Felicity twisted her fingers nervously together, not knowing how to make things better for her friend. Things had obviously been hard for her and Oliver but they had been just as hard on Thea. She was a part of the Queen family and had been dragged into this mess, especially since it was public knowledge she wasn’t living at the Queen Mansion anymore but at her brother’s apartment. To make things worse, the following day was going to be her birthday, the first one she’d be celebrating without her parents and even though she acted like she didn’t care, she did care. Moira and Robert, no matter how awful they were, were still her parents and she couldn’t just let go of that. It was why, Felicity knew, she’d made a comment about Oliver working extra hours at Q. Inc. She needed her brother now, more than ever. Unfortunately, Oliver hadn’t been able to move his teleconference with Ray Palmer but he had let Felicity go, so that Thea wouldn’t be alone to go shopping. Her friends were throwing her a birthday party and she needed a new dress. At first Thea hadn’t wanted to go, choosing to spend the night with her brother but Oliver had been adamant that she attended the party. They’d spend the day together entirely, which was a lot of time as he had reminded her, and then she could go to her party. He had turned to Felicity for help then when it was clear his words weren’t enough. The blonde had talked her into going too, insisting she needed to think about something else but the drama going on in her life and that she needed to stay close to all her friends while she was
going through a hard pass. It was obvious they wanted to be there for her, hence the party, and she needed to let them be. It had taken some time, but eventually, they had convinced her to go. And that was why Felicity was spending her Friday evening doing some last minute shopping instead of pulling off extra hours.

They quickly paid for Thea’s dress before driving back to Oliver’s apartment. It was surrounded by paparazzi, just like her building was, but they left the craziness behind them as they entered the underground parking lot.

“Do you want to wait for Ollie with me?” Thea asked, getting out of the car. He had texted them while Lyla had been driving, saying he was finally leaving the office. It was well past time since it was almost 8:30. “Or do you have to go back to your place?”

Felicity shrugged. “What do you think Lyla?”

“I’m not leaving you until you’re back to your place and you know it,” her friend replied, staring at her through the rear-view mirror.

Felicity winced when her attempt to offer Lyla to call it a day failed. She wasn’t comfortable having a bodyguard, it wasn’t who she was. She wasn’t the kind of girl who needed to be protected by a security detail.

“At least I tried!”

A smile threatened to stretch Lyla’s lips and Felicity took it as a win. The three women made their way upstairs. Thea dropped her bags inside her room before offering them something to drink. Oliver came back at this moment. Felicity, of course, had felt him the moment his car had been near the building but she hadn’t said anything, not wanting to put their strong connection in display. Nevertheless, she smiled when she heard his key turn inside the lock and then the door opened to let him in. He dropped his suitcase somewhere and his coat landed on the table with the key’s bowl. His clothes were rumpled and he looked tired but there was a glint of happiness in his eyes, one Felicity hadn’t seen ever since the press conference held by his parents at Queen Consolidated. The bond between them, which was finally completely free of the Med, was buzzing with happiness as Oliver was dying to tell them about his day and that’s how she guessed his talk with Ray Palmer had gone well.

“Hey, I’m home!” He greeted them, rolling up his sleeves.

“Hey Ollie!” Thea greeted back, taking a sip of her juice as he kissed her forehead.

“How was your shopping?” He asked, hugging Lyla before turning to kiss Felicity. He kept it chaste since they had an audience and when he went to step away from her, to take off his suit jacket, she kept him close by tugging at his tie. She snuggled into his side and he automatically wrapped his arm around her shoulders, his thumb finding a patch of naked skin to stroke above the collar of her dress.

“Great,” Thea replied, shrugging casually. “How was your meeting?”

“Great too,” he said, turning to meet Felicity’s eyes. “Ray Palmer invited over us so that we can present the battery to Palmer Tech’s board of directors.”

Felicity blinked. “Really? That’s amazing!”

Oliver nodded enthusiastically. “We’re going to New-York next week, you, me, Curtis and Diggle,” he added for Lyla.
Felicity blinked again, tasting bile in the back of her throat. Her heart skipped a beat in her chest and she felt as if someone had poured lead in her stomach.

“New-York,” she repeated, her mind digging up memories from another time, memories of a sunny day of July.

“How about we go on a little trip? We could drive to New-York, stop by New Heaven on the way…”

She let out a shaky breath, the memory making her throat tighten to the point of pain. “We’re going to New-York?”

“Yes, but you don’t have to worry about anything,” he added, misinterpreting her feelings and sudden uncomfortableness. “The presentation is just a formality, the deal with Ray is almost completed.” He paused for a second, catching his breath. “You were right about him, he’s very interested in working with us and I’m glad I followed your advice.”

She nodded. “Yeah,” she let out but her breathy response was drowned by Thea’s loud exclamations of happiness.

“I’m so proud of you Ollie,” she told him, coming over and hugging him tightly.

“Thanks Speedy!” He replied hugging her back.

“Congratulations Oliver,” Lyla said. “So you’re taking my husband with you for this trip,” she added.

He nodded. “But don’t worry, I won’t keep it away from you for too long,” he assured her.

“You better,” she replied teasingly and for a second Felicity didn’t see Lyla the bodyguard, but Lyla the friend.

“What about you Felicity?” He added, turning to look at her. “Aren’t you going to congratulate me?”

“Sure,” she said, slipping in his arms letting his presence chase away the memories of the last time she had been in New-York. For now. “Congratulations Mr Queen, now let this be a lesson for you: when it comes to tech stuff, your soulmate knows best.”

He chuckled, kissing the crown of her head. He was so lost in his happiness and relief, he didn’t linger on the remnants of her uneasiness for which she was grateful.

“How about we celebrate?” Thea suggested. “We could order pizza.”

Oliver snorted.

“What?” His sister said, eyeing him severely. “Pizza is a perfectly appropriate celebratory meal, right Felicity?”

“Right, but I’ll pass on the pizza tonight,” she quickly declined. “I have two hungry kittens to go back to and a few stuff to do at my apartment.”

Her explanations were vague, because she knew she didn’t have anything really important to do at home and that waiting one more hour for her wouldn’t hurt the kittens. But she didn’t trust herself around other people now. The prospect of going to New-York wasn’t enchanting her and she needed some time alone to think about it.

Oliver frowned, obviously not believing her and she cursed the strength of their connection. Now
that it was completely free from the Med, it would be hard for her to hide anything from him. Not that she was planning on hiding anything from him. She just needed to figure out this one problem on her own. He had so much on his plate already, she didn’t want to add anything else to the pile.

“Okay,” he agreed, sounding as disappointed as he looked and it made her almost regret her decision. Almost.

“We can celebrate during brunch tomorrow,” she suggested, forcing a smile on her lips. “All our friends will be here so it’ll make sharing the news easier.”

Thea shrugged. “I still want to order pizza. And since this is my pre-birthday dinner, I will.”

Oliver rolled his eyes at her. “Fine,” he eventually caved in and Felicity chuckled.

“Pre-birthday dinner?” She mouthed.

Oliver winced. “Don’t ask.”

She left quickly after that with Lyla. There were paparazzi waiting in front of her building and clearly, they hadn’t understood the part of the press release where Felicity and Oliver had asked for the respect of their privacy. Felicity apologised profusely to Lyla for making her work until late but her friend shrugged it off, assuring her she was the easiest and friendliest job she had had in a while.

Once she was alone, Felicity busied herself with her nightly routine, showering, taking care of the kittens, reheating left-overs, eating said left-overs… But she quickly found herself with nothing to do and a mind full of thoughts and memories she wished would stay buried, far away and unable to hurt her. After Cooper and she had successfully completed their third year at MIT, he had suggested they treated themselves with a few days off. They had gone on a road-trip, travelling from Boston to New-York, stopping by New Heaven on the way. They had made a lot of memories in the Big Apple, happy memories that had started to taste bitterly when she had fallen asleep in the car on their way back to Boston only to wake up tied up to a bed in a dark basement. She didn’t remember how exactly he had kidnapped her. She only remembered closing her eyes, lulled to sleep by the familiar thrumming of the engine of his car.

She wiped at the corner of her eyes, scolding herself for being such an emotional mess over something that really shouldn’t matter. She didn’t know why the prospect of going back to New-York was hurting her like that. She had lived in Boston after being tortured there by Cooper so going back to New-York shouldn’t make her feel like she had been asked to rip her heart out of her chest with her bare hands. And yet, that’s exactly how she felt. Maybe the problem was coming from somewhere else. She was working very hard to build herself again, to move forward with her life. Walking down the streets her past-self had walked down felt like a regression of some sort. She took a deep breath, trying to get her heart to settle down in her chest. She needed to look at things from a different perspective. This trip was a challenge of some sort, her way to prove she was stronger than her demons.

Her ringtone pulled her out of her thoughts and back to the real world. She picked up without checking the ID, already knowing who was on the other side of the line.

“Missing me already?” She teased him, her voice sounding a little bit throatier than she was comfortable with.

“What are you alright?” He asked and she wondered why he bothered asking since he could feel her emotions as if they were his own.
“I’m just being stupid,” she told him, stroking her soulmark lightly, wishing she could just take shelter from her own mind inside of him.

“Felicity,” he said and she bit on her lips to repress a sigh. He had a thousand different ways to say those four syllables and they were all different, carrying a sense meaningful to them only. Before Oliver, she had never thought anyone’s name could encompass so many things, even less so her name.

“I’m really glad about New-York,” she blurted out. “I really, really am but…”

“But you don’t want to go,” he stated.

There was no point in denying it so she just hummed her approval. “I’m so stupid,” she whispered. “I want to be brave, I really want to but…”

“Hey, if you don’t want to go, I won’t force you.” His voice was soft and reassuring and she didn’t need to feel his emotions to know he really meant his words.

“This isn’t about what I want, this is about what I need. I need to go because if I let my past win this round, if I let my fears prevent me from doing something then all the progress I’ve made will be lost.”

“What are you afraid of?” He asked and she felt a shiver run down her spine, elicited by his question.

“You know what I’m afraid of,” she replied, her voice low.

“I need you to say it,” he insisted. “I can’t make it better you if you don’t talk to me Felicity. Besides, we’re supposed to get better at communicating, remember?”

“I’m just afraid of what I’ll feel if I go there. This place… It’s filled with memories.”

“I had gathered that much,” he told her.

“I’m afraid of what my mind will do to me. What I will see, what I will think about.”

“I’ll be here every step of the way Felicity. I’ll hold you in my arms if you have a nightmare, I’ll talk your ears off if you can’t stop thinking about the past. I’ll hold your hands and kiss the bad things away. I promise you everything will be fine, I’ll protect you.”

“You can’t protect me from my own mind,” she reminded him weakly.

“Wanna bet?” He challenged. “We’re part of each other, remember?”

She chuckled. “I guess you have a point here.”

His words felt like a balm on her heart, a gentle and soothing caress. She paused for a second, focusing on the bundle of his emotions inside of her. It had grown significantly since the Med had worn off making her always hyper aware of Oliver. She followed the thread of their connection, revelling in its presence, in its bright intensity and familiar warmth. Her weak attempt at cheering herself up hadn’t really worked on her, unlike Oliver’s words. Maybe it was because she had needed something more, something only he could give her. She had been fighting to get better for so long, and she had received help, from her mother, her therapist… But no one but her soulmate could really help her.
“And maybe we can make new memories in the city,” she eventually said.

Oliver hummed his approval. “I think it’s an excellent idea.”

She smiled softly, feeling slightly better. She would still be apprehensive of their trip to the city but her conversation with Oliver was enough to put her at ease, at least for now.

“Thanks for calling. I wish we could have talked about this earlier but… We weren’t alone.”

“It’s alright, I understand. I actually have to go back to Thea but I just wanted to ask you one last thing before hanging up.”

“Sure, what is it?” She asked, noticing the change in his tone, his sharp intake of breath. Even his emotions changed, jumping from concern to nervousness in a second.

“Well, I’m not sure it’s such a great idea to bring it up anymore after a heavy conversation, my timing couldn’t be worse but I-”

“Oliver,” she cut him off, feeling like he could have gone on and on if she hadn’t said anything. “What do you want to ask me?”

“Would you like to go out to dinner with me?” He blurted out, so quickly she had to pause for a few seconds to put the pieces of words back together and understand the meaning of his question.

“Didn’t you have pizza with Thea?” She asked, frowning in confusion.

He snorted a bit, letting out a shaky breath. “No, I mean yes, I had pizza with Thea, but I wasn’t talking about having dinner tonight.”

“Alright,” she replied. Then understanding came upon her. “Oh. You mean dinner dinner.”

“Yeah a romantic dinner with you know, candles, wine and chocolate cake. A date if you prefer.”

“Oh,” she repeated, her heart twitching in her chest at the word “romantic”. “Are you sure it’s a good idea to go out? Paparazzi are still after us and I don’t want them to ruin our first date.”

“Yes, I know,” he said sheepishly and she could picture him scratching the back of his head in her mind so perfectly her heart made another twitchy move inside her chest. “I thought about renting a restaurant for the night but I figured it would be one of those things you see as extravagant.”

She chuckled, remembering their heated conversation after Lyla had come to pick her up from her apartment on Tuesday. She had called her having a bodyguard an extravagance while he had argued it was a necessity. Obviously, he had won that fight.

“Because it would be extravagant.”

“Or so you think. Anyway, Thea has her party tomorrow night meaning I have my place for myself. You could come over, I’ll make us dinner, open a good bottle of wine…” He teased and she smiled, already picturing them sitting down on his couch, staring at the city with glasses of wine in hands, speaking quietly.

“Well, I’m not one to refuse alcohol, especially when it’s offered by you,” she gladly accepted.

He huffed back a laugh. “Maybe you could stay over?” He suggested. “That way you wouldn’t have to worry about your drinking.”
“Sure,” she agreed without thinking. “So tomorrow, your place at…”

“Let’s say eight,” he decided.

“Alright. First date at eight tomorrow,” she repeated and it somehow made things sound very much real. Butterflies fluttered in her stomach. “I can’t wait,” she confessed.

“Yeah me too.”

“Ollie if you don’t hang up now, I’ll start the movie without you.”

“Coming!” He yelled and Felicity winced. “Sorry about that, Thea…”

“I know. Go with her, she needs you.”

“Are you gonna be okay?” She could feel his worry coming back and she was quick to tone it down.

“Yeah, don’t worry. I’ll busy myself by going through my closet to find something to wear for tomorrow, it should be fun.”

“If you want, I could…”

“No Oliver,” she interrupted him, knowing already what he was going to suggest. “This is your night with your sister, her pre-birthday everything and I won’t crash it. Now go, I’ll see you tomorrow,” she added, her tone authoritative.

“Jeez, someone surely is bossy tonight!”

“Oliver,” she warned him.

“Okay, okay, I’m going. Goodnight Felicity, sleep tight.”

“Goodnight to you too,” she replied, her voice softening again.

He hung up first and she stared at her phone’s screen a minute too long before shaking herself out of her reverie. She got up from her couch and moved to her bedroom. She let herself fall on her bed unceremoniously, the wood laths cracking under her weight. Her closet’s doors were wide opened and she stared deeply at its content, looking for something to wear for brunch the next day.

Tommy and Oliver were the ones organising the brunch for Thea’s birthday, at Tommy’s place. Oliver and Tommy had been inseparable ever since they had met at the age of three. They were brothers by choice and when Thea was born, they had agreed she could be a little sister to the both of them. Tommy cared deeply for Thea, hence why he was organising her a brunch for her birthday. That way she could celebrate with the friends she had come to consider as her family before going to the party her friends from high-school were throwing her. Tommy and Laurel would be here, obviously since it would take place in their townhouse, Diggle and Lyla as well as their two-year-old John Diggle Junior that everyone called DJ too. Barry, Iris and JJ would also attend the party, Barry being Thea’s tutor when she needed help with her homework. Sadly, Sara had cancelled on them for brunch but she had promised to come by Felicity’s apartment where Thea would get ready for her party to say hello.

She quickly found something brunch appropriate to wear. Then she focused on finding the perfect outfit for her dinner date with Oliver. Her heart fluttered in her chest and a small smile stretched her lips at the prospect of their evening together. She wasn’t feeling nervous, not really. She had no
reasons to, considering she had gone out with Oliver a lot since she had met him after all. And yet, she couldn’t help but feel her cheeks redden as she recalled him saying the words “romantic dinner”. Ever since they had decided to stick together and fix things between them, they had been staying in this weird place where they were together without really being together. A date made things official. Their friendship was officially turning into something more.

It was turning into an actual relationship.

She couldn’t help but feel like a giddy teenager at the thought of her and Oliver as a couple. The word only was enough to make her toes curl in her slippers. It was something she’d never thought she’d have, a relationship with her soulmate. But now she was going to have it and she felt just as immensely grateful as she felt deliriously happy.

And just like that, all her fears and worries from before faded away. It had scared her a few days ago how easy it was for her to get lost in her soulmate. But that night, when she went to bed, she didn’t really care anymore. He was her safe harbour during storms and she fell asleep with her hand on her soulmark and a content smile on her face to speak for all the progresses they had made, individually and together.

Felicity was finishing to apply the last touch to her make-up when she heard the knock on her door.

“It’s open!” She yelled from her bathroom, knowing it was Lyla on the other side. She had texted her twenty minutes ago to tell her she was on her way to her place.

“Felicity?” The brunette called and Felicity heard her close the door behind her.

“Coming!” She told her, putting her mascara back where it belonged and walking out of her bathroom.

“We really need to have a talk about safety measures,” Lyla said as a greeting. “Again,” she added and Felicity gave her a sheepish smile.

“Oh come on, I knew it was you.”

“Did you check through the peephole?”

“No, because I knew it was you,” she repeated stubbornly.

“It could have been literally anyone,” Lyla argued. She pinched the bridge of her nose and went on, looking just like a mother scolding her five-year-old. Felicity didn’t know if she should feel offended that she was the five-year-old in this situation or pleased to have Lyla’s maternal instinct directed at her. “Listen, I know you don’t like how all of this is affecting your life. I know you see me as an extravagance from Oliver. But the cold hard truth is I’m not and the danger is real. And when I say danger, I’m not talking about a danger to your physical integrity. I’m talking about a danger to your privacy and your emotions. Some people are willing to do anything to get a picture or a scoop. And I know this sounds utterly ridiculous to you because you’re not interested in those things in the slightest, but this is the world you live in now and you really, really need to be more careful.”

Felicity pursed her lips to prevent from pouting, crossing her arms over her chest. “Alright, alright,” she said.
“I’m not telling you this to upset you Felicity,” Lyla insisted. “I’m telling you this because we’re friends and I care about your well-being.”

The blonde nodded. “Yeah I know.”

Lyla nodded firmly, giving her a smile. “Are you ready to go? Thea, Oliver and Johnny are already at Tommy’s.”

“Yeah, sure. Let me grab my coat!”

They spent the drive talking about Thea’s birthday, Felicity telling Lyla what she’d gotten her. Thea had been eyeing a bracelet for a few weeks and Felicity had bought it for her. She had also helped Oliver with one of his presents for his sister. He had gotten her a new laptop, among other things, and Felicity had set it up with apps and programs she was sure Thea would enjoy. It hadn’t been much work, she could have done it with her eyes closed and one hand tied behind her back, but she had been happy to do it without feeling bad or panicking. She was making progress and she knew one tall blue-eyed guy with broad shoulders was no stranger to it.

“I just hope we can make this day a good one for Thea,” Felicity sighed as they parked in front of Tommy and Laurel’s townhouse. “I know she says it doesn’t matter that her parents aren’t there and that she doesn’t care, they’re still her parents and it has to hurt.”

Lyla sighed, getting out of the car. “I don’t know. As a mother, I can tell you that parents who can put through what Robert and Moira put Oliver and Thea through actually don’t deserve to be called parents.”

“I know,” Felicity agreed, clutching her bag closer to her.

“I was never close to the Queens, unlike Johnny who’s been Oliver’s bodyguard for years now. And in spite of that, there was always something with them… Something that made me uneasy.”

“Yeah, I know the feeling,” Felicity replied. The thread connecting them was shimming inside of her, now that she was getting closer to Oliver.

“My point being it can only do Thea some good to have that negativity out of her life. Especially if she’s surrounded with people who truly care about her.”

“You’re probably right.”

“You know I am.”

Felicity chuckled, sharing a knowing look with the older woman. She was glad it was her friend who was her bodyguard and not some laconic stranger.

The door to Tommy’s townhouse was opened far before Felicity and Lyla reached it. Oliver was casually leaning against the door frame, a small smile stretching his lips. Diggle was standing next to him, carrying his two-year-old son, who literally came to life once he saw his mother. He stretched his little arms toward her.

“Momma,” he called, in spite of the pacifier in his mouth.

Lyla’s smile widened and she sped up a little bit to take her baby boy in her arms, pecking her soulmate’s lip in the process. The sight of them tugged at something in Felicity’s chest and a pang of want hit her when she crossed Oliver’s eyes, which had been focusing on the family next to him. In a second, they agreed on something without even realising it.
One day they’d have that.

“Hey!” He whispered against her hair after she slipped in his opened arms, her cheek resting against his heartbeat.

“Hey,” she replied, sighing contentedly. In spite of their great connection, they weren’t one of these soulmates who couldn’t bear being separated from their other halves. That being said, Felicity couldn’t deny that everything felt better when they were together.

“My, my, aren’t they cute?” She heard Tommy’s voice say from behind Oliver.

There was a rustling noise then and he humphed, making Felicity smile against Oliver’s chest. Slowly, she disentangled herself from him, to see Laurel and Tommy standing in the hallway, the dark-haired men rubbing his ribs, a sheepish look on his face. Before anyone could say anything, Thea came running from the living-room.

“Felicity!” She shout, jumping in the blonde’s arms and hugging her so tightly Felicity doubted for a second that she wasn’t actually trying to strangle her.

“Hey! Happy birthday you!” Felicity replied, hugging her back just as tightly once she had recovered from her initial shock.

“Thank you!” Thea said, squeezing her once again before pulling away. “Where’s my present?” She asked, seeing that Felicity was empty-handed.

“Thea,” Oliver warned her.

“I’m just kidding.” But then she leaned down and whispered to Felicity. “Where is it?”

“Oliver’s got it,” Felicity explained, making a smile blossom on Thea’s lips.

“Alright,” she said, turning around to hug Lyla. Felicity smiled to herself. Thea really looked happy and she felt relieved at the sight.

She moved inside the hallway to say hello to both Tommy and Laurel before turning around and greeting Diggle and DJ. The little boy, who was much shier than JJ, rubbed his cheek against his father’s collarbone, as if he wanted to hide his face from Felicity.

“Hi there,” she said, her voice softer. “You remember me DJ?” She asked, her hand coming up to tickle his stomach in a soothing gesture.

He nodded, his pacifier still in his mouth and waved his little chubby hand at her.

“Aren’t you the cutest little boy?” Felicity said, smiling brightly.

“My godson’s the best,” Oliver agreed.

“Don’t say that in front of JJ,” Tommy teased her. “It’d kill him.”

She rolled her eyes at him before blowing a kiss at DJ and he raised up his hand to catch it. She immediately turned toward Oliver, a bright smile on her lips. He just kissed her forehead, the arm he had wrapped around her squeezing her shoulder in understanding. Barry, Iris and JJ arrived shortly after. For a moment, everything was confused, as they were all standing in the hallway, hugging and exchanging greetings between wholeheartedly claimed birthday wishes. But soon, they were all in the living-room, admiring how beautifully Tommy and Oliver had decorated the table for Thea’s
“Well honey, I have to say I didn’t know you had such great tastes,” Laurel teased them. “You were right to keep me out of all the planning.”

Both Tommy and Oliver grinned proudly at her words until Thea stepped in.

“Excuse me? I’m the one with the great tastes, this was all my idea.”

“Yeah,” her brother nodded. “We have to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.”

“We made this all happen, but it was Thea’s idea,” Tommy concluded, wrapping one warm around Thea’s shoulders and pulling her in for a hug.

Felicity could feel Oliver’s love for his sister, all vibrant and warm, blossom inside of her, flooding her veins and feeding her own affection for the brunette. She knew there was nothing Oliver wouldn’t do for his sister, to make sure she was well and happy. His devotion to Thea was one of the many reasons why she loved him and her heart clenched in her chest at the thought.

He moved to put the different dishes he and Tommy had ordered from Thea’s favourite caterer on the table while everyone picked a seat.

“Felicity, would you help me bring the coats in one of the spare rooms?” Laurel asked, pointing at all their coats on the couch.

“Sure,” she nodded, coming up to help her.

Once they were done with their task, Laurel turned toward Felicity and she looked like she didn’t want to go back just yet. Felicity was brought back to her last conversation with Sara, when she had shared her suspicions about their parents. Had Sara told something to Laurel? She hadn’t looked like she wanted to but maybe Felicity had been mistaken…

“I didn’t get the chance to ask you how you’ve been,” Laurel said.

Felicity frowned, taken aback by her question. “I’m good,” she replied. “Never been more popular!” She added, trying to make fun of her situation.

“Don’t worry, this won’t last. The moment they realise you and Oliver are just another boring couple of soulmates, they’ll let go of you.”

“Hey!” Felicity protested. “We aren’t boring!”

A small smile appeared on Laurel’s lips. “I know, I just meant once they realise the two of you are nothing but normal, doing normal stuff, they’ll let go of you. That’s what happened for me and Tommy. They need drama and if you don’t give them any, you should be fine.”

Felicity nodded, appreciating her attempt at comforting her. It struck her now that she had more in common with Laurel than she had thought. The two of them were just normal women bonded to heirs of billions worth empires. As if she’d been following her train of thoughts, Laurel added.

“And if you ever need to talk to someone, you should know I’m just one phone-call away.”

“I have Oliver to talk to but it’s not like…”

“Talking to another woman. I know. There’s nothing more precious than the connection between two soulmates but we shouldn’t forget that we are more than our soulmate. Our interactions don’t
have to be limited to them.”

Felicity nodded. She stared at Laurel for a second, weighing the pros and cons of the decision she was about to make. She had been closer to Sara from the start but she could see she was reaching some kind of understanding with Laurel.

“Did Sara talk to you-?” She eventually asked.

“About our parents potentially dating?” Laurel nodded. “Yes, she did.”

Felicity pinched her lips together, gauging Laurel’s reaction. Unlike Sara, she didn’t look tense or upset.

“How do you feel about it? I could feel Sara wasn’t happy with it.”

Laurel chuckled dryly. “She wasn’t, but don’t take it personally. It has nothing to do with your mother.”

“Then, what is it about?”

Laurel sighed, creases appearing on her forehead. “As you certainly know, our mother died a bit more than a year ago and I think Sara thought it’d take our father more time to find someone again.”

“Oh. I see.”

“She thinks he’s forgetting about her too quickly, too easily.”

Felicity’s shoulders went limp. “What do you think Laurel?”

“I think-” Her voice faltered a bit. “You know how we keep praising the healing touch of a soulmate?”

“Yeah, I can tell from experience it’s not overrated.”

“And I can tell from experience it’s not the only thing that heals souls and eases minds. The simple fact of being loved by someone, soulmate or not, helps getting better. If being with your mother helps my father getting better then I’m fine with it,” Laurel concluded.

Felicity let out a relieved breath she hadn’t known she’d been holding. “That’s how I feel too,” she confessed. “I just want my mom to be happy.”

“The feeling’s mutual. I’ll try to speak with Sara,” Laurel promised.

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. Maybe we should get back, before they start wondering what we’re up to.”

Felicity nodded and they walked back to the living-room. Felicity sat down next to Oliver and he reached for her hand, squeezing it tightly. She smiled at him before focusing back on the conversation they had started while she had been away.

“So, have you set up a date for the wedding?” Thea asked Tommy.

He exchanged a look with Laurel, reaching for her hand. Silence fell upon the table, Thea’s question having caught everyone’s attention.
Tommy cleared his throat. “It’s good you’re mentioning it because we have,” he said, his cheeks blushing and Felicity’s jaw almost dropped when she realised he was nervous. Tommy Confident Merlyn was nervous.

“Really? Why haven’t I been informed?” Oliver said. “As your future best man, it’s the kind of things I’d like to know about.”

“Who says you’re going to be my best man?” Tommy teased and Oliver rolled his eyes at him.

“As if you had anyone else to ask-”

“That doesn’t answer my question,” Thea interrupted them, forcing Tommy to focus back on her.

“March 25th,” Laurel told her.

Felicity choked on her mimosa. “Of 2017? Or 2018?” She asked, while Oliver rubbed her back.

“2017,” Laurel said.

That was 2 months and 4 days away. And apparently, Felicity hadn’t been the one to do the math quickly since Iris said.

“Why so soon?”

Again, Tommy and Laurel exchanged a look and Felicity was impressed by their ability to communicate without actually using words. It wasn’t the first time she was witnessing it of course and they weren’t the only soulmates she had seen acting like that – her first five minutes around Lyla and Diggle had left her longing for her soulmate back when she was still on the Med – but it amazed her nonetheless. She wondered for a second if Oliver and she were like that sometimes but couldn’t linger on the thought since Laurel was opening her mouth again.

“We didn’t want to tell you today guys because this is supposed to be Thea’s day but, hm… We’re…”

“We’re expecting,” Tommy blurted out. “And I want us to be married before the baby is born.”

“And I want us to be married while I can still see my feet. So March 25th it is.”

A shocked silent followed her statement before the room exploded in cheers and congratulations. Everyone got up to embrace the happy couple, JJ and DJ squealing in happiness though they didn’t really understand why everyone was suddenly so loud and so happy. Oliver hugged Tommy for the longest while.

“Man, I’m so happy for you,” he whispered and Felicity had to swipe back a tear or two at the sight of them.

“This is amazing,” she told Laurel. “How far along are you?”

“Around eight weeks,” she replied. “It’s a bit early to tell people but we decided to make an exception for our closest family and friends.”

“You guys just handed me the best presents ever,” Thea said then. “A wedding to plan quickly and the prospect of a baby to spoil!”

“Does that mean we can take back your other presents?” Felicity teased her.
Thea chuckled. “No, I’ll keep them.”

Felicity burst out laughing, turning around to hug Tommy, who had finally been released by Oliver. After that and since they were already up, they decided to get to the part where they all sang happy birthday to Thea and she opened her presents under their eyes, tears filling her own blue ones as she read the birthday cards attached to the presents.

“You idiots, you’re making me cry,” she complained until her brother came from behind and hugged her tightly. “Thank you Ollie,” she whispered gripping his forearm, her painted nails clutching at his muscles.

“You’re welcome,” he replied, kissing her forehead.

As the hours passed, the number of people present declined until it was just Oliver, Felicity and Thea with Tommy, Laurel having left them to rush to her office to take care of an emergency. Even Lyla and Diggle had gone, Felicity insisting she’d be fine driving back home and then going to Oliver’s apartment. Oliver hadn’t liked it but she had insisted. The Diggles needed some time off. Eventually, the girls left around four. Thea’s party started at eight and they didn’t need that much time to get Thea ready but it wasn’t just her who had plans for the night. Felicity had a date to get ready for meaning that she’d need to get her hair and makeup done after she was finished with Thea’s. They drove back to Felicity’s apartment, where Sara was supposed to meet them. She arrived shortly after Felicity and Thea. She had promised to come by to give Thea her present and a hug. She had also brought some coffee from her coffee shop and the three young women sat down on Felicity’s couch, sipping on their drinks and exchanging news.

“So Felicity,” Thea said, putting her cup of coffee back on the table. “What are you going to wear tonight?”

“She’s coming to your party?” Sara asked, frowning.

Thea shook her head “no”. “My brother asked her on a date.”

“Oh!” Sara said, setting her cup of coffee back on the table too. “I still can’t believe he’s your soulmate. I mean, I can believe he is. I have perfectly functioning eyes and I’ve seen the two of you together but I can’t believe you didn’t tell us.”

Her tone wasn’t reproachful but Felicity wasn’t an idiot and she knew the way all her closed ones had learnt about Oliver and her wasn’t ideal. It was yet another thing she’d have Moira and Robert to thank for.

“I’m sorry. We just wanted some time to figure out things before making an announcement.”

Sara nodded, reaching for her hand and squeezing it tightly. “It’s alright, I understand, I was just messing with you.”

Felicity gave her a small smile.

“So he asked you on a date?” Sara went on, going back to what Thea had previously mentioned.

“Yes. An indoor date since going out is out of question,” she explained.

“People are still crazy about the news of Oliver and Felicity’s relationship,” Thea added, shaking her head.

“Tell me about it! New customers are coming to the coffee-shop because, I quote: “This is where that
Smoak girl gets her coffee.”

Felicity groaned. “Really?”

“They probably want to pour steaming coffee on your head since you know, you’re supposed to be a greedy bitch and all that but it’s actually…”

“Good for your business,” Felicity completed, following her reasoning. “You got free advertising.”

“I wouldn’t say it’s free,” Sara corrected. “I’m just not the one paying the price,” she concluded, giving her a sad smile.

“At least something good is coming out of this mess,” Felicity offered, making Sara chuckle. “And I don’t need any help picking an outfit for tonight,” she told Thea. “I already did.”

“Really, what is it? I reserve the right to contest your choice,” she added very seriously.

“You remember my black skirt? The flared one? I wanted to wear it with the cute cashmere pull-over we bought before Christmas.”

Thea’s shoulders went limp. “You can’t wear that,” she stated. “You’re going on a date not at work.”

“But-” Felicity started to protest.

“No, no buts. This is your first date with your soulmate, it’s important. Everything needs to be perfect, including your outfit. A first date with your soulmate is something major, if things go your way, it’ll be your last first date and-” Her voice gave out and Felicity frowned, concern flooding her veins.

“Thea?” She said her name tentatively, reaching for her hand.

“It’s important Felicity,” she repeated, a stubborn look on her face. “Everything must be perfect.”

“Thea, is something wrong?”

The brunette shook her head, her shoulders falling slightly.

“Nothing’s wrong, I’m just-” She paused for a second and took a shaky breath. “I met him.” She confessed.

“Met who?”

“My soulmate.”

Felicity’s eyes widened and Sara gasped.

“What?” They both said in unison.

“When?”

“How?”

Thea shrugged. “A couple days ago. There is this girl, she lives in The Glades but she has been given a scholarship to come study in my school. She was sick and no one wanted to bring her their notes and her homework because of where lives. I volunteered and I was on my way back when I
felt it.”

“You felt what?” Sara asked.

“The burn and the pulse of my soulmark. The street was kind of busy but I spotted him immediately because he was still and staring at me and—” She shrugged. “I just knew it was him. I didn’t really see his face because he was wearing a hoodie but- I could tell he looked handsome.”

“What happened? Did you talk to him?” Felicity tightened her grip around Thea’s hand.

“I couldn’t. He ran away. One second I was looking at him and the other he was a blur of red running away from me.”

The pain in Thea’s voice was obvious and made Felicity’s heart clench in her chest. She felt a wave of sympathy rise inside of her and she spotted the exact moment Oliver felt it, his confusion making the tips of her fingers tingle.

“Obviously, I won’t be going on a first date with my soulmate anytime soon. Or ever actually. I can’t make things well for us but I can make them for you and Ollie so please Felicity let me…”

Felicity opened her mouth not knowing what to say. It was obvious Thea wasn’t as okay as she had let anyone believe she was. All of the sudden, the blonde didn’t feel like going on her date or letting Thea attend her party. How could she enjoy herself when she knew her friend was hurting?

“I didn’t tell you this to make you feel bad Felicity,” Thea said and Felicity smiled a little bit. She had forgotten how good her friend was at reading her. “I know what to expect when it comes to my soulmate now and it’s nothing. Him not having a SID’s account was my first clue and this is just the final straw. He doesn’t want to be with me, I get it and I have to respect his decision. It’s time for me to let go and a party is just what I need. There is this guy in my history class who has been asking me out for a while, maybe I’ll say yes the next time I see him.”

Felicity bit on her lip, not liking how resolute she sounded, the look of resignation on her face twisting her insides. But in the meantime, there were creases of stubbornness on her forehead, a look she had learnt to recognise on Oliver and she knew nothing she’d tell Thea that night would reach her. She’d have to talk to her again later.

They moved to Felicity’s bedroom and after Sara and Thea had made her try her fifth outfit in a row, deeming it just as unacceptable as the four previous ones, she started feeling nervous. When Oliver had kissed her goodbye earlier and whispered “see you later” in the shell of her ear she hadn’t been nervous. Butterflies had blossomed in her stomach and she had felt warmth spread inside her body making her look forward to their date. She hadn’t been nervous in the slightest. But now, she was and Thea and Sara had been the ones to make her. Her date with Oliver hadn’t been that much of a big deal to her before, not because hadn’t cared but because it was Oliver. In her mind, she was going to eat dinner with Oliver, like she had countless times before. The context was different, obviously, but things would be the same. She knew she could rely on the comfortable familiarity that existed between them to guide her through the night. But now, Sara and Thea had put a lot of pressure on her and she didn’t feel like she was going to a date with the man she loved anymore but as if she was going to a state dinner at the White House.

And because of that, she eventually snapped.

“Just so we are clear guys,” she said through the bathroom door. “If you’re not happy with this dress, I’ll wear ripped jeans and the ugliest sweater I own. Also, we’re running out of time so Thea, get ready to shower.”
She heard them gasp but ignored them and stepped inside the living-room. Sara and Thea exchanged a look before raising their thumbs up.

“Good, the dress is good!” Thea approved.

“Perfect, now shower!” Felicity ordered, pointing at the bathroom’s door behind her.

Thea bolted at her commanding tone, making Sara chuckle under her breath. They moved back to Felicity’s bedroom and the blonde dropped her duffle bag on her bed, starting to fill it with the stuff she’d need to spend the night at Oliver’s.

“What are you doing?” Sara asked, her eyebrows asked.

“Packing for the night?” Felicity replied, suddenly feeling unsure.

“You’re spending the night?”

She nodded, her ponytail bouncing on her shoulders.

“Oh.” Sara said, her shoulders dropping.

Felicity felt her nervousness come back again.

“What?” She asked, crossing her arms over her chest.

“I don’t know… Are you comfortable with that?”

“Why wouldn’t I be?”

“Well…” Sara paused, looking for the right words. “Romantic dinner, wine, an empty apartment, it doesn’t set the tone for a platonic evening.”

Felicity’s eyes widened. “Oh.”

“Yeah, that’s what I said.”

Felicity felt herself blush, and her eyebrows furrowed as she babbled. “You don’t think that he thinks we’re going to…” She bit on her tongue, not really wanting to talk about that part of her relationship with Oliver. “You know,” she finished, giving her a knowing look.

“I’m not the one with a full access to his emotions so what do you think?” Sara shot back.

“I – I-” Felicity stammered. “To be honest, the thought hadn’t crossed my mind before you mentioned it. We’re nowhere near close jumping into bed!”

“Does he know that?”

Felicity frowned. “Of course, he does! We agreed to take things slow.”

“Then alright, you’re just going to *platonic*ly sleep with your soulmate!”

“Exactly!” Felicity was quick to confirm, her confidence wavering inside of her nonetheless. Oliver was older than her and was more experienced than her when it came to relationships. Maybe they didn’t have the same idea of taking things slowly, maybe he was expecting more from her than she could give… If he did their date would get awkward before it even started.
“What are you guys talking about?” Thea asked, wrapped up in a towel, water running from her hair down her neck.

“Felicity sleeping with your brother.”

Thea immediately shut her eyes, scrunching her face. “Gross! Please keep me out of this. And no funny business in the common area, which includes the living-room and the kitchen.”

“Platonically sleeping,” Felicity corrected. “Platonically.”

Then, she rolled her eyes, mumbling under her breath that it was the last time she got ready for a date with her friends. Her fluttering butterflies had been replaced by some kind of spider which was twisting her insides in worry with its eight ugly and hairy legs. Her nervousness reached new heights when she sat behind her wheel to drive to Oliver’s apartment. It wasn’t helping that he was feeling nervous too and it was adding salt to her already raw nerves.

Her heart was beating harder than it ever had before and she felt as if she was going to throw up. She knocked on the door, stamping her foot on the floor. Oliver opened the door and she blinked taking him all in. He was wearing dark jeans which hung low on his hips and a crisp white shirt to which he had rolled up the sleeves and left the top buttons opened. It did nothing to hide how well-built his body was. She swallowed, hard, her cheeks heating up a little bit. His sandy brown hair was slightly messy on top of his head and his piercing blue eyes shone in the dim light of the hallway behind him. Her heart, which had been about to leap out of her chest, froze in her chest.

“You look beautiful,” he whispered in a breath, flashing her one of his stupidly charming smiles that shown his dimples.

Her heart started beating again in her chest with a vengeance when she felt his own appreciation of her appearance fill her veins. She opened her mouth to say something but no words came out. Their very first official date was about to start and he was right in front of her, looking devastatingly handsome, telling her the most beautiful things and staring at her with an intensity she hadn’t seen solely focused on her in a while. He took her in, from her golden heels that made her legs look longer according to Thea, to the short red dress she was wearing that fitted the curves of her waist perfectly. He took her all in, his eyes widening at the sight of her blonde locks falling on her shoulders, soft and untamed at the same time. She gulped, Sara and her stupid comments about their platonic evening echoing in her ears. There was nothing platonic about his eyes on her just like there was nothing platonic in the way she clenched her fingers around her small handbag.

“Felicity?” He called after she remained silent for a very long time.

She shook her head, trying to get herself out of her lustful thoughts. Yes, her soulmate was hot and his eyes on her made her hot but it was no reason to stare at him with a stupid blank expression, her mouth agape. She wasn’t a goldfish for god’s sake!

“Yes?” She replied, her high-pitched tone making her cringe.

“You look beautiful,” he repeated his voice soft and caressing and he really needed to stop using it to tell her such things if he wanted her to stay solid and not turn into a puddle of goo at his feet.

“Uh… Thanks?”

He stepped toward her, cupping her shoulders. “You drove me crazy for the past hours Felicity. You were so worried and nervous and I can’t understand why, you have no reasons to be. You’re…” He let out a shaky breath, his eyes scanning her face and she blinked, the emotions in his eyes too much
for her to take. “You’re perfect!”

She huffed back a nervous laugh. “You’re killing me here,” she whispered.

“Good,” he replied, leaning down to kiss her. He pressed his lips against her in one of those sweet kisses that made her feel safe and loved. He pulled back, a content smile on his lips. She tried to match it with one of her own but she was still feeling nervous and his hands around her shoulders weren’t helping, her clothes doing nothing to prevent his warmth from seeping to her.

“Now can you please relax a little bit? Wait,” he took a step back, “am I being crazy? I mean, what do we have to be nervous about? We have nothing to be nervous about, right?” He stammered, his confidence faltering all of a sudden.

“Did you ask me to stay over because you thought we’d be having sex tonight?” She blurted out before she could chicken out and say nothing.

He choked on his next breath and stumbled back, letting go of her shoulders. “What?” His face turning bright red.

“You heard me perfectly,” she shot back, feeling her cheeks redden too.

“Yes, right, hm…” He cleared his throat, one of his hands coming up to scratch the back of his head. “Well, hm, I don’t want to have sex with you.” Her eyes widened. “I mean, I want to.” She arched an eyebrow. “Oh frack, there’s no right way for me to say this, is there?” She shook her head and he took a deep breath. “Okay.” He stepped toward her again and reached for her hand. “I didn’t ask you to stay over because I thought we’d be having sex. I asked you to stay over because I want to sleep with you. And yes I do mean that platonically. It’s not like we haven’t done it before, right?”

She let out a huffed laugh. “Yeah, true,” she added, her voice shaking slightly.

“I know we’re not ready to take that step and it’s okay. I thought I had made that clear when we decided to take things slow,” he added, tilting his head to meet her eyes when she looked away.

She sighed, leaning forward until her forehead collided with his chest. “I know, I’m just being stupid,” she whispered in his shirt, the scent of his cologne tickling her nostrils and making her head spin.

“That doesn’t sound much like you,” he replied, little puffs of air tangling her hair.

“It’s just something Sara said to me, I let it go out of my control and… I’m sorry. I hope I didn’t ruin everything.” She added, looking up to meet his eyes, her chin resting above his heart.

He bent his head and kissed the tip of her nose lightly, and she had to hold back a squeal of delight.

“Nothing’s been ruined,” he assured her. “Now, shall we go?” He added, offering her his arm, which she gladly took.

“Yes, we shall,” she agreed, letting him lead her inside his apartment.

The first thing that hit her was how good it smelt inside of the living-room. She didn’t know what Oliver had cooked but she could already tell it was going to taste delicious. The second thing that hit her actually made her heart stop in her chest. He had moved the couch and his coffee table in a corner and set up a tent in the middle of his living room. He had wrapped electric garlands around the tent’s pillar creating an intimate atmosphere and put a fluffy carpet on the floor so they’d be comfortable sitting down. There was a small table under the tent with a bouquet of pink daisies and
candles lying on it.

Felicity turned around, a lump of emotions forming in her throat.

“Do you like it?” Oliver asked, bending to retrieve the bouquet of flowers.

“If I…” She was at a loss for words for a second. “This is amazing Oliver,” she said, disappointed that she couldn’t find words strong enough to convey how she really felt. And she couldn’t really count on their bond to let him know since it was hard, even for her, to tell her emotions from his through their connection, the intimate moment they were about to share intertwining them more than they already are.

“I wanted to make this dinner special, different from all the ones we’ve already had here,” he explained. “So, we’re going to eat Italian, no one can go wrong with Italian food, and have an indoor picnic! Oh and these are for you,” he added, handing her the bouquet of flowers he was still holding.

“Thank you,” she whispered, leaning down to breathe the flower’s perfume in.

The oven made a sound and Oliver excused himself to go check it.

“So, Italian,” Felicity said, following him to the kitchen to put her flowers in a vase.

“Yep,” he confirmed, getting whatever had been cooking out of the oven. “I know how much you love pizzas. These are home-made.” Her heart leaped in her throat when she saw he had made several small pizzas with all their favourite toppings. “I even made that disgusting thing you like, with chicken and pine-apple,” he told her, as if he had been reading her mind.

“My hero,” she replied, cupping his cheeks to bring his lips to hers. “I have to say you’re very good at this dinner date thing Mr Queen.”

“Wait until you see what’s for dessert,” he teased her.

“What’s for dessert?” She asked, tilting her head.

“Patience Ms Smoak, patience,” he chastised her, pecking her lips once before stepping away from her.

He poured them a glass of wine, Italian and red and they clinked their glasses to them, their relationship. She helped him move the plates with their food and the wine to the tent and they settled comfortably around the small table. They talked while they ate and Felicity feared for a second that maybe they wouldn’t know what to say, after all they had exhausted the topics one would normally talk about on a first date. And a second date. And a third date. And every date actually, they’d already kissed and slept together, platonically yes, but it still mattered. In the end, it turned out her fears were completely unwarranted and the conversation flew smoothly between them all night long.

She realized that night, she’d always have something to tell him.

That soulmate thing was really great.

For dessert, Oliver brought them a chocolate cake and after the first bite, Felicity’s eyes widened. She looked up to see him watching her, gauging her reaction.

“Oh my god! Is that…?”

“A chocolate cake from Sara’s place? Yes, it is. I went to buy it this afternoon. You ate a slice the
day…”

“… We met, I remember.” She felt her cheeks flush, touched by the gesture beyond words. Love made her heart swell in her chest and she knew he could feel it, through their connection.

“I remember everything about that day,” he confessed, taking a bite of chocolate cake. “It’s funny because it’s one of those days where, you know, you don’t think anything special happened but when you look back upon it, you realize it was everything.”

She nodded, understanding what he meant. “So…” She said, stretching the word longer than necessary. “You remember everything about that day, uh?”

He let out a huffed laugh. “Yes, everything. From your drowned cat look to the clothes you were wearing.”

“Oh my god, don’t remind me of that,” she groaned, burying her face in her hands.

He chuckled, shaking his head.

“What’s so funny?” She asked, his amusement spreading inside of her.

“I can’t believe you showed me your bra that day!”

“Hey!” She said, raising her fingers. “I didn’t show you anything, you were the weirdo staring at my boobs!”

“I was sitting down and they were in my field of vision,” he shamelessly defended himself and she slapped his arm playfully. He caught her fingers and didn’t let them go. “And it really was a nice bra. A red one,” he added, pointing at her dress.

“My god,” she sighed. “I can’t believe you remember that.”

“Well, it’s kind of hard to forget. Who wears a red bra under a white top anyway?”

“I was moving out and my clothes’ choices were limited,” she deadpanned. “I didn’t really think that outfit through. And how was I supposed to know rain was going to pour?”

He kissed the tips of her fingers, a smile stretching his lips. “You don’t have to feel embarrassed,” he assured her. “It was a great first meeting. One I thoroughly enjoyed. A day I will cherished the memory of for the rest of my life.” He was looking at her with those intense blue eyes of his, making her skin tingle in pleasure.

“You always know what to say, don’t you?”

“It’s a talent,” he replied, winking at her and she bit on her lips to prevent her next words to fall from her lips.

God, I love you.

And she did.

Love him.

She loved him more than she’d ever thought possible. She loved him for everything he was, for everything she knew he could be. She loved him for how he made her feel, she loved him for who he made her be. She loved him, with all her heart but just like she knew they weren’t ready to dive
headfirst in the physicality of their relationship, she knew they weren’t ready to completely open their hearts to one another.

Things still needed to be fixed, relationships still needed to be mended.

They were a work in progress.

“Felicity?”

His voice got her out of her thoughts.

“Yes?”

“Are you alright? For a moment I felt you weren’t quite there with me.”

“I’m sorry, I got lost in my thoughts…”

“That’s okay. What were you thinking about?”

She cupped his cheek with her hand, and let her thumb run up and down his bearded skin.

*How much I love you* she thought.

“How much you mean to me,” she said. “This first date is perfect Oliver. You made it perfect,” she added, boring her eyes in his.

He shook his head, kissing the inside of her hand that was still cupping his cheek. “I’m only fifty percent of this,” he told her, gesturing at the space between them. “The rest, it’s all you.”

“But I didn’t do anything,” she argued.

“You know, we keep talking about how different and changed I am but we don’t talk about how changed you are. You’re different Felicity. You used to be suspicious of people and closed off and very, very independent. Now you’ve let people in and look where we are! Right where we belong.”

“It’s all because of you,” she whispered. “You showed me how. You guided me home,” she added, knowing she would have never found her way to Starling if it wasn’t for the pull she had felt toward the city, toward him.

“But ultimately, it was your choice to stay.”

She gripped the fabric of his shirt with her free hand, her nails scratching the firm skin underneath. She leaned forward and he met her half-way, their lips colliding for a searing kiss. Lips opened to eagers tongues soon enough and she let out a deep moan when she felt not only his tongue slip inside her mouth but also what he felt for her seep inside her heart. It was warm and vibrant and bright and pure and she knew it had to be love. They weren’t ready for words of love or actions of love but they were ready to feel love and so she poured everything she had in their kiss. Her hand on his cheek moved to cup the back of his neck, bringing his face impossibly closer to hers, deepening the kiss. He groaned when she tenderly bit his lower lip, panting her name.

*Felicity.*

She clenched her thighs together, the way he had just said her name being everything. His own hands moved, one of them finding her waist, the other reaching for the one gripping his shirt. He brought it to his heart and she felt it beat erratically in his chest, every beat perfectly synchronised with hers.
They knocked the table when they tried to adjust their positions and Felicity pulled away, breathing harshly.

“Oliver, candles, candles!” She warned him, some having fallen dangerously when they’d hit the table.

“Damn it,” he cursed, letting go of her to blow the candles before they could set the table cloth on fire. Felicity watched him, trying to catch her breath and calm herself down.

“One catastrophe avoided,” he whispered under his breath, making her laugh.

He gave her a look, one that made her bite on her lip and he groaned, tearing his eyes away from her.

“What’s wrong Mr Queen? You don’t like what you’re seeing.”

He shook his head. “Au contraire. I think I like it too much.”

She chuckled at that and they decided to move the rest of their slices of cake to the kitchen table. They brought the conversation back to lighter topics while they ate, the both of them feeling the need to cool down a little bit.

“You tired?” Oliver asked after she yawned. It wasn’t even midnight yet.

“A little bit,” she admitted. “I didn’t sleep very well last night,” she confessed and he stiffened next to her.

“Nightmares?” He asked, his concern making creases form on his forehead.

“No, but… But I can feel them lurking,” she explained, pointing at her head.

His shoulders went limp. “It’s because of New-York, isn’t it?”

She nodded. “I’m trying not to think about it but it’s hard to stop once I’ve started.”

“I understand,” he said, reaching for her hand. “Can I ask you something?”

“Sure.”

“Would you have told me yesterday if I hadn’t called?”

She frowned, not really knowing what he expected from her. “I wasn’t going to bring up my psycho ex-boyfriend in front of your sister and our friend, that’s for sure.”

He shook his head. “I understand that but what about later? Would you have called me if I hadn’t?”

He paused. “I’m not accusing you of anything,” he told her. “It’s just that… I don’t know how to handle this. I don’t know if I was right to call you or if I should have waited for you to come to me. I was afraid you wouldn’t so…”

“You called.”

“You told me about this before we were together so I know you trust me with it but… Do you trust me enough yet to tell me when it’s coming back to haunt you?”

“It’s not a matter of trust Oliver,” she said, looking away from him, unable to bear the intensity of his gaze. She hated that he had brought this up, her mind was spiralling back, filled with thoughts she had tried to shove away so they wouldn’t darken Thea’s day or their night together. “I just- it’s hard
for me to talk about this."

“\text{I know. I just want to know what to do when you’re not okay because of it.}”

“\text{You did right yesterday. I’m glad you called.}”

He squeezed her hand.

“How do you really feel about New-York?” He asked her, his thumb drawing circles on the inside of her hand.

She paused, scanning her emotions, trying to come up with the best answer.

“If I tell you not to think about elephants, what are you going to be thinking about?”

“\text{Elephants,}” he replied immediately.

“\text{Same thing is happening with me. I’m afraid going to New-York will bring back memories and trigger nightmares and panic attacks. But it’s starting now because…}”

“\text{You’re thinking about it.}”

She nodded.

“\text{Maybe we should give you something else to think about,}” he whispered, tightening his hold on her hand.

“\text{Like what?}” She asked, her eyes meeting his slightly darker ones.

“I don’t know,” he admitted, though she was pretty sure he was lying. “I just want to get it all out of your head,” he confessed, intertwining her fingers with his.

“I’m not sure that’s possible,” she replied, amazed by the stark contrast between her small hand and his huge one. She’d rather focus on that than the memories that had been stirred ever since she had learnt about New-York.

“I beg to differ,” he said, moving from his seat next to her to stand right behind her. He pressed a soft kiss behind her ear before whispering. “How about we move to my bedroom? I may or may have not put one of your favourite movies in the DVD player.”

A shiver ran down her spine as she felt his hot breath against her skin.

“O-okay,” she stammered, letting him lead her to his bedroom.

When they arrived, he handed her the remote control and she started the movie, squealing in delight when she recognised the logo and the main theme of The Avengers. He drew the curtains of the bay window behind his bed, hiding the city’s lights from their view. Once he was down, he kicked off his shoes, Felicity had gotten rid of her heels a while ago, and laid down next to her.

Fifteen minutes in the movie, she found herself unhappy with the distance between them. She rolled on her side, wrapping herself around him. She hooked one of her legs over his and one of his hands fell on the bare skin of her knee, while the other wrapped around her shoulders, content to lay still and just hold her. She rested her head against his chest, the heat coming off his body enough to keep her warm. She let out a satisfied sigh, one that made him chuckle, his chest vibrating under the tips of her fingers.
Loki had just been captured by the team of super-heroes when Oliver’s hands on her knee started moving. It was subtle at first, small circles drawn on the back of her knee, where she was ticklish. She jerked in his arms, giggling and he chuckled, his movements not faltering.

“You might want to stop that,” she warned him, her throat tightening.

“I don’t think so,” he teased her, tickling her some more.

She jerked. “O-li-ver,” she gasped, trying to free herself from his grasp.

“How ticklish are you?” He whispered, shifting slightly so that he could reach her ribs.

“Don’t,” she forbid.

Something bright and mischievous shone in his eyes and he started tickling her mercilessly. She tried to fight him off but he was too strong for her and he soon had her pinned to the bed. His hands tackled her sides, then her arms, then her sides again, and her legs and her foot. He didn’t stop, even after tears dampen the corner of her eyes, smudging her mascara, her glasses completely askew.

“Oliver please,” she begged, her ribs hurting because she had been laughing too much.

“Please what?” He asked, teasing the back of her knees with his wicked fingers.

She laughed, her hands coming up to grip his forearms. “Please, stop,” she whispered, having completely forgotten about the movie going on, the nightmares she had been scared of before completely gone from her mind.

He let go of her knees and leaned back on his heels, his strong thighs bracketing hers. Her next breath got caught in her throat as his intense blue eyes focused on her, taking her dishevelled hair and flushed cheeks in. Something twisted inside of her belly and she crooked her index finger, motioning for him to come closer to her.

“Come here,” she said and he indulged her, falling on top of her, supporting most of his weight on his arms on each side of her head.

“Hi,” he whispered, his breath ghosting over her lips.

She gulped. “Hi,” she replied, her voice throatier than it had been five seconds ago. She moved her hands to his sides, slipping them underneath his shirt easily since he had gotten the hem out of his pants at some point during the evening. He hissed and she smiled, scratching her nails against his hot skin experimentally. Her smile widened when she felt goose bumps break on his skin.

“You might want to stop that,” he warned her, his voice huskier.

“I don’t think so,” she replied teasingly, her hands pursuing their exploration of his body and traveling to his back. She frowned when she encountered a rough patch of puckered skin on the otherwise smooth expanse of his back.

“What’s that?” She asked, following the path of rough skin with the tips of index fingers.

“Felicity stop,” he asked through gritted teeth and she was surprised when his emotions shifted from playful and aroused to hurt.

She shook her head stubbornly, and moved her hands back to his front, to the buttons of his shirt, which she started to undo. Her heart was in her throat as doubts assaulted her.
It couldn’t be…

“Felicity.”

He tried to prevent her from opening his shirt but she yanked his hands off of hers. She took his short off when she was done unbuttoning it. She didn’t marvel over the beauty of his body. She didn’t even really register it. She just sat down, forcing him to sit back down on his heels. She shifted a bit to get a look at his back, ignoring his closed eyes and clenched fists. She pinched her lips together when she saw it. The scar.

It was a light pink and six inches long, following the curve of his spine. The cut was clean, *surgical.*

She didn’t have to ask him what it was. She knew.

She traced it with her fingers, the proof that she had almost lost him to death once, long before he had almost lost her to death too. She followed the line, the scar tissue, a reminder of the day she had given up on them.

Her head fell on his collarbone and she pressed a soft kiss to the hot skin there.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered, a lump forming in her throat.

“I don’t want you to feel sorry,” he replied, his voice strained.

“God, I can’t imagine the pain you’ve been through,” she cried, snuggling her face in the crook of his neck.

“You’ve been through a lot too,” he reminded her.

“But you were hurt because of me!”

“Felicity,” he said, cupping her cheeks to make her look at him. “I don’t blame you. How could you have known I was driving? How could you have guessed I’d lose control of my car?”

“I…”

“You couldn’t and you know it,” he said, kissing her forehead tenderly, his thumbs wiping away the few tears that had fallen from her eyes. “It doesn’t matter anymore. I’m alright, you’re alright and we’re together.”

She swallowed hard, focusing on the feeling of his lips on her forehead.

“I’m still sorry!”

“There’s nothing to be sorry about,” he assured her and she bit on her lower lip, holding back a protest.

He leaned toward her and freed her lower lip with his own, suckling it into his mouth. He pulled away after that and she keened, chasing his lips with hers. When she caught them, he pressed her lips more firmly against his deepening the kiss. He groaned, his hands traveling down to her waist and bringing her in his lap. She gasped when she felt him press against her, their clothes doing very little to hide his growing arousal. Her desire to make up for all the years they had spent apart was burning her from the inside and so she brought herself impossibly closer to him, needing to fill the gap between them. He hissed, his breathing having turned into harsh pants, and she took the opportunity to slip her tongue inside his mouth, stroking boldly against his. Their new position had
brought the hem of her dress higher on her thighs, exposing inches of smooth skin to his hungry hands. They fell on her, his fingers drawing maddening circles, igniting a fire in her veins. She felt her blood boil and heat pooled low in her belly.

It was over all too soon when he pulled away from her.

“Felicity,” he panted.

“Oliver,” she panted back, her eyes meeting his eyes and she shivered when she saw almost all the blue was gone.

“We said no,” he reminded her and she could see him struggle to get his body back under his control.

“But kissing is okay,” she replied.

He studied her expression for a second and she waited, holding her breath.

“I won’t stop until I’ve kissed every inch of your skin,” he told her and something tightened inside of her at his words. It wasn’t a statement. It was a promise.

“Okay,” she nodded, a smile stretching her lips.

“Okay,” he repeated, his hands coming up to take her glasses off of her nose. He carefully set them on the bedside table on his right and Felicity’s heart skip a beat at his gentleness.

“Kissing is great,” she mumbled as he was leaning against her again, his lips capturing hers. “Kissing is really, really great,” she repeated between kisses.

He pressed forward and they tumbled back on the bed, her on her back and him on top of her, most of his weight supported on his elbows. She caressed his neck before cupping his cheeks with her hands, deepening their kiss yet again.

For a moment it was just that. Their lips kissing. Two mouths moving against one another, performing a dance they were getting very familiar with. Until it was too much and they broke apart, fighting to find their breath again. Blue met blue when their eyes crossed and Felicity’s toes curled on the bed when she realised she was staring right into her soul. Oliver must have come to the same realisation because a smile brightened his face and he peppered her face with small kisses, making her giggle. He moved to one side of her jaw, dropping open-mouthed kisses against her skin, his stubble scratching her skin. She reached for his hair, pulling on the strands every time her pleasure spiked up. He travelled to her ear and he nibbled at the lobe, making her jerk against him. Then, he moved to the other side of her jaw, and to her ear again. He nibbled at the lobe and tugged at her industrial piercing, making her whole body shoot up from the bed.

“Oh,” she moaned, when his arousal pressed more firmly against her belly.

He went on with his discovery of her body and moved down the column of her throat, without stopping to kiss her. He really hadn’t been kidding when he had promised to kiss every inch of her. His fingers tangled in her blonde curls and she hooked her small legs in the hollow of his knees, pressing her feet against his jeans-clad calves. He wrapped his arms around her, forcing her to sit down and she choked in a breath.

“Oliver,” she whispered, her lust combined to his making it hard for her to form a coherent thought, let alone a full sentence.

His hands reached for the zipper of her dress but he didn’t touch it, didn’t lower it down.
“Okay?” He asked.

She sighed, her hands holding onto his naked waist, his skin scorching hot under her fingers. She realised she wanted to feel him against her, against her bare skin.

“Okay,” she agreed.

“Turn around,” he asked gently, nuzzling the side of her jaw and she frowned in confusion, fear filling her veins.

“What?” She asked, her voice shaking slightly.

“Please,” he added and she did as she had been told, her heart positively thrumming in her chest. He helped her sit on her knees and his hands caressed the skin of her arms, goose bumps breaking wherever he touched her, the light hairs on her forearms rising.

Slowly, very slowly, he lowered the zipper of her dress, kissing the newly exposed skin as he did so. He kissed her softly with his lips only, not nipping at her skin once, not using his tongue once. He kissed her tenderly and thoroughly, and she felt his love for her in her bones as he showed her what it meant to be treasured and cherished. Her toes curled and she twisted his comforter between her fingers, needing something to hold onto, to anchor her into the reality of this moment. He followed the line of her spine, nuzzling the hook of her bra out of his way when it crossed his path. For a second, she worried about her underwear, which she thought were in cotton and with polka dots on them but then he reached an area of her back she hadn’t known was so sensitive, just above her bottom and she arched her back in pleasure, a strangled sound escaping her lips. He moved back up again, travelling even up her neck until he met the roots of her hair, breathing her in, the intimacy of the gesture making her legs shake.

His hands cupped her shoulders and she helped him drag the straps down, taking the offending piece of garment out of his way. She wiggled out of them and he resumed his discovery of her back kissing what had been hidden from his lips by the red fabric. He helped her on her back again, leaving her in her bra, her dress stuck around her waist. For a second, he stayed away from her, just staring at her and she shivered, missing his close proximity and his warmth. His eyes travelled her body and with the tips of his fingers, he traced the scar he had kissed and learnt perfectly not so long ago. She felt his emotions shift again and she sat down, pressing a kiss on his heart, smiling when she felt the beat speed up from under his skin.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered against her hair.

“There’s nothing to be sorry about,” she assured him, placing her hands on his shoulders in a way that allowed her to pull him down with her. He followed her willingly and she moaned when she felt his bare skin on hers for the first time. True to his word, his started kissing her again, beginning with one of her shoulders and travelling to the other, paying extra attention to her collarbones, of which he seemed to be very fond of. She hadn’t known it was possible to be fond of collarbones before but he most definitely was. He moved down her body, pressing open-mouthed kisses against the valley of her breast, his hands brushing over her stiff nipples. She instinctively arched her body against his hands but he denied her the touch she craved, preferring to follow the path he had set himself on. He kissed her ribs, lingering on her scar, kissing it again and again, learning it all over again. It felt as if he was trying to leave a mark of his own on the ugly scar, as if he was trying to leave something to hold onto when the weight of the past would become too much for her to handle. Understanding that brought tears to her eyes and her hands flew to his head, keeping him there, encouraging him and thanking him at the same time. She lost herself in the sensation of his lips against her skin, of his raspy stubble scratching her surprising herself when she found it pleasurable and not painful.
Soon enough, he reached her dress and she felt his hands hesitate when he grabbed the fabric.

“You promised Oliver,” she panted.

And just like that his hesitation disappeared and he dragged her dress down her legs. He kissed both her legs, lingering on the back of her knees to tickle her and finishing with her toes, which she had painted a deep red before coming.

Red like the bra she had been wearing that day when they met.

Red like the dress he had taken off of her.

Red like her skin wherever he had touched her.

Red like the blood he had set on fire in her veins with his drugging kisses.

She was a writhing mess underneath him when he came back to her lips, and hungrily plunged his tongue inside of her mouth. Her hands roamed over his sides while his grabbed her thighs, rubbing tender circles against the ivory white skin there. More heat pooled between her legs and she arched her back toward him, seeking friction, seeking more.

“Oliver,” she panted, not knowing what she wanted to say but knowing she needed something from him. Something only he could give her. “Oliver,” she insisted when he didn’t react.

He didn’t reply to her. She knew he didn’t need more from her, he could read her emotions, he could feel the fire burning under her skin. He knew what she wanted, what she needed. He travelled down her body again and, always true to his words, dropped kissed on the inside of her thighs. She couldn’t help but stiffen, knowing this time he wouldn’t travel down but up.

“Felicity,” he called, saying her name as if it was encompassing a thousand words. “It’s just me,” he whispered, pressing a lingering kiss at the juncture of her thigh. Through their connection, which was buzzing louder than it ever had in the back of her mind, she felt his admiration for her, his love, his trust. She felt how much he cared about her, how much he wanted her. He poured everything in his kisses, the thread connecting them vibrating because it was almost too much and yet, it was everything they had been waiting for their whole life.

She relaxed entirely and she felt him smile against her skin. She was trembling, not in fear but anticipation, when he moved back up again, his lips finding hers just when his free hand slipped inside her panties. He was lying on his side, his right hand holding hers, his left very, very close to her centre. He kissed her sweetly, coaxing her into relaxing completely – she hadn’t realised she had tensed up again. Then, delicately, he parted her folds with his hand, touching her right there, in her core, his fingers gentle and exploratory. He was learning her with reverence, one so humble it pulled at something inside of her. His thumb found her bundle of nerves at her apex and she cried out loud when he circled it experimentally, her hand clamping on his right one so hard she left crescent marks on his tanned skin. His other fingers kept exploring her, spreading her wetness, making her feel hotter and hotter. His lips moved from her mouth and she breathed through her nose, air not reaching quite rightly. He nuzzled her head and she understood what he wanted and exposed her throat to him. The moment he dived a finger inside of her, he kissed her throat, catching the vibrations of her loud moan on his lips.

“Oh god,” she panted, earning a chuckle from Oliver. She arched into his hand, because she just felt so good and so hot and so perfect. “Oh god,” she repeated, her brain unable to come up with something else.
He withdrew his finger from her, making her whimper, and pressed his thumb to her clit, yanking strangled sounds, moans and pants from her. He kissed down her throat to her collarbone and she lost her mind, overwhelmed by all the things he was making her feel, which were very intimately intertwined with what he was feeling. Her pleasure melted in his, because yes, this wasn’t one-sided and he was enjoying himself almost as much as she was. He set up a rhythm with his finger inside of her and his thumb on her clit and when he felt she was ready, he added another finger, sparks of pleasure shooting behind her eyelids. She was very familiar with her body and she found it almost embarrassing how quickly he was mastering her body, how easily he had made her wetter than she had been. He was tearing sounds from her, making her feel things more intensely than she had herself. He was slowly building her up, steadily taking her to the edge with his wicked fingers, luscious lips and sinful tongue.

“Oliver,” she panted as she felt something coil deep inside of her. She ground up on his hand, needing more, craving more. “Oliver,” she repeated and he disentangled his hand from hers, moving to brush her still covered breast. She moaned, loudly, when he rolled one of her nipples between his fingers, the pleasure inside of her growing tighter. There was a hot burn building inside of her, her internal fire fuelled by Oliver’s white-hot desire for her. She grinned against his hand, seeking more and he adjusted his position, so that the palm of his hands could press against her clit. She yelped, the new sensation completely messing with her brain, the heat burning hotter inside her.

She didn’t really know what made her snap. Maybe it was when he pinched her nipples and she jerked against his hand in response. Or maybe it was when he found her ear again and tugged at her industrial piercing again, the sensation reverberating inside her whole body. One second she was burning, and the other, waves of pleasure were crashing through her, her inner walls clamping around his fingers inside her. Stars shone behind her eyelids. She heard herself scream Oliver’s name and he swallowed her moans and pants, kissing her hungrily. He helped ride the waves, his thumb pressing lightly over her abused bundle of nerves, until she couldn’t take it anymore and she yanked him off of her. He chuckled, his lips leaving hers to follow the line of her jaw.

It took her a few minutes to come back from her high, and even after she opened her eyes again, her limbs were still shaking. She wrapped her arms over Oliver’s neck.

“Come here,” she said, not liking that he was still far away from her, on his side. He resisted her and she wasn’t strong enough to force him up. “Oliver,” she sulked and he laughed, kissing her cheek tenderly. “Oliver please,” she insisted, pulling him toward her in spite of her shaking limbs. Finally, he let her and followed her until he landed on top of her, his very evident arousal laying between them in his jeans. “We still have you to take care of,” she whispered, bringing his lips to hers.

He came willingly this time, his lips meeting hers for a searing kiss.

Chapter End Notes

SO...

What did you think of the chapter?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)}
Hey guys!

Here's the new chapter! It's been a long time coming and I really, really hope you'll all like it. Though let me warn you, you'll probably be annoyed with Felicity at some point and will most definitely hate me by the end of the chapter. Are you guys scared?

Now, more seriously, I wanted to apologize for not being able to update sooner. You guys are so supportive of me - I'm incredibly grateful for each of you - and I'm sorry I wasn't able to give you as much as you give me - through the comments, kudos, Tumblr asks and tweets. To be completely honest, I was on vacation at my mother's place for the last few weeks and I didn't really write when I was there, for many reasons that are my own. I also wanted to take a break from the fandom and the show so... My writing suffered from that decision. I'm back to writing now though and there shouldn't be another month and a half to wait for another chapter. Although I'd like to say I've started a new year at university -yay- and it's a very important year for me and my future meaning I'll have a lot of work to do and so as a consequence less time to write. And as I write long chapters that can't be written in a week, I hope you'll understand if I publish every 2 or 3 weeks.

Finally, I'm sorry I didn't reply to the comments. I want you guys to know that I read them all and they all made me extremely happy and I'm thankful for each comment and kudos. It's just that it takes me time to reply to them and it would have delayed the update... I thought you guys would enjoy the chapter more than my replies. I hope I wasn't wrong! But thank you for the support, I love you guys, you're the best!

Happy reading!!! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 17:

“Our story binds us

Like right and wrong.

Your hand in mine

Marching to the beat of the storm

And we walk together into the light

And my love will be your armor tonight

We are lionhearts
And we stand together facing a war
And our love is gonna conquer it all

We are lionhearts”

- Demi Lovato, Lionheart.

She would never get tired of this, Felicity realised. She would never ever get tired of Oliver. The feel of his lips against her own, the warmth coming off from his skin and sipping under hers, the pounding of his heart against her palm, the echoing thrumming of his emotions vibrating inside of her… she would never get tired of it all. And when it occurred to her that she was in for a lifetime, she felt a warm feeling of contentment settle inside of her.

She wanted a lifetime. No scratch that. She wanted more.

Oliver tore his lips away from her, his hands coming up to smooth her blonde locks which were damp with sweat. His breaths were coming out in harsh pants, and his skin was burning hot where he was pressed against her. Blue met blue and she chocked on her next breath when she saw the intensity and the rawness of his emotions in his gaze. They were all bare for her to see, his desire for her, his fondness, his… love. Yeah, there was some love, deep and strong, shining in his blue orbs. Her own hands came up, shaking slightly and she cupped his cheeks, stroking her thumbs over his cheekbones. She hoped her eyes conveyed just as much emotions as his did.

They blinked at the same time, breathed in perfect synchrony.

Time stood still and for a second they were alone in the universe. The world could have been crumbling around them, they wouldn’t have noticed as they were both too engrossed in the fire burning them from the inside. The buzzing state she had been left in after her orgasm had slowly faded away as his own lust started filling her veins, teasing the embers of the fire that had consumed her just a few minutes ago. She brought his face closer and captured his lower lip with her mouth, effectively breaking eye-contact with him, and distracting them from the non-spoken things lying heavily between us.

She tenderly bit on his lip, soothing the sting with her tongue. He hissed a breath and she sighed in his mouth. He swallowed the sounds, leaning closer to devour her. His tongue boldly stroke against her and she moaned, shifting her head slightly to deepen the kiss. Her hands, unhappy to stand still, travelled down toward his sides, her nails raking against his burning hot skin. His legs had fallen between her parted ones. Clumsily, she reached for his belt, wanting to pull him to her. She had gotten him to move from his side to be on top of her but she could still feel his reluctance to let her feel him, completely. And it was too bad, because she really wanted him to be closer to her.

“Oliver,” she whispered, breaking their heated kiss. “Oliver,” she repeated, when he chased her lips. She turned her head away, both to find some air and to keep from being distracted again by him and his wicked tongue. The kiss he had aimed toward her mouth fell on her cheek and he groaned in frustration, rubbing his bearded cheek against her much softer skin.

“Felicity,” he replied, one of his hands tangling up in her hair, the other falling to rest on her hip.

“Come closer,” she asked in a breath, pulling at his belt again, with more strength than previously. He resisted her a bit and she frowned, confused by his behaviour and his emotions. She could feel his lust and desire for her, naked and raw, pulsing inside of him. Seeing her come, feeling her
pleasure had almost undone him but somehow, he hadn’t fallen over with her and had remained on edge. In spite of that, she felt his reluctance to let her help him, to let her… Return the favour. It was a pity because she wanted to give him the same pleasure he had given her, to help him somehow, to have him find his pleasure with her, thanks to her. But he didn’t seem to want to and she couldn’t understand why. She wanted him to be overwhelmed by the most perfect bliss ever, she wanted him to let the fire consume him. And some more selfish parts of her longed to know how it would feel, when he came. She wished for his pleasure to be hers, just like hers had been his.

“Oliver what’s wrong?” She asked, her hands traveling up and settling on his waist. Sometimes, even feeling his emotions wasn’t enough and they needed to get back to words to communicate.

“Nothing’s wrong,” he said against her skin, kissing the side of her throat, which he seemed to have grown quite fond of over the course of the night.

“O-li-ver,” she moaned, her frustration getting lost when she felt her skin tingle pleasantly where his lips were working on her.

“Fe-li-ci-ty,” he replied, planting a kiss after each syllable.

“Come closer,” she asked again, her tone demanding. The space between them felt like as wide as a desert and she couldn’t stand it anymore. And if she hadn’t been holding his waist, maybe she would have missed the way he stiffened at her request, the way his muscles jump under her touch.

“Oliver,” she said, her mind leaving the blissful state she had been in and letting worry overtake it. “What’s wrong?”

She saw his cheeks redden as his eyes fled hers.

He was blushing.

Oliver freaking Queen was blushing.

She was the one half-naked and almost begging him to let her get him off and he was the one blushing.

“Talk to me,” she asked, gently, doubts and consciousness rearing their ugly heads. Had she done something wrong? Had she read too much into things? Didn’t he trust her with his pleasure? Did he think she wasn’t good enough for him? Did he think that somehow her lack of experience made her unable to take care of him?

She started blushing. If she was right, she’d need to put some clothes on. And maybe, lock herself in his bathroom. There, she could die of mortification in peace. Also alone and humiliated.

“Felicity? Are you alright?”

Oliver prompted himself on his elbows, his head tilted slightly, a concerned look on his face.

“What’s wrong?”

“Why don’t you tell me?” She shot back, meeting his eyes.

He blinked, once, twice and she watched him cautiously, “I just- I-,” he stammered. He clenched his eyes shut and Felicity bit on her lower lip worriedly, wanting to press him but knowing she needed to wait for him. While he gathered himself, her attention was captured by his soulmark. She looked down toward the dark unique sign branding his chest. The mark had stretched due to their heavy
make-out session. It wasn’t just above his heart anymore, but covering a good half of his chest. She knew she would feel it pulse under her fingers if she touched it, just like she knew without having to glance at her hip that her own mark had grown to cover more of her creamy skin. She felt a sudden urge to touch it, to make sure he was really there, really hers and so she did. Electricity passed between them when she brushed the arrowhead, jolting him out of his thoughts.

“I don’t want you to rush you,” he eventually admitted, lifting her chin up with one of his hands, forcing her to look at him. “And more importantly, I don’t want you to think like you have to – that you’re obligated to-”

She cut him off with a kiss, feeling like a weight had been lifted from her shoulders. She giggled between two kisses, her relief chasing away her worry. For a second, Oliver remained still and unresponsive. Felicity ran her hands in his hair, pulling at the shortest strands of his hair.

“I want to,” she told him, her lips moving from his own, to the side of his jaw, to his ear where she whispered. “I want everything with you. Slowly, one step at a time, but everything nonetheless.”

One of his hands gripped her hip, clenching tightly. She didn’t mind it one bit, the contact anchoring her more in the moment.

“Yeah?” He gasped when she scratched his back with her nails, her fingers stopping before his scar. She stroked the puckered skin tenderly, hoping her soft caresses would soothe some of his pain. When she reached the hollow of his back, she pressed with a little strength and this time he followed her command, lowering himself completely, erasing the space between them.

She moaned when his hard chest pressed against her breasts and her moans turned into cries when his jean-clad erection came in contact with her still very sensitive core. She had known he was aroused, she had felt, still could, his desire pulsing inside her like a living thing but now she could feel the tangible proof of his hunger against her most intimate part. He was hard, his cock struggling against the confines of his pants, the rough seams of his dark jeans close to her already abused bundle of nerves. The thin soaked cotton of her underwear was the only thing preventing her from feeling him against her bare heat and she gasped. He wouldn’t be closer to her that night and yet it felt almost too much. The intensity of their emotional connection, the fire of their physical entanglement was too much. The thought sent her brain into overdrive. If that felt too much, how would she be able to take more? Would there be anything left of her to retrieve after he was done consuming her?

No, her heart whispered.

Because she would be him and he would be her and together, they would be one.

He was hot, so hot and heavy and hard and yet, he felt so perfect against her soft pliant body that for one second, she truly believed he had been made for her only. She wrapped her arms around his neck, keeping him against her. She could feel the loud pounding of his heart against her chest and she smiled when she realised he most certainly could feel her wild heartbeat as well. Her lips dropped clumsy kisses against his cheek and under his jaw while she felt his hands clench the sheets beside her head, careful of her blonde locks spread on the pillows.

His lips captured hers again for a heated kiss when he started rubbing against her, dragging the hard bulge of his jeans over her. Sparks of pleasure coming from both sides made the thread connecting their emotions tremble, fuelling the fire that had started to burn in her veins again, much to her surprise, and much to her delight. Oliver stroked his tongue against hers in tandem with his jerky movements. For a while, it could have been seconds or hours, she had no idea and really didn’t care, Felicity could only feel.
His emotions getting bigger, their buzzing growing louder in the back of her head.

The pleasure he was giving her was making his reach new heights and he was dragging her alongside with him, making her climb high enough so that heaven was within easy reach. She could feel it tingle at the tips of her fingers. She was a messy tangle of sensations and feelings until she tore her lips away from him, gasping for air. Not wanting to be a passive receiver, she readjusted her hips a little bit. She keened loudly when his next thrust against her was just so right, she saw stars dance in the back of her head. Her hands moved from his neck to his hair, keeping him firmly in place against her throat, where his lips were busy sucking what promised to be a giant hickey the next morning. It wouldn’t be easy to conceal it but she realised she didn’t care. She wanted him to leave his mark on her, one more primal, one uniquely hers, one he had directly printed on her skin with his own tongue and teeth, unlike their shared soulmark.

“Felicity – I – fuck,” he hissed when she wrapped her legs around his waist, bringing him impossibly closer to her. The huskiness of his voice had more heat pool low in her belly, making it even easier for him to move and rub against her.

“Oliver,” she panted, feeling her body tensing, even though she was still far behind him.

“Damn it,” he cursed against her skin and tears pricked at the corner of her eyes. She could feel how close he was from snapping and the build-up made her toes curl. “Felicity,” he growled her name. “I – You-” He couldn’t finish his sentence and she didn’t blame him, she had a hard time coming up with a coherent thought herself because of all the things he was making her feel. One of his hands blindly reached for her breast. She breathed through her nose at the new sensation, realising he wanted her to be just as close as he was. His fingers raked against her hardened nipple, in tandem with his thrust against her. A particularly rough one ended directly against her swollen clit eliciting a low moan from her, one that made Oliver smirk proudly against her throat.

“Oliver,” she whispered, completely out of breath and at a loss for words.

She arched her back, the tensed muscles of her stomach meeting his very hard and strained six-pack. Beads of sweat flew from his forehead to the skin of her collarbone and further down. She pulled his face away from her, bringing his lips back to hers and wasting no time before thrusting her tongue in his mouth. He gripped her hips hard, to keep her still when she started undulated her hips beneath him. He moved above her and they kissed, again and again, never breaking away, not even when their lungs started to burn because of the lack of oxygen. They kissed and moved and felt until suddenly it was too much and too intense and they snapped.

Oliver broke first, his orgasm unleashing a torrent of fire inside Felicity through their connection, triggering her own release. Her lips opened in a silent cry, their combined release knocking her breath out of her. He muffled her name against her hair, which had turned into a mess of curls because of the sweat. Waves and waves of pleasure crashed through her, made stronger by the storm of white-hot pleasure raging inside of him and for a second she feared she might blackout from the intensity of it all. Her body jerked under his, her nails scratching his back in a desperate attempt to stay somehow connected to reality. He collapsed heavily on top of her, efficiently pinning her to the bed, stopping the clumsy spasms of her body. She welcomed the weight of him in the cradle of her hips, humming softly, feeling perfectly content and sated. He hummed back, both in response and appreciation while she roamed over the marks she had left on his back with her nails. He brushed her hair with his nose, slowly, softly, traveling to her lips. He kissed her tenderly, with lips only, and her heart clench in her chest at so much gentleness from him. Gone were the avid hands, the eager touches and hungry kisses and they were left with soft caresses, soothing touches and light kisses.

She sighed happily against his lips, a lazy smile stretching her own as she slowly came back to her
senses. She became more aware of her surroundings as her mind started working again. Oliver’s emotions had taken a step back, leaving her master of herself again. Slowly, her heart settled back in her chest, and her breathing evened out. Her skin was still tingling, the last remnants of the blinding bliss that had taken over her body a few minutes ago. She already felt somewhat sore in all the right places and even though it wasn’t particularly pleasant, it didn’t do anything to the feeling of contentment that had overtaken her.

“Wow,” she whispered between two kisses and he chuckled, the deep rumbling sound feeling like music to her ears. “I mean it,” she went on, cupping his cheek. “This was – wow, just wow. And I don’t know how you managed to keep yourself in check when I-” She hesitated, biting the tip of her tongue. “Well, you know. Because I most definitely wasn’t able to when you did. Wow, wow, wow! This is was so intense and I-”.

He cut her rambling off with a kiss, a teasing smile spreading his lips.

“I guess we know now I have more stamina than you do,” he said.

“Haha,” she laughed dryly. “As if there had been any doubts of that anyway.”

He tickled her with a strand of her hair and she pushed him away from her face, smiling widely.

“Mr. Queen, far away from me the idea to offend you after all that greatness, but all those muscles are getting heavy,” she gestured at the two of them still tangled together.

His eyes widened and he pressed further into her, making her choke on her next breath.

“Oliver,” she protested, trying to push him off of her.

He eventually complied and rolled off on his side. She found herself missing his warmth immediately after and so she snuggled into him. She felt him move next to her and when she looked up, she saw him shaking his head in annoyance.

“I can’t believe I came in my pants like some goddamn teenager!” He groaned, his eyebrows furrowed.

Felicity raised herself up on one of her elbows. “I’d have been offended if you hadn’t to be honest,” she told him, biting the inside of her cheek to prevent from laughing at the sight of the obvious wet spot at the front of his pants.

He tilted his head at her words, a playful look lightening up his eyes. He leaned to kiss her and she kissed him back, savouring the taste of his lips. He cupped his cheek, her thumb stroking his stubble lightly when they got a little carried away. Oliver regretfully tore his lips away from hers and she pouted, unable to hide her displeasure. He rested his forehead against hers, just breathing her in for a second and she did the same savouring the perfection that laid in this simple yet sweet moment.

“You mind if I go to the bathroom?” He asked after a while and a small smile stretched her lips. She shook her head “no” as a response. She could use a bathroom break herself.

He winked at her playfully when he got up from the bed and she couldn’t help but roll her eyes at him. He had to go and make her all flustered again! He closed the bathroom door and she fell back on his bed, sighing happily. Her eyelids felt heavy and she wanted nothing more but to fall asleep right here and there. She hadn’t felt that relaxed in a very long time, if ever. But she was wearing nothing but her underwear felt sticky. Such a relaxed state came with a short price she realised, one she didn’t mind paying at all. Collecting her last strengths, she reached for his discarded shirt, and put it on, only closing a few buttons. She got up from the bed, her legs still shaking slightly. She glanced
up toward the television and realised the movies’ credits were rolling on the screen. Turning around, she saw on Oliver’s bedside clock that it was a little past two am. As she started hearing the sound of the shower, she quickly turned everything off. Then, she padded toward her overnight bag and retrieved clean underwear and her pajamas.

She walked out of Oliver’s room, since he was using the bathroom attached to it, and made her way toward his flat’s main bathroom. She caught sight of her reflection in the mirror and couldn’t help but suck in a breath. Her hair was a mess of blonde curls, damp strands stuck to her forehead. Her lips were swollen and redder than when she was wearing lipstick. She could see a bruise already forming on her throat. Shaking fingers reached for it. It throbbed but didn’t hurt and for a second, she felt puzzled, not knowing how to react to its presence on her otherwise creamy skin. She hadn’t cared earlier but now she wasn’t so sure anymore… She moved on with the exploration of her body, tilting her head slightly. Oliver’s shirt was too big for her and reached her mid-thigh, exposing a great deal of her legs and the red marks left by Oliver’s stubble. Those were already starting to fade away. Fidgeting with the hem of the shirt, she lifted it exposing the dark soulmark on her hipbone. It was back to its normal size. She couldn’t quite recognise herself. She had never looked that dishevelled and wanton before and she didn’t know how she felt about that. Until she looked up again, meeting her own eyes. There was a look in them, one she didn’t remember seeing, ever. It was a mix of sheer happiness and deep contentment. A mix of calm and peace. A smile stretched her lips, and she bit on her lower lip to keep a giggle from bursting out of her. She didn’t mind the marks on her body, she didn’t mind her dishevelled appearance. She looked happy, felt happy and it was the only thing that truly mattered.

She took a quick shower but when the time came for her to get dressed again, she decided to forget the top she had intended to wear and to put on Oliver’s shirt back on. She just loved the way it was too big for her and the fact that she was surrounded by his scent was just a bonus. She rolled up the sleeves, a necessity since his arms were twice, maybe thrice the size of hers.

She walked back to his bedroom and smiled when his eyes darkened at the sight of her wearing his shirt. Okay, she may or may have not decided to put on his shirt again because she had read enough books and seen enough shows – and movies for that matter – where the guy got all desiring and possessive because his girlfriend was wearing his clothes. She didn’t know why it was such a turn-on but she knew it was a turn-on for her when Oliver got all desiring and possessive in front of her, for her.

“You like what you see?” She asked, teasing and leaning against the bathroom’s door frame. His eyes widened when she stretched her arm above her head.

If he hadn’t been brushing his teeth, she was pretty sure his jaw would have dropped. Instead, he gulped, which couldn’t have been great, because, hello, toothpaste, his Adam’s apple bobbling up and down. She bit back a grin.

“You minx!” He cursed, his voice weird because of his mouthful. He walked toward her and planted a sticky minty kiss on her lips.

This time, she laughed, without bothering to clean up the toothpaste he had left on her lips. Instead, she followed him inside the bathroom, snatching her own toothbrush on the way. They settled around the sink together and the domesticity of the situation hit her, hard, making her feel dizzy with her head spinning.

This was her life.

She had a boyfriend, and they did stuff other than cuddling and talking. She had a boyfriend who cooked her pizza and set up a freaking tent in his living-room for her. She had a boyfriend whom she
brushed her teeth with in the bathroom as she stayed over at his place at night.

This was her life.

Wow.

She turned toward Oliver, who was cleansing his mouth.

“What?” He asked, wiping his mouth with a towel. “Why are you looking at me like that?”

She just shrugged and leaned toward him, giving him a sticky minty kiss of her own. He rolled his eyes at her, using his towel to clean his lips once and for all. He walked out and she hurriedly finished to meet him. He had already pushed the covers back so they could get in bed.

She hopped up on the bed, falling on her back right in the middle. She sighed contentedly, Oliver’s mattress felt like heaven on earth and the pillows were soft under her head.

“Don’t get too comfortable Miss Smoak, I’m afraid you’re going to have to make some room for me,” he told her.

“Mh, I don’t think so,” she replied.

He huffed back a laugh. “How am I supposed to sleep then?”

“Figure it out,” she replied, closing her eyes while he walked around the room, closing the blinds and making sure everything was in place before going to bed.

“Felicity,” he said, poking her ribs.

“Mmmh,” she hummed. “Whatcha doing?” She asked sleepily when she heard him turn on the lamp on his bedside table.

“Turning on the light?” He replied unsure. “You can’t sleep without one,” he reminded her, his voice soft and gentle.

Her heart swooned in her chest at his words.

Then she made a decision.

“Turn it off,” she said. “I don’t need it.”

She didn’t need to see him to feel his hesitancy.

“Yes, I’m sure,” she added and she nodded to herself when she heard him turn the light off.

“Hug,” she demanded soon after, opening her arms clumsily, as she was already falling asleep. The urge to touch him, to have him in her arms had suddenly risen within her and she knew it was a result of the new level of physicality and intimacy they had reached. From now on, she’d crave his touch more and more.

He seemed to be feeling the same way since he was hovering over her not even two seconds later. He leaned on top of her, careful not to crush her and she wrapped her arms around his neck, inhaling deeply. Her limbs were feeling heavier and heavier and she knew she was on the verge of falling asleep but she held on for a few more seconds, just to savour the peacefulness of the moment. It was just them and their even breathing in the room and it was perfect.
His body grew heavier on top of her and she knew he was getting lost in the moment with her. They rearranged their position on the bed, slowly, their movements uncoordinated. Oliver put his arms around her waist, holding her close. He buried his head in her breast. Her hands came up to his head, and threaded his hair.

“‘You okay down there,’” she whispered sleepily, her eyes remaining close. It was too much of an effort to open them.

“Yeah,” he let out, sighing deeply. “Your boobs make a great pillow.”

She pulled at his hair and he groaned, tightening his hold on her.

“Night F’licity,” he said, drowsily.

“Night,” she replied, feeling perfectly safe in the arms of her soulmate.

Felicity woke up to a feeling of contentment she didn’t remember feeling… ever in her life before. Her waking was soft, the transition from sweet dreams to reality pleasant, easy. Her eyes fluttered open and she realised Oliver and she had moved quite a lot during their sleep. Much like the first night she had spent at his place, she had moved away from him, landing on her stomach, far on her side of the bed. But this time, unlike the last one, he had followed her, covering her body with his becoming her very own human blanket. She didn’t feel too hot though, he was a furnace and she welcomed the natural heat of his body on hers as she was an ice cube, especially in winter. Their legs were tangled together, his face buried in her hair. She could feel the regular little puffs of air he was letting out every time he exhaled, telling her he was still deeply asleep.

She smiled to herself, closing her eyes and burying herself deeper in the pillow she had claimed as her own during the night. She was clutching it with her arms, holding onto it tightly. It was a habit she had taken after her abduction and everything that had happened with Cooper. She slept with the light on and holding a pillow tightly against her.

The thought of Cooper, very inappropriate when she was in bed with her soulmate, brought back her worries from the previous night.

New-York. The trip.

Uneasiness rose inside her but she quickly chased the unpleasant feeling away. She was in the arms of her soulmate, safe and protected. She didn’t need to worry about anything at all. As if Oliver had sensed her discomfort even in his sleep, which she supposed he had on some level, he snuggled closer to her, his arm wrapped around her waist tightening his hold on her. She sighed happily and closed her eyes again.

She dozed off and was woken up some time later by her bladder. A bathroom break was becoming a necessity. She tried to wiggle out of Oliver’s grasp, without much success. The man was heavy. She would have to wake him if she wanted to get up but he was sleeping so peacefully next to her, she didn’t want to take that from him. Not yet. She craned her neck a little and saw it was barely eleven am. She hadn’t slept that late in forever. And that made her wonder.

How many of her future Sunday’s mornings would be spent just like that in the future? Sleeping in, tangled in bed with her soulmate?
A lot of them, she hoped.

She buried herself deeper in her pillow, savouring the feeling of loving someone and being loved just as much in return. She had known she loved Oliver, loved him as in being in love with him, for weeks now – though chances that she had fallen for him that fateful day of September where they had met were high – but she had yet to tell him the words. She wanted to tell him, the words had threatened to spill from her lips the night before several times, more particularly when they had brushed their teeth together. Telling someone “I love you” was always special but in their case, it would be even more so. It would be the final barrier between them finally crumbling and vanishing. It would be the final step on their road toward forgiveness. The last fix to bring to their relationship. And she would make sure that moment was a special one, just like he had made sure their first date was special and just like they would make sure their first time having sex would be.

Her toes curled from where they were hiding under the sheets and comforter. Oliver or she, there was no telling who, had kicked away the covers until they fell low on their bodies, hardly covering their legs before their knees. She smiled against her pillow, memories from the previous night filling her mind. She remembered everything that had happened with acute precision, from the light wrapped around the tent in Oliver’s living-room, to the taste of the red wine and the home-made pizzas, to the taste of Oliver. Every kiss, every touch, every whispered word were carved into her memory, a precious treasure she would cherish for the rest of her life. She shifted slightly underneath him, tingles starting at her fingertips as memories of the intense pleasure and sensations they had shared came back to her. Oliver shifted too, in response to her movement, his breath coming to tickle her neck. Her smile grew wider.

“What are you thinking about?” He asked drowsily, his voice husky and way too much for her to handle without caffeine in her system.

She bit on her lower lip. “Nothing,” she replied, teasingly.

He moved her hair from her neck completely and nuzzled the newly exposed skin. She could feel him fight off sleep just so that he could be awake with her and savour the moment.

“Liar,” he said, his tone close to pouting.

“I’d never dare!”

“F’li-ci-ty!” He whined, the syllables of her name drowned when he pressed his lips against her neck.

She exhaled slowly, enjoying the moment, his lips and the tickling kisses he had decided to drop on her, his hands moving to capture hers.

“Oliver-“ She hesitated, not wanting to disrupt the moment, but really needing to get up.

“Hm?” She didn’t need to see his face to know he had closed his eyes again and was slowly drifting off again.

“I need to go to the bathroom,” she confessed.


She bit on her lip, holding back her laughter. “As much as I’d love that, we have needs.”

“Don’t care,” he repeated.
This time, she couldn’t help but laugh. Who would have thought that Oliver Queen was like a six-year-old in bed?

“Hey!” He poked her ribs. “I think I proved being better than a six-year-old last night.”

She frowned and moved to turn on her back, which he let her do. He raised himself up on his hands, his arms caging her. Not that she minded, because she didn’t. Soon enough, she was facing him and she was at a loss for words. He had a sexy case of bed hair that was really working for him, his cheeks were red, his eyes bright blue and still half-asleep. He looked beautiful, in a lazy but happy kind of way.

“What?” He asked, tilting his head. His confusion was making him look all adorable and very kissable.

She blinked, her question almost forgotten. “Did you just read my mind?”

He shook his head. “No, just a hunch.”

She accepted his answer, knowing it was probably just their connection growing stronger. They had been near a ten before they were together and she couldn’t help but wonder where their number was at now. They had hardly talked about her appointment with the soulmate’s specialist, there hadn’t been much time for it and she hadn’t wanted to ruin their date last night with potentially bad news. Yet, she knew it was a conversation they needed to have, sooner rather than later. She pushed it back, not wanting to ruin the glow of their morning.

“I really need to get up though,” she told him.

“A kiss for your freedom,” he bargained.

Her eyes widened, morning breath wasn’t just a rumour after all, it was a real thing. Oliver didn’t seem to care though. He leant forward and nudged her nose with his.

“Stop thinking,” he whispered against her lips and that made her melt in his arms. She tangled her fingers in his hair and brought him to her lips. Their kiss wasn’t anything passionate or crazy. It was rather chaste and tender, something soft to finalise their wakening.

She moved to the bathroom after that, while Oliver made his way to the kitchen, to make them some breakfast. She met him there soon enough, smiling at the sight of him behind a frying pan. She stood beside a stool for a few seconds, eagerly taking him in. If she had any saying in the matter, he would be wearing this white-tee a lot more. It was doing wonders to his abs and arms.

“Hi!” He greeted her, waving the wooden spoon he was holding at her.

“Hi yourself,” she replied, moving around to put plates and cutlery on the counter.

“I’m going with bacon and eggs, is that okay?” He asked her, scratching the back of his head.

“Oh, that’s great!” She replied and she knew it sounded cheesy but it was true so it made her feel less guilty.

He beamed at her and she raised up on her toes to kiss his cheek.

“How did you sleep?” He asked, watching her move around in the kitchen easily, never hesitating before opening a drawer to get forks and knives or a cupboard to get cups and plates. She could sense a feeling of longing rise inside of him but she chose not to linger on what it could possibly
mean.

“Perfectly,” she told him, her body buzzing with energy. “You?”

“Same,” he admitted sheepishly, stirring the eggs with a spatula.

She poured them cups of steaming coffee and glasses of fresh orange juice. Soon enough, their food was ready and Oliver filled their plates before sitting down in front of her.

“Damn, that’s good,” Felicity moaned after her first mouthful.

Oliver smiled at the compliment, taking his time to swallow his food. He cleared his throat when he was done and she frowned at that. “You know maybe we could do this every weekend,” he said, trying to keep his tone casual. The seriousness of his suggestion was betrayed by the real desire she could feel deep in his bones.

“A date every weekend?” She asked.

“As long as it’s followed by a sleepover,” he said.

She sighed, her shoulders dropping slightly. “I don’t know,” she replied, dropping her fork.

He frowned, not understanding where her reluctance was coming from. “Why not?”

“I’m not sure if it would do us any good, I mean, we did agree to take things slow…”

“We haven’t seen each other naked yet so as far as I’m concerned we’re pretty good at taking things slow,” he deadpanned.

She gave him a look. “It’s not what I meant, though you’re raising a pretty good point.”

“Then what are you talking about? What’s wrong with spending time together and sleeping together? Platonically,” he quickly added. That was her rubbing off on him.

“We’re already spending a lot of time together, at work.” When his eyes widened and his mouth opened to protest, she was quick to add. “I’m not saying I don’t want to spend time with you outside of work, because I do and you know it. I just don’t want us to get lost in the… bubble,” she concluded, gesturing at the two of them.

“The bubble?”

She gave him a look. “You know what I mean,” she argued. “The bubble, where it’s just the two of us and nothing else matters.”

“I love the bubble,” Oliver told her, a dreamy smile stretching his lips.

“Me too,” Felicity confessed, reaching for his hand. “But we can’t afford to get lost in it.”

Oliver blinked. “Pray tell why?”

“Since I arrived yesterday, how many times did you think about Thea?”

“For some reasons, I try not to think about my sister while I’m busy with my soulmate and girlfriend…”

“So you didn’t think about your eighteen-year-old sister out at a party we both know she won’t be
playing board games at while with your soulmate and girlfriend?”

He scratched the back of his head. “Where’s my phone?” He asked, looking as if he was about to get on his feet.

“That’s exactly why the bubble is dangerous,” she told him, glad to see her point had been made effortlessly. “It shuts down the outside world. Maybe with time we’ll be able to control it more but for now it’s fresh and new and we’re caught on each other so…”

“It’s a bad thing,” Oliver finished.

“It’s not for the best,” she corrected. Then, she added. “And your phone is on your bedside table. I got it from the living-room when I went to the bathroom last night,” she explained.

“O-okay,” Oliver said, looking slightly ill-at-ease. “How come you thought of it and I didn’t?”

She could understand the meaning hidden behind his question. Weren’t you lost in me as much as I was lost in you?

“We’re both different,” she said as an explanation. “And you know me, I tend to overthink things, I never stop thinking.”

“That’s true,” he agreed, chuckling. “So I guess it’s a no to a sleepover per week.”

“For now,” she agreed. “We need time apart just as much as we need time together.”

He sighed and she could see he didn’t like the “apart” part of the plan, even though he understood her point.

“We’ve lost so much time already,” he sighed. “I don’t want us to waste one more second,” he added, reaching for her hand on the table.

“I know,” she replied, squeezing his fingers. “I don’t want to waste another second either, so let’s compromise.”

“Compromise?” Oliver tilted his head, suddenly looking very much interested.

She shrugged, playing it cool. “They say it’s important in “10 things to know if you want your relationship to work”.”

Oliver shook his head. “I think you’ve been spending way too much time online lately.”

“There’s no such thing as too much internet,” she argued, pretending to be offended by his statement. “Plus you know I love the internet.”

“Oh I know you do,” Oliver replied, clearly remembering the thousand emails she had sent him with stuff she had found funny while surfing on the web. It was generally just a link, toward a tweet, a Tumblr post, an article about something she had found cute, funny, entertaining or just interesting.

“And before you ask, no, I’m not adopting a hedgehog and you aren’t either. You already have enough on your plate with the kittens.”

Felicity pouted. “But Nemo will be gone soon,” she said.

“You’ll still have Arrow,” he reminded her. She opened her mouth to add something but he raised a finger to stop her. “Can we focus back on the matter at hand?” He asked. “I want to know how many times a week I can take you out. I’m going to woo you so hard, you’ll be begging for more,”
he added, a devilish grin stretching his lips.

She batted her eyes at him. “It’s the twenty-first century you know? I can take you out and woo you too.”

His smile shifted, going from devilish to curious in a second. “Is that so?”

She leaned forward and whispered, in what she hoped was a mysterious as well as sexy voice. “I’m going to woo you so hard, you’ll be begging for more.”

He groaned, his eyes darkening slightly. He brought the hand he had been holding to his lips and kissed her palm, his lips lingering on her soft skin for just a second too long.

“I think I’m going to enjoy this dating thing,” he pointed out.

She huffed back a laugh. “Oh come on, I’m sure you’ve been on a lot of dates.”

He shrugged, scratching the back of his head. “I’m not sure you can call what I used to do “dating”.”

She nodded, knowing just how much he hadn’t been of the “dating” type back then. She opened her mouth to say something, something that would ease some of the tension that had suddenly risen between us. The past hadn’t been entirely forgotten. Old wounds hadn’t been entirely closed and this moment, this fleeting moment of uncertainty and fear was the reason why they both hadn’t said what was truly on their heart.

They needed more time.

Thankfully, Felicity was saved from having to say anything by the door, which was opened and then closed. They both turned around and saw Thea walked in, barefoot, wearing her clothes from the day before, her gorgeous golden dress now all rumpled and creased. Her hair was a mess on top her head, brown curls all twisted and tangled. She looked tired, purple bags were circling her eyes and her makeup was smudged, black mascara staining her smooth cheeks.

“You alright Speedy?” Oliver asked, concern flooding his eyes.

“Not that loud,” she complained, pointing at her head.

“Bad hangover?”

“I’m not allowed to drink Ollie, remember?” She shot back, cleverly avoiding the trap he had set for her.

“You forget I was eighteen before you were,” he told her, getting up to help her sit down at the kitchen counter right next to Felicity. She dropped her purse and her phone on the dark marble, between her and Felicity.

“Can someone please go get my sunglasses?” She groaned after Oliver had set a glass of water and aspirins in front of her.

“I’ll go,” her brother said before Felicity could open her mouth.

“God,” Thea sighed. “Why is everything so loud and bright?”

Felicity chuckled.

“Too loud!” The brunette repeated, before gulping down the medicine her brother had brought her.
“Is that coffee I’m smelling?”

“Want some?” Felicity asked, careful to keep her voice low.

“I don’t know, let me check with my stomach if it’s okay.”

Felicity bit on her lower lip to hold back her laughter. Oliver was still looking for Thea’s sunglasses and she hadn’t decided if she wanted coffee when her phone beeped between them. And Felicity didn’t mean to but her eyes were drawn to the screen which had just lightened up and the beginning of the text message on display on the locked screen.

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*Alex Davis*

“*Last night was great, can’t wait to see you again xoxo*”

--

Felicity froze.

“Who’s Alex Davis?” She asked, trying to keep her tone casual while she was kind of freaking out inside.

She’d seen enough movies and shows to know what the words “last night was great” usually implied.

And more often than not, it wasn’t a night spent playing board games.

Thea gave her a look, reaching for her phone and pulling it away. “Just a guy from my history class. I told you about him yesterday.”

“You didn’t tell me his name,” Felicity reminded her.

“Well now I have,” Thea replied, looking like someone who really wanted to change the subject. “It’s Alex.”

“Who’s Alex?” Oliver asked, walking back in the kitchen, carrying Thea’s sunglasses.

“No one,” Thea was quick to reply. Maybe too quick because Oliver frowned, his suspicions raised and the big brother mode activated.

“Do I need to have a talk with that guy, the kind of talk that will possibly involve my fist meeting his cheek?”

Thea rolled her eyes at him, at least Felicity imagined her doing that from behind her sunglasses and sighed heavily. “No you won’t. Now if the two of you are done with the questioning, I’m going to go to bed and rest.”

She left them then, slamming her bedroom’s door, making Oliver and Felicity jump in their seats.

“Too loud,” Felicity whispered, wincing.

“What was that about?”

Felicity opened her mouth, not really knowing how to brush the topic of Thea’s soulmate with him.
She didn’t want to tell him about the text she had seen, it was Thea’s business after all.

“She got a text from that guy, Alex, and I just asked her about him.” She paused for a second, before adding. “I don’t want her to do something she’ll come to regret later.” There, privacy respected, soulmate’s topic launched.

Oliver frowned. “What do you mean?”

“She met her soulmate, and he kind of ran away from her. She’s convinced he doesn’t want to be with her and I’m afraid she’s rushing into something with this Alex-guy because of that.”

Oliver’s eyes widened. “When did that happen? When did you learn about it?” He demanded, jumping on his feet. She could feel a mix of conflicted feelings rise inside of him. On the one hand, he wanted to go comfort his sister but on the other, there was anger bubbling inside of him, directed at whoever was hurting his sister.

“She told me and Sara yesterday,” she explained, reaching for his hand and stopping him from disrupting Thea’s rest. “I was hoping that we’d have some time to talk to her, maybe convince her to look for her soulmate?”

“So that he can run away from her again? Break her heart some more?”

Felicity frowned, surprised by the harshness of his tone. She knew he was protective of his sister and she liked that about him, usually when it was for the right reasons.

“We don’t know why he ran away, maybe we shouldn’t be judging him too promptly…”

Oliver sighed in frustration and pinched the bridge of his nose. “Thea is going through some very difficult stuff right now…”

“All the more reasons for her to have her soulmate by her side,” Felicity cut him off.

“I don’t want to add another rejection to the list of things that suck in her life, okay?”

Felicity blinked. He had a point. Thea had been through a lot lately, just like all of them. And yet, the blonde couldn’t help but think that she’d regret starting something with someone else without knowing the whole truth about her soulmate. One needed closure before moving forward, right? Besides, he wasn’t taking the Med, it had to mean something. Maybe this was just a misunderstanding, maybe he had just been scared when they had crossed paths? Who could blame him? Meeting your soulmate, your one and only, could be scary. It didn’t always happen at the right time, and being afraid or not feeling ready was understandable.

“Having her soulmate by her side could only do her some good,” Felicity argued, trying to make him see her point. “I think we’re proof of that.”

He stepped back, slipping from her grip. “They’re not us.” His voice had softened a bit and she suspected he was trying to coax her into agreeing with him. Spoiler alert: it wasn’t working.

“Exactly, they don’t have to go through all the pain we’ve been through. They can be happy, now.”

“Felicity,” Oliver started but she cut him off immediately.

“Oliver, I want to protect Thea as much as you do and I’m not saying we should force her to meet him if she doesn’t want to. I’m just saying this is worth digging up a little bit. What if he just got scared? Maybe he recognised Thea Queen and freaked out. I know I would have, if I had been him.”
He gave her a look, exasperation filling his eyes. “Exactly! What if he doesn’t want to be Thea Queen’s soulmate? She’d be heartbroken!” She flinched when he raised his tone, all softness gone from his voice, and it didn’t escape his attention. He ran a hand through his hair, trying to get a grip on his emotions. “Felicity, listen, I don’t want to argue with you, especially not over this.”

“I don’t want to argue with you either,” she confessed. “And I understand what you’re trying to say, I really do but…”

“You disagree,” he concluded.

She nodded, looking down toward her hands in her lap. “I can’t help but feel for him, whoever he is,” she explained, a lump forming in her throat. “I wish I had someone to talk to all those years ago when the Mediator came to me, someone to help me.”

“Again Felicity, they’re not us. You’re making this personal.”

“Because it kind of is.”

He shook his head. “Let me handle this, okay?”

“Your way of handling this is doing nothing.”

“I don’t want to meddle in my sister’s business. I hated it when my parents did it to me.”

Her eyes widened. That was a low blow. “This is completely different! They had bad intentions and we don’t.”

“It doesn’t mean we wouldn’t hurt her. Come on Felicity, we have to respect Thea’s wishes.”

She crossed her arms over her chest again, her lips pursed tightly.

“Felicity?” Oliver insisted.

“Alright,” she agreed, even if it was far from alright.

He cupped her cheek with one of his hands and she leant into his touch against her will, unable to resist him.

“Let’s talk about something else, okay?” He suggested, his blue eyes meeting hers. “And eat, you’ve barely touched your plate.”

She stared down at her plate. Her heart was feeling heavier in her chest and she didn’t feel like eating anymore. She knew they wouldn’t taste nearly as good as the first bite had. She sighed. She meant what she had said to Oliver earlier, about feeling for Thea’s soulmate. She didn’t know who he was or what his life was but she felt for him. If his problem was that he’d been scared of being bonded to Thea Queen that was something she could relate to.

“Felicity?”

She looked up to meet Oliver’s concerned eyes.

“Did you hear what I just said?”

She blinked, getting out of her thoughts. “Sorry, what did you say?”

“I said I was thinking about inviting Martin Walker over.”
Again, she blinked but for entirely different reasons this time. “Why?”

“Well, things have been really tensed between us lately and I know he only supports us now because he has invested a lot of money in our projects. The thing is, once the contract with Palmer Tech is finalised, our battery will be in all their watches, phones and laptops. It will increase people’s awareness and more contracts and offers will be brought to us. We won’t need Walker’s support anymore.”

She nodded. She knew that already. It had been something she had thought of when she’d suggested Oliver contacted Ray Palmer, but never in her life had she believed it would happen. To her it had been a dream, sweet but unreachable. She had hoped for a small contract at best. But now a few weeks later after her first meeting with Ray Palmer, the contract she had been dreaming of, the contract they had been dreaming of, was on the verge of being concluded. A dream coming true.

“Why invite him over then?”

“Because I want to prove him I’m not the jerk he thinks I am. I want to prove him that I care and that despite my successes, I don’t turn my back on those who were there for me when I had nothing but a bunch of ideas and projects. Let’s invite him over after our trip to New-York. We’ll tell him about the contracts and the profits. It should make him happy. Then, we’ll prove him we take soulmate’s business seriously. If we’re lucky, our partnership will be back on track before he leaves.”

“That is if we do sign a contract with Palmer Tech.”

“Do you doubt we will?”

She shrugged. “I just know we shouldn’t count our chickens before they’ve hatched.”

Oliver nodded. One more step and the dream would become reality.

“True. Palmer’s executive assistant will email us the details for our trip tomorrow, we’ll have to work on our presentation during the week, with Curtis.”

They talked about Q. Inc some more, discussing the company’s future. They could form a real Applied Science department after, maybe even make Curtis its head. Felicity highly doubted they’d get him out of his lab long enough to actually focus on managing a whole department but she kept that thought to herself. Hiring new engineers for the Research and Development or expanding their IT department were also possibilities for them and they’d consider them all when the time came.

Much to Oliver’s regret, Felicity went back to her apartment during the afternoon. She had boring stuff to do, cleaning, laundry and kittens to go back to. Oliver did try to get her to stay longer, and she probably would have let herself be convinced, if Thea hadn’t walked out of her bedroom and almost caught them heavily making-out on the couch.

Once home, she was quickly done with the few things she had to do though meaning she was left with nothing to occupy her Sunday’s afternoon. She settled down on her couch, wrapped in a fluffy blanket and watched some silly rom-com, her brain completely disconnected from what was happening onscreen. She sighed, her eyes falling on her coffee table and her laptop. She sighed, her mind drifting back to her earlier conversation with Oliver about Thea and her soulmate. It would be easy to reach her laptop, press a few keystrokes and find out who her friend’s soulmate was, where he lived, what he was doing for a living.

“No,” she said out loud when the thought crossed her mind.

And yet, she really wanted to do it.
Not because she wanted to explore her inner stalker, she wasn’t a stalker at all to begin with, but because she wanted to help Thea and her soulmate, whoever that was.

Thea was persuaded her soulmate didn’t want to be with her because he had run away from her. But she didn’t know why he had run, she didn’t know his reasons and maybe he had a good explanation. Almost five years ago, Felicity had made a decision based on what she thought she knew. It had resulted in a car accident for Oliver and years of separation for them. Now, she knew Oliver was right and Thea and her soulmate were not them but it didn’t mean they wouldn’t end up just like them, hurt and apart. She wanted to help Thea make the right decision, based on facts and not only on suspicions. If he really wanted out of Thea’s life, she’d recommend he did something so that he’d stop hurting her, them. But if he was just scared, she’d provide as much reassurance as she could. Neither Thea nor Oliver were willing to give him the benefit of the doubt but Felicity would. There was too much at stake not to take the risk.

She reached for her computer, her decision made.

She powered it off, a plan forming in her head. She’d need to find out who the girl Thea had visited in the Glades was. Then she’d need to know when she had missed school and when Thea had brought her notes and homework. She’d have to hack into the CCTV camera system and wait for Thea and her soulmate to cross paths. She had said he had been wearing a red hoodie that was something she’d have to remember for when she’d be watching the feed.

She powered her computer on, her heart thrumming in her chest.

She remembered when she was with Cooper, they would spend their nights challenging each other, hacking and coding and bragging about their achievements on hacker forums. Each night had started like that.

With a plan of action.

She clenched her fists before cracking her knuckles. Now wasn’t the time to freak out about her crazy ex.

She was about to hack into the school’s system when she stopped herself, her fingers barely brushing her keyboard.

What if she just checked Thea’s phone GPS? She could find out when and where exactly she had been in the Glades and then look for her on the CCTV camera. It was a much simpler plan and would take less time. She smiled quietly to herself, happy to see it wasn’t that hard to get back in the game.

She heard Cooper’s voice in her head the whole time. It wasn’t just memories from that night in the basement. It was memories of all the other nights, the ones they’d spent together, when she’d thought he cared about her. The words of encouragement he had whispered to gain her trust, the ones of congratulations he had shouted to make her happy. She heard them all and they made her feel sick in her stomach. She’d built her first computer when she had been seven years old and her passion for computers and dream of MIT had kept her sane when she’d been dancing dangerously close to the edge in high-school. And Cooper had ruined that. He had ruined the one thing that had always been hers and hers only.

After a while, she couldn’t hear the sound of the keystrokes as she pressed on them. She couldn’t see her computer screen. His voice was the only thing she could hear, his face the only thing she could see. She almost dropped her computer and rushed outside of her apartment, hoping to run away from him.
Almost.

She thought about Oliver. About their date. She heard his voice in her head.

“You look beautiful.”

“It was a great first meeting. One I thoroughly enjoyed. A day I will cherish the memory of for the rest of my life.”

She saw his blue eyes, his grin that showed his dimples.

She felt his hands in her hair, his lips on her skin and she took a deep breath, shuddering.

In and out, easy, until Cooper’s voice was completely drowned, his face entirely faded.

She parked her car down the street, a few feet away from his house.

Roy Harper’s house, Thea’s soulmate.

He lived in the Glades, the part of town with the highest criminal rate, and he had lived there since he had been born. He was four years older than Thea and a year older than Felicity. It made the blonde feel a bit uncomfortable. What if he refused to listen to what she had to say? She knew she wasn’t your typical twenty almost twenty-one year old. She had been through a lot and it had shaped the person she was, made her grow up faster than she would have, had things been different. Now of course he had no way to know her age but just because she didn’t feel like someone her age, didn’t mean she didn’t look like her age. Because she did.

“Come on Smoak,” she admonished herself. “You didn’t go through all this to turn back now.”

She sighed and glanced at the house in the rear-view mirror. According to what she had found online, Roy Harper Junior had been raised by his single mother and his father, Roy Harper Senior, had always been absent from his life. That had hit far too close from home for Felicity. She knew Oliver didn’t want her to make this personal – he didn’t want her to get involved, period – but how could she not make it personal after what she had learnt? Just like her, Roy had grown up without a father and with a sick mother, albeit his had had cancer and hers had been heartbroken but did the difference really matter? No, her heart claimed. She could relate too much not to feel some strong feelings of sympathy toward him.

However, just because they had grown up in similar environments, it didn’t mean they had turned out the same. Far from it actually. Roy wasn’t a bad boy but he wasn’t an upstanding citizen either – not that she considered herself an upstanding citizen either since she had done a few not so legal things in her life. He worked part-time as a mechanic in the Glades but his wage obviously wasn’t that good since he had been caught stealing a few times and had a record to speak for it. He was apparently in the hot seat as he would be sent to prison if he was arrested again. So yeah, they hadn’t really turned out the same but Felicity wasn’t judging him. Desperate situations called for desperate measures. The thought of stealing had crossed her mind once or twice when things had been financially complicated for her and her mother. She had always found a way to make it, pulling out more shifts at Daisy’s but it hadn’t been easy in any way. Besides just because she had been caught hacking when she was in college didn’t mean she was worth more than him. She had just been better than him at not getting caught.
Taking another deep breath, she glanced at his house again in the rear-view mirror. It looked exactly as it had when she had done her little digging earlier. Seedy and shabby, a wretched house in a wretched neighbourhood. The roof was missing a few tiles, plastic canvas sheet had been used in lieu of a window in what she assumed was the kitchen, the walls and the render were crumbling… The sight broke Felicity’s heart but the most painful thing wasn’t the appalling aspect of his house but the fact that it wasn’t the worst looking one! Meaning there was even more poverty and misery in the neighbourhood. It brought back memories from Felicity’s childhood. She had grown up in a place just like this one and she had been pretty sure her building wasn’t responding to the sanitary norm. She had grown up in a neighbourhood where the cops were reluctant to come because it wasn’t “safe”. She had grown up in some Glades of her own.

Again, how was she supposed not to make this personal? It felt really personal.

She was about to open her door when something caught her attention.

It was a woman, walking on the pavement, tightly holding the hand of a little girl with dark brown hair tamed in pigtails on both sides of her head. Their walk was interrupted by some guy wearing a dark leather jacket, who appeared out of the shadows of a small alley Felicity hadn’t even noticed until now. She gulped, reminded how creepy this place was. The woman stopped walking immediately. She dropped the handle of the shopping bag she was dragging behind her and Felicity, even from the distance, could see her shoulders tense up significantly. And the fact that her little girl went to hide between her legs confirmed her suspicions. The guy who had come out from nowhere meant trouble. Her hand on the handle of her door, she was ready to burst out of her car, should she need to.

She didn’t need to.

A blur of red ran past her car and gripped the guy’s arm. He pulled him aside and the two seemed to engage into a heated argument. They pushed each other rather roughly and Felicity’s breath got caught in her throat, fear clawing at her gut. What if they started fighting? The guy in red looked rather slender and the guy in black much stronger. The woman tried to come between them but red-guy didn’t let her. Eventually, black-guy stepped away, gesturing toward red-guy in a way that could only mean they weren’t done.

Felicity bit on her lower lip in worry as black-guy was fading away, he really was giving her the creep, and red-guy bent forward to grab the shopping bag the woman had dropped. He messed with the little girl’s hair, making her giggle. He got something out of his pocket and handed it to the girl. Felicity couldn’t exactly pick out what it was from where she was sitting in her car but it made the girl giggle and jump in excitement so she guessed it was some kind of sweets or maybe a toy. The woman hugged him before hurrying inside her house a few feet ahead. Red-guy watched them carefully and allowed Felicity to get a glance at his face, as he had stopped moving.

Her heart skipped a beat. It was him, Roy Harper.

She felt silly there for a second, she thought she should have recognised him because of his red hoodie – had he ever worn anything else? The few pictures of him she had found, he had been wearing it and when Thea had seen him, he had been wearing it too. Felicity opened her car door and walked out, determined to talk to him.

“Roy Harper?” She called and his eyes immediately fell on her, his eyebrows creasing.

Quickly, she erased the distance between them, his gaze watching her every move, full of suspicions and distrust. She looked up to see he had pushed down his hoodie, revealing his face to her. With his perfectly chiselled jaw, bright blue eyes and messy brown hair, he reminded her of one of those male
models working for teenagers’ clothing stores. His worn-out jeans, Chuck Taylor’s and dark tee only added to that impression.

“Depends who’s asking,” he told her, his voice low but and his tone unsure.

“Not a cop,” she joked, trying to chase away her nervousness.

She was talking to Thea’s soulmate!

“Obviously!” He said, looking at her from top to toe and back. She shifted her balance on her feet, not comfortable with the way he was staring at her, his eyes squinted. “Wait a minute, aren’t you the chick that’s been on the news lately?”

For the millionth time, Felicity cursed the journalists for showing her face to the whole city.

“If by “chick” you mean young woman and by “on the news” you mean every news channel, newspaper and gossip websites then I’m your girl. I mean I’m not your girl, obviously,” she chuckled, embarrassment reddening her cheeks, “you got what I meant, right?”

A small smile stretched his lips and amusement shone in his eyes. “Don’t worry, I got it Barbie!” And then he had the audacity to wink at her.

She shook her head, frowning. “Don’t… Don’t call me that.”

“Why not? You’re the blonde blue-eyed girl wearing cute pink jeans and driving a mini-cooper.”

She crossed her arms over her chest, annoyed. “Because that’s rude… Abercrombie.”

He shot her a dark glare. “Don’t call me that!”

“Why not?” She replied innocently. “You’re the one rocking that nonchalant bad boy street style all while looking like a model.”

“Okay, okay, you made your point…” He voice trailed off as he was hesitating…

She smiled and raised her hand toward him. “Felicity.”

He took her hand, shook it lightly. “Yeah right. I knew that.” He let go of her hands, putting his own in his pockets and looking away from her. “You should go back to your home Felicity. The Glades aren’t a place for Oliver Queen’s soulmate,” he quickly added with disdain laced in his voice.

Felicity took a step back, deeply hurt by his words. She didn’t want to be defined by her relationship. And just because she had changed, it didn’t mean she had forgotten where she had grown up, where she came from.

“It’s not a place for anyone,” she corrected sharply. “But I saw what you did for that woman. I thought it was really brave,” she added, truly meaning it. Most people would have turned their backs on the situation, but not Roy. Roy had rushed to help and that only told Felicity everything she needed to know about him.

He shrugged. “Little Sadie is a great kid. And Jennifer is nice to me. Rick,” Felicity guessed he was talking about black-guy, “is just the douche son of her ass of a boyfriend.”

She nodded, understanding what was being left unsaid. “They were lucky to have you today.”

“Yeah right… Listen Felicity, you look very nice and all but… It doesn’t take a genius to know why
you’re here and frankly I don’t want to talk about it so leave.”

She tilted her head, frowning. Could he know…? “Talk about what?” She asked.

He sighed and kicked a rock on the ground, still avoiding her gaze. “Talk about her. I know the two of you are friends and I don’t want to listen to whatever it is you have to say. I don’t want to hear about her, I don’t want to know her.” It might have been her imagination but Felicity found that his voice sounded tighter, throatier. And there was a new fragility to it, something that lead her to think he was trying to convince himself more than he was trying to convince her.

“Oh,” was her stunned response. So he knew who his soulmate was. Odd. “She has a name you know,” she said, clearing her throat.

“Doesn’t matter,” he said grumpily. “I don’t care,” he added, taking off toward his house. Felicity followed after him but he was faster than her.

“It does matter and I know you care,” she argued stubbornly, unwilling to let him walk away.

“No, I don’t,” he shot back angrily, his jaw clenched tightly.

“You and I aren’t so different and I know you care because I cared too,” she said, hoping it would make him stop.

It did.

It did take one to know one after all.

Roy turned around, his hands out of his pockets and his fists clenched tightly. There was pain and misery in those blue eyes of his that had been full of arrogant confidence when he had teased her earlier and the sight broke Felicity’s heart. She had seen that look a lot in the mirror as a teenager.

“What is that supposed to mean?”

She opened her mouth to say something but held her words back, Oliver’s voice echoing in her head.

“Again Felicity, they’re not us. You’re making this personal.”

But what if making this personal was the only way to reach Roy?

“It means that I know what’s going on in your head right now.”

He shook his head, his body tightening under the weight of his anger. “No you don’t, how could you?”

She raised her hands up in a calming gesture.

“I’m pretty sure you’ve heard a lot of things about me, not all of them nice but here’s the truth. I grew up in a neighbourhood barely better than this one. My father was MIA and my mother sick. In high-school, I was juggling with my classes and my shifts in a shabby diner. And I felt unworthy of my soulmate, I felt I wasn’t enough and never would be. I thought he deserved better than me. Stronger, richer, prettier.” She paused, letting her words sink in. “And that’s how you feel now, isn’t it?”

He looked down toward his feet. That’s how she knew she had struck home.

“Almost five years ago, I made a terrible decision and I’m still dealing with the consequences of that
“decision,” she swallowed heavily and she felt Oliver’s curiosity and concern rise through their bond. “I wish someone had been there for me back then, to tell me my fears were uncalled for, I wish someone had helped me.” She paused, emotion tightening her throat. “Let me help you Roy, please.”

He sighed and she could see the struggle was real in his eyes.

“Okay,” he eventually said. “I’ll listen to you.”

She nodded, a warm smile stretching her lips.

“Let’s talk inside,” he added, gesturing toward his house.

Again, she nodded before following him. He let her inside and urged her to sit down on the couch. The inside of his house looked better than the outside but Felicity paid it no mind Roy being her only concern.

“You want something?” He asked, fidgeting. “Water, coffee?”

“A cup of coffee would be nice, thank you,” she gladly accepted, slightly amused by his uneasiness. Obviously, he wasn’t used to having guests and his clumsy manners, a result of his desire to do things right, warmed her heart.

She nervously played with the ring on her finger while he poured them coffee and reheated the beverage in the micro-wave. Soon enough, he was handing her a steaming cup and sitting in front of her. She took a sip, the scalding drink burning the tip of her tongue and her throat. Silence settled between them. It was heavy, loaded and Felicity was pretty sure it was what made her feel so nervous all of sudden. She opened her mouth to ask Roy something when he spoke.

“I didn’t create an account in the SID for myself, I never was that kind of guy.”

Felicity tilted her head. “You mean you never believed in soulmates?”

He nodded. “I thought it was an overrated concept, that people were just making a fuss of it for nothing.”

Felicity had to bite back a smile at that. “Most people believe that until they meet their soulmates.”

He nodded. “I thought it was an overrated concept, that people were just making a fuss of it for nothing.”

Felicity had to bite back a smile at that. “Most people believe that until they meet their soulmates.”

“Yeah, I kind of see what you mean.” He paused for a second, his eyes looking down toward his cup of coffee. “We ran into each other four times,” he told her. “The first time was two years ago in July. There is a big firework fired above the ocean for the 4th of July and that’s where we “met,”” he mimed the quotation marks. “She didn’t see me that day, I was just a face in a sea of faces but I saw her. How could I have not?” A sigh. Soft, dreamy. “She was Thea Queen. Angelic smile, happy blue eyes, sun-kissed cheeks…” His voice trailed off as he got lost into his memories of the day. “Dark brown hair down, wavy, short summer dress, leather sandals… The moment I laid eyes on her, I just knew it was her. I can’t explain it, my heart just knew.”

Felicity let out a small breath. “I believe that’s what they call love at first sight,” she whispered, touched by the sincerity she could see in his eyes. They were expressive eyes, letting on more than perhaps Roy was comfortable with.

He gave her a disgusted look. “I told you I’m not that kind of guy.”

“Whatever helps you sleep.”

He rolled his eyes at her but she kept smiling.
“She only noticed me the last time we crossed each other’s path, a few days ago.”

“And you ran,” Felicity said, no judgement in her voice or in her eyes.

“And I ran,” he confirmed.

“Why?” The million dollar question.

“You said it yourself,” Roy sighed, looking suddenly very tired. “She deserves better than me.”

Felicity shook her head vehemently. “I said that’s how you were feeling, I never said it was true.”

“How I feel, the truth, there’s no difference.”

He sounded utterly defeated and Felicity used the look on his face to fuel her mind and heart, to force them to find the right words, the ones that would, perhaps, change Roy’s mind.

“Your perception of the situation blinds your feelings. You think she deserves better but that’s incredibly selfish of you to make that call for her. Worst, if you think this is about what she deserves, you could not be more wrong. It’s about what she needs. Love, stability, support, someone to lean on… A true partner. And that’s who you’re supposed to be. That’s what the mark on your skin means.”

“Me? The screw-up kid from the Glades with a record and no money a true partner? I don’t think so.”

“There’s more to you than that, you proved it to me earlier when you helped Jennifer and her daughter. You ran to them without thinking and what for? Because she’s nice to you. That doesn’t sound that bad to me.”

“She is Thea Queen. I can’t offer her the silver spoon that comes with her last name.”

“It’s the twenty-first century mister, she can provide for herself. Don’t let her family name come between the two of you. It has already cost her a lot, don’t let it cost her you too.”

“I’m not going to feel sorry for her because she was born a Queen and so rich she probably has no idea what to do with the money in her trust fund.”

“I won’t say you should feel sorry for her because Thea doesn’t like pity but you shouldn’t assume that because she was born rich she was always happy. Because she wasn’t,” Felicity said, her tone harsh and dry.

Roy frowned, a questioning look on his face. “This is not my story to tell,” she explained. “Her secrets are her own.” She paused. “But you should know Moira and Robert gave me money to walk out of their son’s life. They thought I wasn’t good enough for him and they did it behind his back. They probably would have done the same thing to you, had you created a SID’s account.”

“Well, you did take the money, didn’t you?” Roy said harshly. “So whatever consequences you’re dealing with, they’re on you.”

The blow hurt. A lot.

“Yeah, I did take the money. My mother was sick and I couldn’t help her, you know how that feels don’t you?” That was a painful reminder and a low blow and he didn’t reply to it. She went on, a lump of guilt forming in her throat. “My point being Moira and Robert weren’t always the best
parents and Thea wasn’t always as happy as the media painted her to be. And since you’re her soulmate, I’m guessing that you know that better than anyone.”

He shrugged. “I always assumed her sadness came from getting a two carat diamond ring and not three.”

Felicity blinked. “You really don’t know her at all, do you?”

“When you were in my shoes, did you know your soulmate perfectly?”

She didn’t reply to him.

“Yeah, I thought so,” he concluded, putting his empty cup on the floor. She followed his lead.

“What about you Roy?” Felicity eventually asked.

“What?”

“Aren’t you tired to fight the pull toward her? To feel her so close and yet not allowing yourself to touch her?” She paused for a second, pondering her next words. “Don’t you think you deserve her? A chance at love, at a new life? She is your true partner as much as you’re hers.”

He frowned. “I- I didn’t think of that.”

Felicity smiled, of course he hadn’t, and she reached for his hand. “That’s because you’re a good person and you’re selfless in your love for her. You want what you think is best for her, even if it’s not the best for you.”

He arched an eyebrow. “So I went from being selfish to selfless? You’re not making much sense Barbie.”

She smiled internally at the nickname. “You’re going to stick to that, aren’t you?”

“I think I will,” he confirmed, offering her a small smile, perhaps the first honest one she had seen him wear. It faded away quickly as a dark shadow took over the blue of his eyes.

“What is it?”

He sighed, deeply, rubbing his face with his hands. “I just wished things were easier. Fate isn’t supposed to be that hard, it’s supposed to happen, whether we like it or not.”

Felicity chuckled lightly, happy to be able to share the things she had come to realize with him. “You know, it’s easy to just believe in fate and wait for things to turn out the way they’re supposed to. After all, we’re talking about soulmates. Nothing’s more fated than that and yet, I’ve realised it also has to be a choice. You’re part of the choice making, it’s your decision. Your soulmate may be your forever but this is still your life and you’re allowed to say “no” to forever.”

For the longest moment, there was only silence between them. Then, a whisper.

“I don’t want to turn my back on my forever.”

“Then, do something before losing what’s meant to be yours to someone else.”
She felt his presence before she stepped inside her building.

She stopped her walk abruptly, her hands tightening on the handle of her purse.

Sighing, she checked his emotions, trying to assess how angry he was.

He wasn’t exactly angry, just upset and confused.

She considered walking away for a brief second but realised it was pretty stupid, considering he’d probably felt her presence the moment she felt his, if not before. Besides, she was done running away from her problems.

“Go deal with it Smoak,” she murmured to encourage herself, walking inside her building.

The ride in the elevator felt shorter than usual and when she walked out, her heart was pounding in her chest. There he was, leaning against her door, his arms crossed over his chest, his blue eyes flashing judgemental stares at her.

“You’re spending so much time on my door-step, maybe I should consider giving you a key,” she joked, trying to ease the tension she could feel growing between them.

She failed, spectacularly.

“You couldn’t let it go, could you?” He asked her.

She blinked. “What?” She asked innocently.

“You had to find him and even worse go talk to him!”

She squared her shoulders, readying herself for the argument that was sure to follow.

She opened her door, getting inside her apartment, Oliver on her steps. He closed the door, more like slammed it actually, and she jumped in surprise, startled.

“That door did nothing to you,” she pointed out.

“Don’t try to change the subject. Why couldn’t you let go of it? Why couldn’t you respect Thea’s wish and let him go? Why did you have to go find him, in the freaking Glades on top of that?”

“Because Thea’s making a mistake,” she yelled, letting her own frustration out.

“That’s not for you to say! We agreed this morning to let her handle things the way she wanted to…”

“No you said that’s what you wanted to do, but I disagreed and you knew that.”

“Felicity…”

“No don’t “Felicity” me,” she interrupted him. “Thea is a romantic at heart, you know that, I know that. She wants to be with her soulmate even if she’s too damn proud to say it out loud. And I know she used to say she wanted him out of her life so that he wouldn’t be sucked in the mess of your parents’ lies but we both know it was just a façade. She wants to be with her soulmate, she’s always wanted to and if we can help her be with him then let’s do it!”

“Why does it matter? He doesn’t want to be with her.”
“Except he does,” Felicity argued. “Thea… She wants to get involve with other people because she’s persuaded he doesn’t want her and maybe I was wrong to go see what was really going with him but I’m not sorry I did. Because someone had to do something before more damage could be done and now we know for sure. He’s a good guy and he really wants to be with Thea. Be mad at me all you want, I won’t change my mind and how I feel which is not sorry.” She paused for a second, holding Oliver’s eyes. “I’m not saying they’re going to get together tomorrow, but now at least Roy knows what to do if he doesn’t want to lose Thea. It’s now up to him to make his move.”

Oliver scanned her face for a while and she crossed her arms over her chest protectively. When he spoke, he surprised her with what he said.

“Roy?” He asked.

“Harper,” she completed. “That’s his name. And he’s a good guy.”

“Roy Harper,” he repeated, trying out the name. He seemed to like it, his negative emotions slowly replaced by softer ones.

“I’m not too happy with what you did today Felicity,” he eventually said. “Even if it turned out alright.”

“I’m not sorry,” she said stubbornly. “Thea has helped me so much, it felt right to help her in return.”

“I don’t want my sister to get hurt.”

“I know, and I can tell you that Roy is the last person who will ever hurt her, at least intentionally. He loves her, I could see it in his eyes, hear it in his voice.”

“Does he?”

“Yeah, he’s showing some serious signs of love at first sight,” she joked and a small smile stretched Oliver’s lips. It warmed her insides and she found herself aching to reach out to him and kiss his dimple. “Are we okay?” She asked, her tone unsure even if she could feel their argument melt like snow under the sun.

He nodded slowly. “Yeah I guess so.”

She let out a small relieved breath.

“But,” she sucked in a breath, “Don’t do stuff like that behind my back again. We’re supposed to be a team, remember?”

“We don’t always see eye to eye,” she objected.

“Then you make me see things your way,” he said, as if it was obvious and easy to do.

“You can be pretty stubborn,” she replied.

“Because you can’t?”

She smiled, knowing he was right. “I just don’t want to force you to agree with me on everything,” she said, nervously playing with her ponytail. “We’re allowed to disagree. I actually think it’s recommended if we want to stay sane!”

“Disagreeing is one thing but making decisions on the other end…”
“I see your point.” Then a second after she added. “I’m sorry.”

He relaxed probably feeling that she truly meant it. He gave her a small smile before opening his arms. “C’me here,” he whispered, crooking his finger. He didn’t have to ask her twice. She all but rushed to him, wrapping her arms tightly around his strong body. He caught her easily, kissing the top of her head tenderly.

They stayed like that, in each other’s embrace for a few minutes, until Oliver asked to know more about Roy. They settled on her couch, Felicity’s legs sprawled over his lap, the kittens climbing on her stomach at some point during the conversation. She told him what she knew about Roy, what she had seen, what they had discussed and she felt him grow hopeful, for his sister and her future.

They ate dinner together watching a movie on Felicity’s TV. It was past ten pm when Oliver started shifting under Felicity’s head, he was holding her against his chest, his body heat keeping her warm.

“Hm,” she protested weakly because she had dozed off a little bit. “Stay,” she whispered, gripping his hand.

He chuckled, his chest vibrating against her back.

“Won’t that be considered getting lost in the bubble?”

She whined, hating it that he was using her own logic against her. “Please,” she said. “You’re here and I want you to stay.”

“Are you sure?”

“Do you really need to ask?” She said, craning her neck to look at him.

He bent his head a little and pecked her lips. “No, I don’t. I just want to hear you say it.”

“Aren’t you a little bit greedy Mr. Queen?”

“Only for you,” he replied, a wicked smile stretching his lips.

She rolled her eyes at his cockiness. “Yes, I’m sure I want you to stay with me tonight.”

“Then I’ll stay.”

“Great,” she said, settling herself back in his arms.

Sometime later, he picked her up to his chest and carried her to her bedroom. As Oliver had often mentioned it, her bed was too small for the two of them together, especially considering Oliver had very wide shoulders. But they eventually made the best out of the situation as Felicity ended up lying on top of Oliver, her fingers clenching his tee-shirt tightly.

She slept soundly that night, without ever waking up.

She was alone when she woke up the next morning, her bed suddenly feeling completely empty without Oliver to fill it entirely. She found a note and a steaming cup of coffee waiting for her in her kitchen. He had gone out early to get a suit at his own place and hadn’t wanted to wake her before
her alarm clock went off. Her heart swooned in her chest as she read the words he had written in that annoyingly perfect handwriting of his.

She was feeling really happy that morning, and it made no doubt in her mind it had something to do with her soulmate and the nights they had spent together. She could feel him in every fibre of her being, right where he belonged and it felt *good*. She was so happy she didn’t complain once when Lyla came to pick her up and dropped her at the office.

When she arrived at Q. Inc, Oliver and Diggle were already there, the bodyguard telling Oliver about the last news about his son, Oliver’s godson. He stopped talking to greet her.

“Good morning Felicity!”

“Good morning to you too, Dig, may it be as bright as mine,” she replied happily, her tone light.

He shot her a surprised look. “Someone’s in a good mood today!”

“I’m in a great mood,” she agreed, shooting him a bright smile and Diggle shook his head, amused by her enthusiasm. Oliver just smiled, her happiness sipping to him through their bond, echoed by his own lightness of heart.

“Hey,” he whispered, bending down to kiss her. She turned her head at the last moment and his lips landed on her cheek. He froze.

“No PDA at the office,” she reminded him and he arched one of his perfect eyebrows, amusement building inside of him. “We have a no sex in the office rule,” she insisted. “We don’t want to scar Diggle. Or anyone working here.”

Oliver bit on his lip and she could see he was struggling to hold back a laugh. His amusement was obvious, filling her heart.

“Dig, tell me, would a kiss scar you?”

He shrugged, looking just as amused as Oliver. “Depends on the kiss.”

Oliver pecked Felicity’s lips before she could process it. It was brief, a mere brush of his lips against hers but it left her skin tingling.

“That kind,” he said.

“Not scarred,” Dig joked and Felicity felt herself blush.

“Great,” Oliver said, pecking her lips again. She slapped his arm in retaliation and it only served to make him laugh. He stole another kiss from her, whispering in the shell of her ear. “Third time’s a charm.”

She giggled happily while Dig shook his head at them. After that, they were all in a great mood when they got to work.

Oliver immediately busied itself with his speech, the one he was going to make to the board of Palmer Technologies. Ray already wanted to work with them, the deal was almost concluded. Oliver only needed to wow the board and they’d give their approval. Felicity had no doubt he would succeed. Obviously she was partially biased, because she was his soulmate but she also truly believed in Oliver. He was charismatic and entertaining. She knew he’d have won them over after three sentences. While he worked on the speech, she got to the technicalities of their trip. She didn’t
have to worry about booking them plane tickets, Ray Palmer had promised to send his private jet. Felicity thought it was considerate and extremely generous while Oliver coughed something that suspiciously looked like “show off”. They’d be leaving on Thursday, have dinner with Ray and some of his business partners that night, do the actual presentation on Friday, have dinner with Ray and his soulmate on Saturday and travel back on Sunday. That planning in mind, she focused on finding them hotel rooms.

That was when problems arose.

She booked a room for Curtis, one for Diggle – since he’d accompany them – but didn’t know whether or not to book a room for Oliver and her, together. The question was legit. They could share a room, already had actually. She didn’t want to sound presumptuous and book a room for the two of them without consulting Oliver first. Maybe he would think it wasn’t such a great idea to mix business with pleasure. Besides she had just reminded him of their no sex rule at the office. But on the other hand… She knew her presence soothed him, the same his soothed her. And surely he’d be anxious before his speech, even though he’d go all manly and pretend to be alright. Maybe it would do him some good to have her by his side?

The thought made a blush spread on her cheeks. Flashes of the previous nights came back rushing to her. The intimacy of their embraces, the heat of their kisses, it all came down in one memory and her skin started tingling in guilty pleasure and a ball of warmth formed itself in her belly, an army of butterflies fluttering around it.

She froze in her seat and looked up from her computer, crossing Oliver’s eyes through the walls of glass separating their offices. His eyebrows were raised in confusion. Then she felt his interest rise inside him and he smirked cockily. He got up and walked to her, looking like a predator about to jump on his prey. The prey being her in that particular case. She gulped. He knew, he just knew what she’d been thinking about, she could see it in his eyes. And from the look of it, it amused him a lot. He was very proud of the way he affected her. She resisted the desire to fan herself that surged through her as he walked toward her, all sexy and confident in his three piece suit and tried to regain her composure.

“Miss Smoak, is there anything you’d like to tell me about?” He asked, grinning smugly.

She cleared her throat, cursing him for being so irresistible. “Actually there is Mr Queen,” she replied and she almost high-fived herself when her voice didn’t waver.

“I’m listening,” he said casually leaning against her desk, his joined hands resting on his knee.

Well, two could play this game. “I was wondering about our sleeping arrangements for New-York.” As she spoke, she pulled her chair back a little and crossed her legs, the hem of her dress following the movement and exposing more of her thigh. Oliver’s eyes zeroed on her and she smiled to herself, glad to see she could unsettle him just as much as he unsettled her.

“What about them?” He asked his voice suddenly huskier.

“Should we share a room or not?”

He tilted his head. “I don’t know, wouldn’t that be considered unprofessional?”

“Not as long as we keep what happens during the day separated from what happens at night.”

“And what happens at night exactly?” He asked, leaning down toward her.

She smiled, feeling more playful than ever. “Wouldn’t you want to know?”
He groaned and cupped her cheek with one hand. “I’m sorry Felicity but I really have to kiss you right now.”

She looked around, they were alone. “Well, if you have to!”

And before she could blink, his lips were pressing against hers, hot and demanding. She gave in and he dragged her into a deep and passionate kiss that left the both of them panting with their cheeks warm and red.

“Book one room,” he whispered as she erased the lipstick on his lips with her thumb. He pressed a soft and lingering kiss to the digit, the small kiss somehow more intimate than the heated one they had just shared. He winked at her then before going back to his desk. She watched him, biting on her lower lip to contain a squeal of delight.

Oh boy, how she loved him.

They spend the rest of the week working and preparing Oliver for his speech to the board of Palmer Tech. Felicity got to see a side of Oliver she had been aware of but hadn’t truly encountered.

He was a perfectionist and wanted to do well.

No, scratch that, he wanted to do great.

He rehearsed his speech using her, Curtis, Dig and sometimes Lyla as his audience, so many times, Felicity ended up knowing it by heart. But he was never satisfied of himself and his presentation, always finding something to correct, always changing a word, a sentence. She knew he was nervous, she knew he was conscious of how important the presentation was. She knew there was more at stake for him than just the fate of Q. Inc – even though that was good motivation enough in itself. She understood it was his way to finally make a name for himself in the business world, his way to finally prove his parents he didn’t need them to succeed and wouldn’t come back home crawling and begging for their help. She realised this was important to him, on a professional as well as a personal level. And she did her best to support him and help him. But when she realised he was being too hard on himself, she recorded him without his knowledge and then showed him the video, so that he could see he was already perfect. It helped him relax, but just a little.

Felicity wasn’t all surprised when she got a call from Curtis telling her he wouldn’t be able to go to New-York them. He had showed up at Q. Inc on Wednesday with a bad cold and a nasty fever. He had sworn he had been fine but he had been all sweaty and gross, with his stuffed nose and so she had had to send him home. She had even asked Diggle to drive him back, as she had been afraid he wouldn’t be able to drive himself back. Yeah, he had been that sick.

This bad news had done nothing to ease Oliver’s nerves. Curtis was essential to the presentation as he was the brilliant mind behind the technology they were going to introduce as he was supposed to handle the technical part of the presentation. Felicity could take his place but she didn’t feel comfortable presenting his work. He had put all his effort and energy in the battery and she really had wanted for him to be able to show it to the world. Or in this case to the board of Palmer Tech.

And it was only the first thing that went wrong that day.

Diggle found himself unable to come with them, as he was busy with Lyla – Oliver hadn’t needed to
say more for Felicity to understand the meaning behind his words. With Curtis cancelling on them as well, it was only going to be the two of them in New-York. Not that they minded it, it just wasn’t ideal security-wise. Felicity, determinate to do everything so that Oliver could focus on his presentation and woo old business men, rearranged everything before he could worry about it. After that problem was solved, she thought everything would be alright.

Quite the opposite ensued.

The dry-cleaner’s messed up with their orders, meaning Oliver’s tux wasn’t ready when they came to pick it up before going to the airport. Felicity arranged for a rental to be delivered at the airport so that the plane’s crew could get it for them.

When Oliver and Felicity made it to the airport and to their plane, it was to be told they couldn’t leave because of the bad weather. It hadn’t been great when Felicity had woken up but things had worsened during the morning meaning that instead of taking off at ten am, as they had planned, they’d have to wait for a few hours, if not for the entire day.

“Everything’s going to be alright,” Felicity told Oliver in a desperate attempt at calming him down. She soothed the creases between his brows with her thumb. They had left the plane to get a cup of coffee in a near-by coffee-shop.

He gave her a look.

Okay, change of tactic.

“Look at the bright side, things can’t possibly get…”

“Don’t finish that sentence!” He said, covering her mouth with his hand. “Please don’t.”

“Hmpf!” She groaned from behind his hand. He released her and they sat down soon after, steaming cups of coffee in hands.

“Those are very bright red pants,” he told her, tugging her legs in his lap.

“You like this colour on me,” she replied without thinking. He gave her a very intense look, the kind that made warmth spread inside her stomach and her toes curled in her shoes. She shrugged, offering him a small smile.

“I love it,” he corrected, his hand reaching out to put a loose strand of her hair back in place. He opened his mouth to say more but she interrupted him, gesturing at her ringing phone. It was the cab company she had called earlier to replace the car they had rented to drive around New-York. She told them their plane had been delayed and that she’d call them back before they took off. Depending on when, the cab would either drop them at their hotel or drive them to the restaurant they were supposed to have dinner at. She came back to Oliver when she was done with her phone-call. His blue eyes, full of thoughts and longing, were stuck on her.

“What?” She asked, tugging at the hem of her pullover in a nervous gesture.

“Thank you,” he whispered, reaching for her hand, “for this week, for today. Thank you for your presence and your patience and your support…” His voice trailed off with things unsaid and she felt her heart swell in her chest at the love she could feel coming off from him. “I’m lucky to have you by my side,” he whispered after a second.

“There’s no place I’d rather be,” she whispered back bringing his hand to her lips so that she could drop a lingering kiss to the back of it.
He brought her hand to his lips and returned the kiss. “You kept me sane this week,” he murmured against her skin.

“Well that’s my job. As your EA and your soulmate. And you know, keeping you sane helped keeping me sane so it was a win/win situation.”

He tilted his head. “Why is that?”

“I can’t think about anything else when you’re everything that’s on my mind.”

He smiled, tilting his head in that cute way of his. “Is that a side effect of the bubble?”

_It’s a side effect of loving you._

“Exactly,” she replied, smiling back at him.

Eventually their plane was able to take off a few hours later. They wouldn’t have time to stop by their hotel if they wanted to be on time for their dinner so they’d have to change on the plane but it didn’t bother them at all. Being on time was the only thing that mattered.

Felicity took it upon herself to distract Oliver from overthinking their dinner and his presentation by talking to him about literally anything, as long as it didn’t involve Q. Inc, the battery or Palmer Tech. At the beginning their conversation was light and easy, talking about nothing had always been easy for them, but quickly it turned into something more. Oliver asked about her mother. He was eager to see her again. For Felicity, it was the perfect way to talk to him about her mother’s plan to move to Star City. She hadn’t expected his very enthusiastic yes. When she asked him about it, he told her he just wanted to know everything about her and that included her family. And when she suggested they gave her mother the money his parents had given her so long ago, he agreed. According to Oliver, it would enrage his parents more to see the money used to anchor Felicity some more to Star City than having it returned to them. Felicity wasn’t sure she wanted to enrage his parents more than they already had, but she knew she wanted her mother to have everything she wanted and so she’d give her the money. Oliver even offered to go to Vegas and help her move out. Felicity wasn’t too eager to go back to Vegas but Oliver had little stars shining in his eyes when he mentioned the trip, she found herself unable to blankly reject his offer. They agreed it was something they’d need to talk about again and more seriously, later. Felicity’s heart fluttered in her chest at the thought of her mother coming to Star City. She missed her a lot and her presence in the city would make things easier for her.

Felicity started getting ready a couple of hours before they landed. Under Oliver’s watchful eyes, she braided her hair and used tiny hairgrips to pin them on top of her head. He was impressed by her efficient technique and she confessed it was something her mother and she used to do after Donna got out of the clinic in Boston. Sunday mornings were generally spent chatting, painting each other’s nails and braiding hair.

“It was one of those bonding moments the doctors encouraged us to have. I think I already told you I wasn’t really a girly girl back then.”

“You might have mentioned it, once or twice,” he nodded.

“Well, trust me I made some _really_ bad personal style choices but still… I enjoyed those moments with my mom. Although I hated anything pink!” She chuckled.

“Unbelievable! It’s like your favourite colour now!”

She shrugged. “Pink, yellow, orange, purple, I love them all.”
“Green’s my favourite!” Oliver confessed.

She tilted her head. “I feel like we’ve already had that conversation before but do tell me why again. If there’s a reason, that is.”

“Two places: Emerald Bay, Lake Tahoe.”

Felicity frowned, the name sounding familiar. “That’s where your grandparents had their cabin, isn’t it?”

He nodded. “I’ll take you there one day.”

“I’d love to,” she replied before getting up and moving to the small bathroom to do her make up and get dressed. She felt a bit anxious as she put on her dress. It wouldn’t be the first time she was going to attend an even with Oliver. But before, she had been just his EA and now she was his soulmate and it put some pressure on her shoulders. She hadn’t let Oliver see it, this trip wasn’t about her, but about him and his company but as she was a part of his life, a huge part, she couldn’t help but feel nervous. It was why she’d been glad, relieved, to have Oliver to occupy her thoughts. That way she hadn’t been able to think about the things that were scaring her.

Men in suits and the memories of Cooper.

It was all hitting her pretty hard as she was getting ready.

In a couple of hours she’d be back in New-York, facing business men and helping Oliver woo them.

Because apparently that was her life now.

She had been thinking that quite often lately.

She brought her necklace up to her neck but soon realised she couldn’t clasp it because of her shaking hands. Her sweaty palms even made difficult the grasp of the very tiny clasp. Why did they have to make such tiny clasps? She breathed out heavily, frustration growing inside of her.

Strong, steady hands closed over hers and pulled her back slightly. She collided with a warm and firm chest.

“Allow me,” he whispered against the shell of her ear, his hot breath dancing on her skin.

“Okay,” she replied throatily, letting go of her necklace. He closed it easily, too easily but instead of pulling away from her, his face lingered against the side of her neck. He nuzzled the sensitive spot hidden there, behind her ear and her eyes fluttered close. In a second, he had taken over her world, replacing everything bad by the feel of him. He was the best of drugs, quickly getting her the highest.

“Everything’s going to be alright,” he told her and he said the words with such faith, she believed him instantly.

“Hey! That’s my punchline. Find your own Mr. Queen!”

He chuckled and rubbed his beardy cheek against her, inhaling deeply.

“God, I’m obsessed with your perfume,” he whispered, threading his fingers with hers, his lips brushing against her skin, just a hint of a touch.

“Just my perfume?” She teased.
“Fishing for compliments Ms Smoak?”

“Perhaps,” she replied, smiling at him in the mirror of the small bathroom.

He smiled back at her and dropped a feather like kiss on the side of her throat. “I’m obsessed with your skin,” another kiss, “with your ear,” another kiss, “your cheek,” another kiss, “your hair,” another kiss.

She bit on her lower lip, aware the plane’s crew wasn’t that far.

“And your lips too,” he added, shifting his position so that he could kiss the corner of her mouth.

“Careful with my makeup Mr Queen,” she warned, raising her index finger.

“It’s perfect,” he said caressing her cheek.

“And I wish for it to stay that way.”

“I promise they will.” He planted another kiss, right on her lips this time before dragging her back to her seat. Then, he proceeded to get ready for the party and put on the tux Felicity had rented. From what Oliver had told her, Ray Palmer had booked a fancy restaurant in Manhattan for the evening and there would be not only board members of Palmer Tech attending the dinner but other businessmen and philanthropists. According to Oliver, Palmer had taken it upon himself to introduce them to the business’ elite of the East Coast.

“I’m wondering who’s trying to woo who,” she told Oliver as she looked up the guests list on her tablet. “Palmer or you.” She then looked up from the screen and her eyes went wide. Her heart skipped a beat at the sight of Oliver. His white shirt fitted him perfectly and his jacket hung loosely on his shoulders because he hadn’t closed it yet, revealing the suspenders hidden beneath the dark fabric. He was a vision of nonchalant male beauty and he was hers.

“Did I miss our landing in Heaven?”

“Ha ha ha,” Oliver pretended to laugh, his hands coming up to take care of his bow-tie. She watched him do it carefully and waited until he was done and had closed his jacket to straighten it. She ran her fingers through his hair.

“There, you look perfect,” she whispered, smoothing the strands on the front.

“So do you,” he replied.

They both sat down, knowing there was little time left until the landing. Oliver grabbed Felicity’s hand after only a few minutes holding onto her and offering the possibility to hold onto him as well.

“Look at where we are,” she said, her eyes drawn to the skyline of the city that was said to never be sleeping. “A few months ago, you were interviewing me and now we’re here,” she gestured at her window. Oliver nodded, a small smile stretching his lips.

“Started from the bottom now we’re here,” he said.

“I think you can be proud of what you’ve accomplished.”

“What we accomplished,” he corrected, raising their joined hands. “I’m pretty sure I would never have been able to understand a word coming out of Curtis’ mouth without you.”

She opened her mouth to protest but he cut her off immediately.
“This is not me devaluing myself. I know I’m smart, I’m just not techie smart like you or Curtis.”

“I think you handled yourself just fine for someone who got a D in tenth grade algebra.”

He arched an eyebrow, a chuckle threatening to escape his lips.

She shrugged. “If it’s online I can find it.”

He gave her a look.

“What? You didn’t think I would start working for someone without knowing who I was dealing with, did you?”

“I thought you didn’t use computers anymore.”

“I didn’t but I’m getting back to it.” She paused, then said. “Thanks to you.”

Oliver was about to reply but the pilot interrupted him, saying they were about to start landing.

“New-York, here we come,” Oliver said.

“You could be the king but watch the Queen conquer,” Felicity hummed.

Oliver raised his index finger in warning. He hated puns about his name. And for some reasons, Felicity absolutely loved them.

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They arrived at the restaurant around 8:30pm. Oliver had called Ray Palmer to warn him they’d be coming in late and he had been really comprehensive. When they arrived, Oliver and Felicity introduced themselves to the maître d’, who guided them upstairs. Ray had booked the entire floor to entertain his twenty-five or so guests.

“Try not to drool too much when we see Palmer,” Oliver whispered in her ear during the elevator ride.

She arched an eyebrow, fighting back the urge to nudge him hard in the ribs. “Oh but why, are you jealous Mr Queen?”

He faked a laugh. “Something like that,” he replied.

She rolled her eyes at him, more amused than annoyed.

Ray Palmer was there to greet them when they stepped out of the elevator.

“Mr Queen, finally you’re here!” He greeted Oliver, shaking his hand energetically. “And Ms Smoak, it’s a pleasure to see you again. I hope you remember my soulmate Anna?” He gestured at the pregnant woman by his side.

“Of course, it’s very nice to see you again,” Felicity replied shaking Ray’s hand before shaking Anna’s, who was already asking her about their flight and if it had been good in spite of the weather. Felicity answered her questions politely while taking her in. If Felicity hadn’t already been in awe of her because of her journalistic work, she had just won the Pulitzer Price, she would have started
admiring her right here and there. She was pulling off her pregnant belly with grace in the chiffon dustiy mint dress she was wearing. She also had on heels that were probably killing her feet but didn’t let it show. She was that kind of woman, smart and always looking beautiful and ten kinds of perfect.

They got the chance to talk a little before Ray dragged Oliver, and her, away and introduced them to the other people attending the dinner. Her heart fluttered in her chest when he said she was not only Oliver’s EA but also his soulmate. In the eyes of their society, being a soulmate was a title in its own right, and being someone’s soulmate was as important as being their husband or wife, if not more. Felicity was thrilled to have her status recognised and she knew, thanks to their bond, that Oliver echoed the feeling. They were caught in a whirlwind of hands to shake and courtesies to exchange and at some point Felicity’s mind went into autopilot. She replied when someone was talking to her but otherwise stayed quiet to let Oliver shine.

At some point though, he was dragged into a conversation about sports by a man, whose name Felicity couldn’t remember, and the blonde found herself alone with Ray Palmer and his soulmate as her only companions. Ray engaged her in a conversation about the recent discoveries made by Harrison Wells and his team in Central City about particles. He was aiming to build a particle accelerator that should be able to power the whole city with clean energy. Their conversation was short, he had to leave her as he had other guests to entertain, but animated. Felicity turned toward Anna, who had lingered next to her. The blonde had a feeling the other woman wanted to talk to her about something.

“So how have you been Felicity? I’ve heard my “confreres” in Star City have been giving you a hard time.”

Felicity chuckled dryly. “That’s one way to put it. Actually, I wanted to thank you and your soulmate for accepting to work with us. I know some people would have been reluctant to give us a chance because of all the bad press we’ve been getting.”

Anna smiled. “You don’t have to worry about that, Ray doesn’t really pay attention to the news unless it concerns the tech world.”

Felicity arched an eyebrow, surprised. “That’s ironic considering you’re a journalist!”

Anna chuckled. “I know right?” She paused for a second. “By the way, I was wondering if you and Oliver had done anything to turn the tables.”

Felicity blinked. “No, not really. We’re tired of the press and we’re just praying they’ll lose interest in us soon.”

“As a, relative, expert of that kind of situation, I was thinking that maybe I could give you some advice? Feel free to say no, of course, but since you’re going to be in town for a couple of days I thought it could be interesting to talk about your options.”

Felicity frowned at the word “options”. “Sure, I guess. I’ll have to talk about it with Oliver though…”

“Of course,” Anna agreed. “I-” She didn’t get to finish her sentence though, her soulmate interrupted her, saying it was time for them to sit and eat.
It was close to midnight when they finally made it back to their hotel. The day had been long and quite eventful, Felicity was feeling exhausted in all her limbs and bones. Her head had been resting on Oliver’s shoulder in the cab and she had had a hard time keeping her eyes opened. When they made it to their suite, she was too tired to appreciate her surroundings. She just made a bee-line for the bed and collapsed onto it.

Someone shook her shoulder.

“Felicity.”

“Hmm,” she sighed against the comforter.

“You might want to change your clothes.”

She turned her head. “I’m sleeping,” she whispered.

She could hear his smile when he said. “C’me on, you’ll be more comfortable in your pajamas.”

She turned around on her back and smiled dreamily at him.

“Tonight was a great night,” she whispered.

“It was indeed,” he nodded, helping her get her heels off. “I think I did a great job at getting people to like me,” he added, keeping her feet prisoner, gently massaging the soles.

“I think all the women that were present are in love with you,” she confessed, closing her eyes and abandoning herself to the feeling of his touch through her tights.

He tilted his head. “Are you jealous Ms Smoak?”

“As much as you were when I was talking with Mr Palmer.”

“Touché.” And yet, a shadow crossed his eyes. Tommy’s words about lingering insecurities came back to her.

“What is it?” She asked, supporting her weight on her shoulders so she could look at him better.

He shrugged. “It’s just… You can talk about things with him you can’t talk about with me.”

“And by “things” you mean “boring techie stuff”?“

“You don’t think it’s boring,” he pointed out.

“No, I don’t that’s right. But it also doesn’t matter to me. At least, not nearly as much as the things we talk about together do.”

He nodded, his thumbs still rubbing over her feet. “I’m sorry, it’s just that you seemed really passionate when he talked about that particle thingy and…”

She arched an eyebrow. “Oliver Queen did you eavesdrop my conversation with Ray Palmer instead of listening to what Mr I-can’t-remember-his-name was telling you?”

He gave her a sheepish look. “Maybe?”

She shook her head, chuckling and jumped on her knees on the bed. She wrapped her arms around his neck and planted a big kiss that was all lips on his mouth.
“You’re an idiot Oliver Queen,” she stated.

“Too bad you can’t get rid of me,” he replied.

She rolled her eyes at him. “As if I would ever get rid of you,” she said before kissing him again, this time more deeply, more passionately. They were both breathing heavily when they parted.

“Let’s get ready to go to bed,” she decided and he nodded his consent. She let go of him and jumped off the bed.

“What are you doing?” He asked when he saw her open his suitcase and get a white tee-shirt.

“I didn’t bring any pajamas,” she said innocently.

His eyes widened. “You’re killing me,” he breathed out. She just winked at him in response.

She locked herself in the bathroom and was quick to get ready for bed.

She stumbled on her way out, panic and fear flooding her body, rushing through her bond with Oliver. It happened quickly, it was so sudden, she felt like she had been hit right in the chest. Breathing became difficult, black spots danced in her eyes. She yanked the door open, her heart speeding up in her chest, her hands shaking like leaves in a storm.

She found him in their room, on the phone. His face was pale, his free hand shaking.

“Thanks for calling me,” he said. “I’ll be there as soon as I can.”

He hung up.

“What’s going on?” She asked when he didn’t say anything.

He looked up, his eyes meeting hers. Her next breath got caught in her throat when she saw the pain and the fear shining in his blue orbs. She had never seen that look on him. Dread filled her. Something terrible must have happened.

“It’s Thea,” he said, his voice sounding as broken as he looked. “She’s in the hospital.”

Felicity’s eyes widened and her heart started hurting in her chest.

“What?”

“She’s been stabbed.”

Chapter End Notes

SO... You must all hate me now. Sorry(notsorry). :)

What did you think of the chapter? Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly
happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)

Chapter 18 - There is a place where I feel at home

Chapter Notes

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY GUYS!!!!
HELLO REMEMBER ME??�I'M BAAAACKKKK!!!!

Okay, okay, enough caps.

So hi guys, it's me! I know I've been away for a very long time and I'm really sorry about it but things have been hectic and that's why I've been absent. Real life kept me busy, this year is very important for me at school and it didn't start very well so... I needed to focus on that more than anything else. Besides I felt like my writing didn't really matter anymore and I also kind of wanted out of the fandom and Olicity so... I decided to take a break. I'm sorry guys but I really needed it. Things are better now and so I started writing again at the beginning of the year. It took me longer than I expected to post this chapter.... But finally it's here, right on time for Valentine's day!
I know I haven't replied to all the comments but I was late in the replies.... I thought you'd love a chapter more than replies so here's an update. I want you to know that I read them all and they made me extremely happy. I'll reply to every comment from now on.
Thanks for everyone who has supported me while I was gone, thanks to all my friends for their presence and advice and for putting up with me when I was having nervous break-downs or doubting myself... I love you guys!

Happy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 18:

“There is a house built out of stone
Wooden floors, walls and window sills
Tables and chairs worn by all of the dust
There is a place where I don’t feel alone
There is a place where I feel at home

And I build a home
For you...

For me…”

- The Cinematic Orchestra, To build a home.
"It’s Thea, she’s been stabbed."

Felicity felt like her whole world had stopped spinning. Her lungs weren’t working, her heart wasn’t beating, her eyes weren’t blinking. She was standing perfectly still in a world of quiet.

Everything had just completely stopped.

"She’s been stabbed."

Felicity’s vision blurred as tears welled up in her eyes.

She blinked, a single drop of salty water running down her cheek. It landed on her hand, startling her.

And then everything started moving again.

Panic and fear rushed through her veins, knocking her next breath out of her. She was struggling to inhale when white hot anger joined the party and flooded her veins, making her blood boil under her skin, and her pulse pound furiously against her neck. Oliver’s own panic, fear and anger melted with hers in her heart and in her soul and it was too much. She was drowning, burning, suffocating in emotions, and for the first time in her life, she didn’t enjoy her connection with her soulmate but resented it with everything she had. Because everything was just too much and she couldn’t handle it.

Oliver hated it just as much if his loud gasp and the look of sheer pain in his eyes were any indication and when logic would have wanted them to step away from the other, to put some distance between them and the raw emotions raging inside their hearts, they both took a step toward each other instead. Because their instincts knew better.

They fell into each other’s arms, Oliver holding onto Felicity harder than he ever had before, his grip so tight it almost hurt. She wrapped her arms around his neck, holding him close, the trembles of his body echoing in her own limbs.

He didn’t say a word but she knew the words “she’s been stabbed” were playing on a loop in his mind because they were also playing on a loop in hers. He was in shock, complete shock and the shaking of his body was a consequence of the fear gnawing at him, eating him alive. And it was pulling at her, dragging her down the same path of utter terror. And she couldn’t afford that, she couldn’t crumble too because he needed her to be his rock just like he had always been hers when she had needed him. When she had tripped, he had picked her up and now she had to do the same for him. But it was so hard, as she felt his emotions as if they were hers and they were doubling her own fear, her own worry, dragging her down with him while she was desperately trying to keep herself afloat.

One of her shaking hands trailed down his back and she started rubbing it, the gesture both meant to soothe him and anchor her. She breathed slowly in and out and whispered.

“IT’s okay, it’s okay, it’s okay.”

It wasn’t, they both knew it but she said it nonetheless, letting the words sink in until she had gathered enough strength back for the both of them. She said it until the flow of his emotions receded a bit, until the thread of their bond stopped roaring in their heads because of the too many strong emotions passing through it. She said it until his presence within her lessened, until they disentangled themselves from each other. She said it until he stopped trembling, until the gate opened and words
flooded out of his mouth.

“Thea,” he repeated, the thickness of his voice not lost on Felicity. “I need to go, I need to get to her… She’s in the hospital, she needs me.” He paused for a second, his eyes widening in horror. “She hates hospitals Felicity, I have to go! I have to hold her hand and tell her it’s okay and…” A shadow darkened his eyes. “But what of Palmer? And the presentation? But Thea, she’s my sister, I have to…”

She pulled away from him and cupped his face between her hands. Her breathing had settled a little and she’d managed to calm down her racing heart too. She was still holding Oliver but she now felt between the two of them some sort of a wall. They were still physically touching but she felt distance stretch between their usually joined emotions. She didn’t know what it was or where it came from. Was it her who had put that wall between them, who had distanced herself from the rawness of his emotions? Or was it him who had pulled away in some stupid chivalrous way to protect her from his pain? No matter what the answer was, the wall was there. It was hard, unnatural and close to painful. But it allowed her to think clearly when he obviously couldn’t as he was just too hurt and too confused. Still, they were meant to be one, to share everything not to pull away from the other and Felicity dreaded that distance between them. But then again, the both of them unable to think straight wouldn’t help Thea.

Clearly.

Felicity needed to think clearly for the both of them.

“Oliver, listen to me,” she asked softly, a lump forming in her throat when their eyes met. She had never seen a pain like this in his blue eyes. She didn’t want to see it, ever again. “There’s only one person that needs you right now and it’s Thea. Focus on her and her only, she’s what matters most.”

“But Palmer and the board-” he started to protest, but his heart wasn’t in it.

“Oliver, don’t think about them,” she interrupted him firmly. Then, her stupid mouth got away from her. “I’ll handle them.” He opened his mouth to say something but she was quick to shut him up. “Oliver, I can do it, trust me.” She hesitated for a second, put back a strand of hair that had fallen. “We’re going to call you a cab and you’re going to fly back to Star City. You’ll be there in no time, okay? You don’t need to worry about the presentation or Palmer or anything because I’ll stay here and I’ll take care of everything. Think only about Thea, okay?”

He nodded and her thumbs delicately caressed his quivering lips.

“Okay.” She knew she had been saying the word way too much but she needed him there with her and having him nod every time she said “okay” was one way to make sure he was. “I’m going to call a cab,” she went on, “you go get your things.”

He nodded again and she moved away from him, focusing on what she needed to do right now and not what she’d need to do later, concerning Palmer and the board. She had no idea how the hell she was supposed to handle them and do Oliver’s presentation. She shook her head, pushing those dark thoughts aside. She needed to focus on one problem at a time and not freak out about everything at the same time.

The phone call was brief and she soon turned again to face Oliver. He had sat down on the bed and his hands were joined over his knees. The sight of him tore her heart in pieces. Gone was her playful soulmate, her strong unshakeable Oliver. He looked so small on the bed, with his shoulders down and distraught darkening his eyes. It twisted her insides to see him like that and she rushed to his side her hands coming up to cover his. She wished she didn’t have to stay, she wanted to go with him, to
be at his side, at Thea’s side…

“Who called you?” She asked, her voice shaking with emotions. “What happened?”

He turned his face to look at her and she soothed the crease between his eyebrows with the tip of her finger. The gesture was soft and tender and she hoped it would soothe more than the crease. The wall between them was still firmly in place, not completely blocking him from her but seriously diminishing their connection. Was it a defensive move? Something they had both put in place to protect themselves from the other’s pain? When they were feeling the same thing, the echo effect always tended to intensify their own emotions. It was great when they were lusting for example, and not so great when they were in pain. Was this distance between them an automatic reaction of protection? She didn’t know.

“A nurse from the hospital. I’m Thea’s emergency contact. She said she’d been brought in with a – with a…”

He pinched his lips together tightly and Felicity’s heart clenched in her chest.

“A what? Oliver talk to me,” she begged, half-whispering, her thumb coming up to stroke the skin of his forehead tenderly.

“A wound to her back,” he eventually said, his voice failing him. “She was with her soulmate.”

Felicity’s mouth fell open. “Roy? She was with Roy? Was he hurt too?”

Oliver shrugged. “I don’t know, she didn’t tell me. Thea… She said they were taking her in surgery… She talked about her kidney and some internal bleeding…”

Surgery.

Felicity felt like a heavy weight had been dropped on her shoulders.

Internal bleeding.

Things were bad.

They already were but somehow they had just gotten worse.

Her hands shaking, Felicity swallowed heavily in spite of her throat feeling tight.

“Call Tommy,” she said suddenly, getting on her feet. “Call Tommy and tell him to go to the hospital, to be there for Thea until you can be there yourself. Your cab is on its way, I’m going to make sure you’re on the next plane for Star City.”

Oliver nodded, reaching for his phone while she rushed to her bag and unpacked her laptop. It was only a matter of minutes before she had a seat for Oliver on the first plane leaving JFK for Star City, as she had promised. In the meantime, Oliver had ended his phone-call with Tommy. He was paler than he had been before and his features were strained, his eyes wary. He looked just as exhausted as he felt, not that she knew much about how he was feeling as there was still this barrier between the two of them. It was nothing like the wall that had been between them while she had been taking the med. No, this time it was different. It was more like an opaque veil had fallen over his emotions. She felt them there somewhere but she couldn’t feel them.

It was weird.
But sadly as she caught the time on her laptop, she realized they’d have to figure things out later.

“Your cab will be here any minute now. Let’s get you downstairs.” She reached for her coat but when he didn’t move she stopped moving. “Oliver?” She asked, her arms half-way through the sleeves.

He stood in the middle of the room frozen, tears making his blue eyes shine.

“What if…?”

“Don’t,” she hastily cut him off, crossing the room to join him. “Don’t think about anything else but getting to Thea. It’s what matters most.”

“But what if she…”

“Oliver no,” she said, her tone drier and harder than she had expected. “Don’t go there or you’ll drive yourself crazy.”

He nodded.

“Thea is young and strong, she’ll make it.”

He nodded again and she nodded too.

Because frankly, she didn’t know if it was him she was trying to convince or herself.

Quickly, they gathered his stuff and went downstairs to wait for his cab. The elevator ride that had earlier been filled with lazy kisses and soft touching was now filled with tension and not the kind they liked. It was the kind of tension that kept people awake at night, the kind of tension that hurt the soul.

“Call me when you’re at the airport, in the plane, when you land, when you arrive at the hospital,” Felicity told him as they put his suitcase in the cab’s trunk. “Call me whenever you can and if you can’t just text me and keep me updated okay?”

Oliver nodded haphazardly.

“She’s going to be alright,” she said, gripping the lapels of his coat.

“I really hope so,” he said, his voice so rough it was almost unrecognizable. He swallowed then said. “I’m sorry I’m leaving you alone here, I wish…”

She interrupted him by putting her index finger on his lips. He naturally pressed a soft kiss against it and she smiled at him, the simple gesture resonating deeply inside her.

“None of that. I’ll handle everything here like a pro. I had the best example after all.”

He smiled at her. It was small and strained but it was his smile. She leaned up on her toes and pressed a brief kiss to his lips.

“Go now and don’t worry about me,” she said as she ushered him in the cab even though he was reluctant to let go of her hand. With the distance between them, between their emotions, they needed the physical contact more than ever.

“Be careful Felicity,” he whispered, his blue eyes heavy on her.
She nodded, gulping. “You too Oliver.”

His answer was to squeeze her fingers. They stared at each other for a few more seconds, their eyes conveying all the things they didn’t have the time to say. Felicity was the one to pull away eventually and she closed the cab’s door, the sound of it slamming echoing loudly in her ears. She stepped aside and watched the cab pull away with a sinking feeling in her stomach.

Thea was fighting for her life back in Star City.

She was left alone to deal with things in New-York.

Neither she nor Oliver had acknowledged the barrier between them.

Things weren’t just bad.

They were really, really bad.

The chilly air of the night got her out of her thoughts and forced her to retreat back inside the hotel. She moved back to her room, her chest laden with lead. She leaned against the room’s door for a while after closing it, a ball of knots tightening her throat. Everything was quiet and just as it was when she had left with Oliver. She looked around, her arms crossed tightly over her chest, in a weak attempt at holding herself together. Less than an hour ago, she had been teasing Oliver about not bringing any pyjamas with her and there she was now, alone and still wearing the pretty dress she had worn at the restaurant.

She dragged herself to the bathroom and took a quick shower, changing into a pair of jeans and a sweat-shirt. She knew there would be no sleep for her that night. She was well too worried about Thea to close her eyes. And in addition to that, she didn’t feel all comfortable now that she was alone. Coming back to the city hadn’t been an easy decision but she had made it knowing that Oliver would be with her every step of the way. But now he was gone and she was left alone to deal with not only Ray Palmer but also her own fears and personal demons.

So yeah, no sleep for her that night.

Her phone buzzed somewhere in the room and when she couldn’t find it she turned everything upside down, frustration gnawing at her. Finally she found it, still in her purse. She mentally slapped herself, mad at her own self, and saw a text from Tommy informing her he was at the hospital and that the nurses had agreed to keep him updated on Thea’s condition although he wasn’t technically family. Felicity didn’t know how he had managed to do that but she imagined all the donations he had made over the years might have come in handy. She replied with a quick text, telling him when Oliver’s plane was meant to take off. They texted back and forth for a while until they were left with nothing else to say. Felicity grabbed her laptop and sat down right on the floor, the rug covering it was soft and fluffy. She needed to figure something out for the presentation the next day and there was nothing else to do as she waited for news on Thea’s health.

She clicked on one of the videos she had recorded while Oliver had been repeating his speech. It was a bit messy because he was always stopping himself and when he wasn’t she was the one interrupting him but in the end, she had a pretty good idea of what his speech was. Not that she needed it because he had rehearsed so many times in front of her, she already knew it by heart. No, what she needed to know was how to deliver the speech. Because she could know the words all she wanted and still suck at saying them. And she didn’t want that, at all.

Deciding that if she was going to spend the night working on that stupid speech, she would at least do so with coffee and sugar in her veins, she was a stress eating kind of woman, she got up and went
to buy herself coffee and donuts at the diner she had noticed down the street and which was, luckily, opened 24/7. She came back with enough coffee to keep an army awake for days and enough sugary donuts to make Oliver’s eyes roll.

Except he wasn’t here. Because Thea was in the hospital and he was on his way to her.

Feeling weak at the knees, Felicity sat down and ran a hand through her hair in frustration. One of her closest friends was fighting for her life and there was nothing she could do to help her. She hated feeling like that, so helpless and so powerless. Her phone chirped and she reached for it with shaking hands, hoping and fearing at the same time to see a text from Tommy. It wasn’t him though but Oliver who was informing her his plane was about to take off. She wished him a safe trip and got to work. She couldn’t do anything to help Thea but she could help Oliver, she had promised him she would.

The presentation was supposed to take place at nine am the next morning. It would be followed by a tour of the company and a business lunch. Then Felicity would be free, dinner with the Palmers being only the following day. But she was hoping they’d understand that she had to shorten her visit and let her leave the city right after the business lunch. Ray and Anna had stricken her as family people and that was why she was kind of expecting them to sympathize with Oliver and her. She was also hoping Ray, who really seemed to be a decent person in addition to a genius, would get why Oliver had to leave in such a hurry. She really needed him to be on her side because she had a pretty good idea of how the situation would look like to the board members. They wouldn’t be easily convinced to work with Q. Inc by someone that wasn’t the CEO and even worse, Oliver’s absence would probably work in their disfavour, making them seem unreliable and not trustworthy. Hopefully, she’d be able to turn things around but she knew she’d need all the help she could get to do so. Hence why she was hoping to get Ray Palmer on her side.

She worked on the presentation all night long, reviewing numbers and stuff, a part Oliver usually handled. And she felt grateful that their connection had been strong before they even knew about it because as much as he’d learnt techy stuff from her, she had learnt CEO things from him too. Enough things she hoped for her to make a good impression on the board of Palmer Tech.

She was interrupted around 3 am by a text from Tommy informing her Thea was out of surgery and stable for now. Relief crashed through her and she breathed a little easier after that text.

Stable.

Thea was *stable*.

She wiped her eyes blurry with tears and focused back on her work.

Later, she got another text from Oliver, telling her he had safely landed in Star City and was on his way to the hospital. She dozed off a little after that text and was torn from her dreamless sleep by the shrilling sound of her phone ringing. She blindly reached for it, wincing because she had fallen asleep while she had still been on the floor, her back leaning against the bed.

“Hello…” She said, her tongue feeling furry.

“*Felicity*?”

“Oliver!” She straightened herself immediately, the sound of his voice having the effect of a cold shower on her. “Are you okay? Did something happen? Is Thea okay?”

“Yes I’m alright. I saw Thea earlier. She – she hasn’t woken yet.”
Felicity let out a short breath and tried to work the kinks in her neck. “What do the doctors say?”

“They say we need to give her body some time to heal.”

“Good… I mean that’s good right?”

“I don’t know, you tell me.”

“I think it sounds good Oliver. Obviously the surgery was a success, now we need to let time work its magic,” Felicity explained, trying to sound enthusiastic. Oliver sounded… off. Completely disheartened. “How are you feeling?” She asked, because their soulmate connection was still altered, strained and she had no idea how he truly felt. The veil, the barrier, whatever it was, was still there, blinding her.

“I’m fine.”

His tone suggested otherwise.

There was a pause. She waited.

“I just,” his voice trailed off. “I just needed to hear your voice.”

“Oliver,” she started to say.

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t be bothering you,” he cut her off. “You’re probably really busy getting ready for the presentation.”

“Oliver, you’re not…”

“I’ll call you back later, okay?”

And before she could reply, he had hung up. She thought about calling him back for a second but voted against it in the end.

That phone call had been enlightening to say the least.

She knew now the veil, the barrier, whatever, wasn’t hers.

It was his.

She wasn’t pulling away, he was.

He was shutting her out.

Her heart feeling ten times heavier after that realisation, she glanced at her phone screen, needing to know the time.

6:54am.

Pushing all thoughts of Oliver aside, she got up and switched on the business mode. There wasn’t much she could do from here to help her relationship but she could help the company she worked for and she would.

She went to take another shower and got dressed. She did her hair and make-up and made sure to look flawless. After she was done in the bathroom, no one could tell she had just had a sleepless night or that one of her best friends had just been stabbed and was still in the coma. No one could tell
her already fragile relationship was even more fragile. No one could tell she was a very young woman alone in a big city doing a job she hadn’t been trained for. The only thing they would see was a strong and determinate young woman.

Fake it ‘til you make it, right?

She arrived at Palmer Tech a little less than half-an-hour early. Ray Palmer’s EA was there to greet her and to lead her to his office on top of the building. He seemed really happy when she saw him but his smile faded a little bit when he noticed her walk alone.

“Good morning Miss Smoak!” He greeted her, extending a hand for her to shake. She did.

“Mister Palmer,” she greeted him back and mentally gave herself a thumb up when her voice didn’t waver and she sounded as she always did.

“I take it that Mr Queen will be a little late?” He was trying to sound casual while he was nothing but.

“No, sadly he won’t be with us today.”

Ray’s eyes widened.

“Excuse me?”

“Something happened last night, something really bad and Oliver had to fly back to Star City. His little sister, Thea, she was stabbed and she was taken to the hospital.”

Ray Palmer went from mildly surprised to astonished in a second. His face grew pale and concern filled his eyes just as questions formed on his lips. But he didn’t voice any of them. Instead he said.

“Dear lord no, what happened?”

“We don’t have a lot of information yet,” Felicity explained, trying to remain calm and collected. “But Oliver had to go. You’re no stranger to all the things that went down between the Queens and you know he’s the only member of her family she can count on at the moment.”

“Poor girl, is she okay?”

“She got out of surgery in the middle of the night, the doctors stabilized her. Now we’re waiting for her to wake up…” her voice trailed off with things left unsaid.

“If she wakes up.”

“She will,” her heart roared.

Felicity just couldn’t entertain another possibility.

Thea would wake up. She would be okay.

“I’m so sorry Ms. Smoak, I know she’s your friend.”

He reached for her hand and squeezed it in a comforting gesture, a look of genuine compassion on his face. It wasn’t exactly professional and they weren’t friends enough to justify it but she was grateful for the contact nonetheless.

“Thank you Mr. Palmer,” she said.
“If there’s anything you need, just ask me,” he told her, letting go of her hand.

“I appreciate it. I’ll do the presentation for Oliver but I was hoping that you’d understand if I left right after our lunch business. They need me back in Star City.”

“I totally understand… We’ll do dinner another time.” She nodded, a small, grateful smile stretching her lips. “And if you want to cancel the lunch or shorten the tour, I’d also understand,” he went on.

“No, I’ll stay. I already feel bad enough for leaving earlier than planned or being here without Oliver… I don’t want to disrespect anyone more than I already am.”

“Let me stop you right here and there,” Ray said. “You’re not disrespecting anyone. You and Mr. Queen are going through something terrible and you need support, not blame.”

Felicity nodded. “Thank you Mr. Palmer.” She paused then added. “You’re a really good man.”

He nodded shortly, accepting her compliment.

“Let’s probably head for the conference room. Are you ready for the presentation?”

“I’m as ready as I’ll ever be.”

Truth was, her stomach was tied up in really tight knots and she was starting to regret the donuts she had eaten during the night. Her legs felt wobbly and her high-heels suddenly didn’t sound like such a good idea. Her palms were sweaty and she was boiling inside.

Other than these minor inconveniences, she was ready.

The knots in her stomach loosened up when she walked inside the conference room which was filled with old men wearing tailor-made suit and severe expressions on their faces. For a second she thought she’d throw up right here and there on the table. But she didn’t. She straightened the sleeves of the blazer she wore on top of her dress and took a deep settling breath, forcing the wave of panic to recede significantly.

“Gentlemen, allow me to introduce Ms. Felicity Smoak to you today. Most of you met her last night but for those who don’t remember her, she’s Oliver Queen’s ex… partner at Q. Inc and she’ll be presenting her company’s project to you today.”

Ray stepped aside and let Felicity occupy the front row. She thanked him with a short nod and put on the table the files she had brought with her and would give to the board men after she was done with her introduction speech.

If she could make it this far that was.

A few men were already moving about uncomfortably in their seats and a few had protests and questions on the tip of their tongue. One was bold enough to speak up for the others.

Mr. John White.

Felicity had done her homework on the board men before their trip in order to know those who already were in favour of a partnership and those who would need a lot more convincing. John White had landed on top of the “lot of convincing needed” pile. With that in mind, she wasn’t surprised that he was the most vocal of the group.

“Excuse me Ms. Smoak, far be it from me to offend you, but why would I want to hear about a
project so important the CEO couldn’t bother to show up to present it in person? And on top of that, instead of sending an actual partner, he sent his secretary.”

Felicity felt like she had been slapped but she didn’t let it show. She squared her shoulders, held her head high and replied.

“No offense taken here Mr. White. I understand your concerns and I can assure you that Mr. Queen never would have missed such an important meeting if it wasn’t for something just equally important. He had to go back to Star City in a hurry last night to take care of a personal matter but I can assure you that even if I’m just his executive-assistant, I was involved in this project from its very beginning. I know it like the back of my hand and all the things I’m about to tell you are as worthy of your time and attention as if they’d been told by Mr. Queen himself.” She paused for a second and looked at everyone in the room before adding. “This project Q. Inc has developed could revolutionize the world of technology and I’m sure that’s something you want to hear about.”

Silence followed her declarations and she felt the tension in the room thicken.

“Duly noted Ms. Smoak,” Mr. White eventually said. “I’m sure you won’t mind answering another question of mine before you get started.”

“Of course Mr. White.”

“Why would we want to work with Mr. Queen when clearly he places personal matters above his company’s interests?”

“You won’t find a person more dedicated to their company than Oliver Queen. He’s worked very hard to get where he is today and he wouldn’t have been absent today if he could have avoided it.”

“And why should we believe that? You’re his soulmate. Your point of view is obviously biased.”

Ray Palmer opened his mouth to say something but Felicity was faster than him.

“You know you surprise me Mr. White. I never would have taken you for a man who enjoys gossips. Now why don’t you go straight to the point and ask me about what you really want to know which I guess is the reason why Mr. Queen isn’t here with us today.”

“Why isn’t Mr. Queen here with us today?”

Felicity looked down toward the glass table, her heart hammering in her chest. She was doing her best to look unfazed but the truth was, Mr. White’s relentless assaults were unsettling her. She wasn’t a master when it came to verbal sparring even if she had managed to come up with a good comeback so far.

Truth was, she didn’t want to tell him about Thea. It was none of his business. And she didn’t want to use the aggression of his sister to make Oliver look good. Most of the board men were family people, Palmer Tech was a family company, so it was possible they’d still appreciate Oliver’s commitment to his family and that in spite of his absence at the meeting. But she knew he wouldn’t want to score points on his sister’s behalf.

“What?” Mr. White said, misinterpreting her silence. “Did I catch you off guard? Haven’t you planned that part of your speech ahead?”

“What I’m about to tell you will probably be on the front page of every newspaper by tomorrow but I would still appreciate it if no words of that story got out of that conference room.” She paused for a second then said. “Thea Queen was assaulted last night and she’s the reason why Mr. Queen
travelled back to Star City.”

Silence fell over the room.

“So he left because of his sister?” Mr. White asked, disbelief lacing his voice.

“Your heard me correctly.” After a few seconds she added. “She’s alive by the way, thanks for asking.”

Another board member chose that moment to speak.

“Be sure Ms. Smoak that all our thoughts and prayers are with the Queen family in these troubled times.”

“Thank you Mr. Parker, I truly appreciate it. And now that we’ve cleared the air, I’d like to go back to the presentation of Q. Inc’s project. If that’s alright with you of course.”

She stared at everyone in the room defiantly. Her gaze lingered on Mr. White, daring him to say anything. He didn’t and that was for the best. If he had said something, it would have told more about him than Oliver anyway.

An hour later, she was walking out of the conference room feeling like a weight had been lifted off her shoulders.

“I think it went well,” she said once she was alone with Ray Palmer. “It went well right?”

“You did great Ms. Smoak. Now are you ready for the tour of the company?”

“Of course,” she nodded enthusiastically. She had been really happy when she’d learnt that Ray had planned a visit of his company for their visit. It was a very nice addition to their program. Felicity had always dreamt of visiting Palmer Tech and when she had still been interested in working with computers, the company had been on top of her list to send her application to.

“I took the liberty to summon one of the newest addition to my team of IT specialists to walk with us today,” Ray told her as he led her back to the elevator.

Surprise coloured Felicity’s cheeks. “Really?”

“Yes.”

The elevator’s doors opened right after he finished his sentence and Felicity’s heart skipped a beat in her chest when a young man walked out of it.

“Ms. Smoak I think you already know…”

“Cameron Chase,” she breathed out.

“Hi Felicity,” a tall and smiling guy greeted her. He was wearing a tweed sweater with elbow patches, on top of a white shirt and round glasses were precariously standing on his nose

“Hi!” She replied, her voice coming out higher than she expected.

“It’s good to see you,” Cameron said, extending a hand toward her.
She didn’t hesitate and shook it energetically. “It’s good to see you too. I had no idea you were working here.”

“Have been since graduation. I was recruited over the summer.”

“That’s amazing,” she said, sincerely meaning it. Cameron and she had attended MIT at the same time. They hadn’t been close and intimate friends per se but they had definitely been on the friendly side. And when Felicity had missed a lot of her classes when she couldn’t get out of her apartment because of a panic attack or something just as nice, he’d been among the people to share his notes with her and bring her assignments over. They had also been part of the same study group.

“I heard you are working for Oliver Queen,” Cameron said, letting go of her hand. “Mr. Palmer told me you were here to present a project that could potentially lead to a partnership between our companies?”

“Yes, that’s exactly why I’m here.”

“Great, I hope the presentation went well.”

“It went very well, Ms. Smoak did an outstanding job,” Ray Palmer confirmed.

“Colour me not surprised here Mr. Palmer. That’s her trademark. She’s the reason I was very often second best.”

“Oh Cameron will you stop please,” Felicity said blushing.

“Just speaking the truth here Felicity.”

“Whatever.”

She pushed back an imaginary strand of hair to hide her embarrassment.

“Shouldn’t we be starting the tour?” She asked to divert the course of the conversation.

“Right, let’s get started,” Ray Palmer said. “Mr. Chase I trust you to make this tour an entertaining one.”

“Of course Mr. Palmer,” Cameron replied.

“I, for myself, will bore you with corporate details Ms. Smoak. I believe you need to see the full picture of the company you are getting into a partnership with.”

“I don’t think anything related to Palmer Tech could ever be boring,” Felicity replied.

“Good answer,” Ray smiled.

The tour began and Cameron took over control of things while Ray Palmer only interrupted him here and there when he felt like a precision needed to be brought. They showed her many departments and laboratories, flooding her with information and stories about some of the company’s most famous inventions and teasing some ongoing projects. Felicity was living a dream walking down the halls she had thought about her whole childhood and seeing machines and computers she had only ever read about. After the rough hours she had been through, she was very grateful for the break the tour allowed her to take. At some point, Ray Palmer had to abandon them but he told Felicity to meet him in his office at the end of the tour and that they’d drive to the restaurant together for their business lunch with some board members. After he was gone, Cameron seemed more relaxed,
something Felicity totally understood. They shared some memories from college and the more he talked about the company and his job, the more Felicity realized he was living the dream. The dream they had all had in college. A pang of longing tugged at Felicity’s heart at that realization. She could have been him. This could have been her life. But it wasn’t. Because when she had formulated that dream, when she had wished for that life, she had wished to live it with Cooper. And when he had revealed his true colours, he had not only hurt her soul or torn her flesh. He had broken her dreams and wishes.

“You know it’s really good to see you Felicity,” he told her at some point.

“It’s really good to see you too Cam,” she said, the old nickname falling from her lips easily.

“Yeah…” He scratched the back of his head. “That’s not really what I meant.”

Felicity frowned in confusion. “What did you mean then?”

“I meant it’s good to see you here, at Palmer Tech.”

Her frown deepened. “I’m not sure I understand…”

He cleared his throat and looked away as if he felt uncomfortable. Felicity was starting to feel uncomfortable herself. She crossed her arms over her chest and waited for him to explain himself expectantly.

“It’s just that after graduation we all thought you would give up on this. We thought you’d follow an entirely different career path. It’s good to see you haven’t and that you’re still in the tech business.”

“Oh,” was all Felicity could say. She was at a loss for words.

“I’m sorry Felicity, I didn’t mean to stir up bad memories or something, I just…”

“No it’s okay,” she interrupted him. “I get what you were trying to say. And to be truly honest, I never thought I’d stay in the business after graduation. I wanted a fresh start, put everything behind me.”

“I know, that’s why I never really tried to reach out. But in the end, I’m glad you changed your mind and you didn’t let what that psycho did to you break you. We could really use the help of a Felicity Smoak in the crazy world of 1s and 0s.”


“Mr. Palmer seems to think otherwise.”

“Okay, maybe I’m more like a partner to Oliver at Q. Inc but I’m not a tech girl that’s for sure. I don’t think I ever will be to be honest.”

“Why would you apply to work for a tech company if parts of you didn’t want to still be a part of that world?”

“I guess I wanted to have the possibility to go back to that if I wanted to,” she eventually said.

“And you made it this far already even though you never thought you would, that’s amazing.”

She couldn’t disagree with that. “I met the right persons at the right time. They helped me a lot.”

“Yeah I heard about that. Oliver Queen uh?” He nudged her playfully, a teasing light in his eyes.
She rolled her eyes at him.

“More seriously, I’m sure in ten years everyone will know about Felicity Smoak and her crazy inventions that revolutionized the tech world. Just keep your mind opened to possibilities.”

“Thanks Cam. As for you, I’m seeing you head of IT here in less than two years!”

He laughed at that. “We’ll see about that!”

They resumed the tour of the company but it didn’t feel as good as it had felt before. Felicity felt something in her heart, something that hadn’t been there before and it weighed down on her a little and prevented her from enjoying the rest of the tour.

Much later, after the lunch business, Felicity found herself in a car with Ray Palmer who had insisted on both driving her to the airport and letting her use his jet so that she could get back to Star City as quickly as possible.

“Mr. Palmer, it’s really too much, I can’t possibly accept,” she tried to tell him once again. “I can be on the next flight for Star City, you don’t have to…”

“Nonsense Ms. Smoak, it’s my pleasure to help you out. Please be sure to tell Oliver my thoughts and prayers are with him and his sister.”

“I will,” she promised.

Oliver had texted her several times. There had been no changes in Thea’s condition, she was still in the coma. He hadn’t asked about the presentation but she didn’t blame him for that. He had other things to think about, more important things. She had also gotten a few texts from Tommy telling her to get “her sweet ass in Star City ASAP” and that was what was worrying her most. Whatever was wrong with Oliver, Tommy had noticed it too and judging by all his texts, it was worrying him.

“I hope you’ll forgive my boldness Ms. Smoak,” Palmer said, reaching for something in his briefcase. “But we don’t have much time left and there is one last matter I’d like to discuss with before we part ways.”

“What is it?” Felicity asked, holding out a hand to take the file he was handing her.

“This partnership between our companies is the first step of a project of mine to extend my company.”

Felicity arched an eyebrow and opened the file. Her heart stopped when she realized what she was staring at.

“You want to build a second Palmer Tech Tower on the west coast? In Star City?”

“Yes. It was my father’s dream but sadly he isn’t here anymore to pursue it. I am though and I intend to make it come true.”

Felicity looked up from the documents and met his gaze. “And why are you showing me this exactly?”

“Because my company could use a Felicity Smoak.”

She froze.

“Excuse me?”
“You heard me correctly. My company needs people like you, with your abilities. You’re wasting your talent at Q. Inc. Don’t misunderstand me, you’re very good at your job and if today proved me anything, it’s that you’d be as good a CEO as a tech wizard but that’s not really who you are, is it?”

“With all due respect, that’s not for you to say Mr. Palmer,” she told him, her tone much colder than it had previously been.

“You’re right, I misspoke. What I meant is that, from what I’ve seen and heard, you don’t strike me as a CEO in the making.”

Felicity glared at him, her frustration and indignation making her blood boil in her veins.

“So that’s why you insisted on the tour? And also why you had a friend of mine conduct it? You were trying to wow me.”

He smiled at her and she wanted to wipe that look off his face.

“Do you realize how disrespectful it is? Oliver Queen is negotiating a partnership with you and you’re backstabbing him by trying to steal me away.”

“I’m not trying to steal you away Ms. Smoak. I’m just reminding you there are other possibilities for you out there. If you’re willing to take them that’s all.”

“Well I’m not. I’m perfectly happy where I’m working and the people I’m working with. While I’m flattered that you think so highly of me, I have to tell you I don’t appreciate you reminding me of “possibilities” as you want to call them. I really think it’s not appropriate considering the situation of our companies.”

“Alright, I won’t bring this up anymore. But please Ms. Smoak, don’t forget about this.” He pointed at the file he had handed her.

She nodded but it was mainly for him, not for her. She stood by what she’d told him. She was happy with her job. Sure the tour and seeing Cameron again had reminded her of her old dreams but that was it. She had other dreams now and she’d work hard to make them come true.

Once she was on the plane and alone with her thoughts, she decided against telling Oliver about all of this. He had already enough insecurities as it was. Just the previous night he had pointed out that she and Palmer had more in common than them. She knew she was to blame for this because she had taken the Med for so long… He was close to expecting her to leave at any minute, she wouldn’t add fuel to the fire and tell him Ray had openly tried to hire her (or show her other possibilities… whatever). Who knew how he’d react? He might even decide against working with Palmer Tech after all and Felicity wouldn’t risk that. Q. Inc needed that partnership too much. So she wouldn’t tell him anything, at least not until things had settled a little between them. And his sister was out of the coma.

She dozed off on the plane. She had been on a roller coaster of emotions ever since she had heard about Thea, going from panic, to sadness, to worry, to relief, to panic again and then from excitement, to relief again, to anger and to worry again… Everything kind of caught up with her once she was in her seat and she didn’t really try to fight it. She let exhaustion pull her under and she slept. When she woke, her muscles all ached and she longed for a hot shower and her bed but she felt better rested and ready to see her friend at the hospital and help her soulmate out.

She rushed out of the plane and then out of the airport and she hailed a cab.

“To Starling General please,” she asked before leaning down in her seat.
She spent the whole car-ride biting her nails in worry. Now that she was about to see Oliver again, she felt really nervous. He was still blocking her and she had no idea why and she didn’t know how to fix things. Her stomach was a mess of tight knots when she made it to the hospital. Tommy was waiting for her outside.

“Felicity,” he said, opening his arms to hug her.

She fell into his embrace without thinking about it twice, letting her friend’s presence comfort her. The past two days had been completely crazy, between all their problems with their trip and Thea and she hadn’t realized how much she had needed someone to hold her until she had Tommy’s arms tightly wrapped around her, his familiar scent surrounding her completely.

“Finally you’re here,” he said, pulling away.

“I came as fast as I could,” she replied as they started walking inside the hospital. “Still no changes?” She knew the answer already since she hadn’t gotten any text when she had been on the plane. But she needed to ask, to hear the words.

Tommy shook his head and Felicity’s heart sank in her chest.

“She’ll be alright,” she eventually said.

“The doctors seem to think so,” Tommy agreed, leading her to the elevator. They got in in silence and Felicity took a second to look at her friend, to really take him in. He looked like a mess. His clothes? Rumpled. His features? Strained. His hair? Tousled. There were dark bags under his eyes and Felicity felt a lump form in her throat. Thea was Oliver’s sister yes, but she was Tommy’s too, to some extent. Oliver and Tommy had practically grown up together. And when Thea was born, she had tagged along with them. She had chased the both of them down, running on her small and still unsure legs. And they had both looked after her, protected her. They both loved her.

“I’m sure they’re right Tommy. She only needs time.”

He nodded.

“How’s Oliver?” She asked him.

He arched an eyebrow. “Shouldn’t I be asking you this?”

“He’s shutting me out, I don’t know why,” she admitted, knowing Tommy would understand, he always did.

Tommy frowned at that. “That’s… odd. He should be holding on to you.”

“Well he isn’t.”

Tommy sighed, muttering a frustrated Ollie under his breath.

“He’s devastated,” he said. “I’ve never seen him like that before to be honest.” He paused for a second and said. “You need to get through to him Felicity. He really needs you.”

“How can I get through to him if I don’t know what’s wrong?”

“You’ll figure it out,” Tommy assured her. “Trust your connection.”

“It’s disturbed at the moment,” she said bitterly.
“Then undisturbed it.”

She gave him a look and he just shrugged. They walked out of the elevator. Felicity’s side of the bond fluttered in her chest, sensing the proximity of Oliver in spite of the barrier between them.

“Thea’s room is right there,” Tommy told her. “I’ll let the two of you talk for now, okay?”

She nodded.

“Thank you Tommy,” she said, catching his fingers. “For everything.”

“Don’t mention it.”

Taking a deep breath, Felicity squared her shoulders. She knocked softly on the door and a breath got caught in her throat when she caught sight of Thea. Beautiful Thea. Strong Thea. Sweet Thea. She was lying in a bed, her face pale, her hair sprawled over her pillow. She was perfectly still, except for the slow rise and fall of her chest. Wires connected her to machines which were beeping regularly. If only she knew who had done that to her… She’d kill them herself.

And Oliver… Oh Oliver!

He was sitting in a chair by his sister’s bed. He didn’t seem to hear her or notice her presence. He was staring in front of him but there was no light in his eyes. His arms were limply resting on his legs, under his jacket which he had used to cover himself.

Slowly, she made her way to him, tears filling her eyes at the sight of her friend in the coma and of her devastated soulmate. She put a gentle hand on Oliver’s shoulder, hoping that the contact might tore him from his torpor. He didn’t react at first and that hurt. As she was about to step back, to step away, he abruptly reached for her hand, keeping it firmly in place.

“Did I ever tell you why Thea and I established weekends at my place with Movies Saturday?”

His voice was rough and broken and the sound of it cracked Felicity’s heart a little more.

“No, you didn’t.”

“One day she came home from school crying. A boy had been mean to her because she was short. I promised her that day, I’d always protect her from any guy who’d try to hurt her. And that included me. When I realized she was hurting because we weren’t spending a lot of time together after I moved out of the mansion, I made sure she knew she was welcome in my home. I furnished her bedroom and I created Movies Saturday. I’d promised to protect her and I did. I’m her big brother, I’m supposed to be looking out for her.”

“Oliver, you are…”

“I’m not. I failed, I let her get hurt… She’s my baby sister Felicity, my responsibility. And she needed my help. She got hurt and she needed me to protect her but I wasn’t there… I failed her, I let her down.”

Felicity kneeled down in front of him, her hand trailing down his arm and reaching for his.

“Oliver, this is not your fault, okay? There was nothing you could have done to prevent this. I know you don’t see it that way right now, but it’s the truth. You promised to protect Thea I understand that, but sometimes, protecting someone doesn’t mean preventing them from getting hurt. It means being there for them after. It means picking them up, putting them back together. Sometimes protecting
means loving and caring. It means supporting. And I don’t know a single person on this earth who loves their little sister as much as you love yours.”

His eyes met hers and for a second, she felt his pain, raw and throbbing so clearly, it knocked the breath out of her. She staggered but held onto his hands. Then, the pain was gone.

She opened her mouth to say something but he cut her off.

“My parents were here earlier.”

Oh.

Oh.

It made sense. Robert and Moira had done a lot of bad things and had hurt their children deeply but in the end, Thea was still their daughter and Felicity was sure they loved her. In their own twisted way.

But still. It was the first time Oliver was seeing them ever since he had taken Q. Inc from them. She couldn’t imagine how he must have felt. The moment she formed that thought, anger bubbled up within her. She shouldn’t have to imagine how he must have felt. She should have known and she would have known if he hadn’t shut her out.

“How did things go with them?”

He shrugged. “We didn’t really talk. They left with Detective Lance a little before you came in.”

“Detective Lance? He’s in charge of the investigation, right?” Oliver had mentioned that piece of information in one of his texts earlier.

“Yeah he is.”

“Okay, what did he tell you? Do we know what happened?”

It was something Oliver had refused to discuss over the phone and Felicity hadn’t pushed him for details. She’d rather hear everything from him directly, face to face.

“Let’s not talk about this here,” Oliver said, standing up. Felicity nodded. She watched him fold his jacket on the chair he had been sitting on and then they walked outside the room. Once outside, he leaned against the wall, his arms crossed over his chest. He sighed deeply, and Felicity tilted her head, trying to meet his eyes.

“Oliver?”

“It’s just that,” finally he looked up and met her gaze, “you were right. About Thea.”

Felicity frowned.

“I don’t understand.”

“She went to meet him, her soulmate.”

Felicity’s eyes widened in surprise.

“Roy?”
Oliver nodded, a scowl forming on his face at the sound of his name.

“But… But how did she know where to find him?”

“We don’t know yet,” Oliver said, his tone hard.

He was mad, that much was obvious but she didn’t understand why. Surely it wasn’t Roy that had hurt Thea. It couldn’t be, the boy loved her, Felicity had seen it in his eyes when she’d met him.

“Oliver, talk to me,” she asked softly, placing her hand on his arm. She was hoping that the gentle touch would help him relax. It did.

“It was… It was a stupid case of “wrong place, wrong time”.” He ran a hand through his hair and Felicity could see that he looked really exhausted and seemed very close to lose it.

“Thea? She was at the wrong place at the wrong time.”

“Yeah, the guys that stabbed her. They were after Roy. It’s not really clear what happened… They got into a fight, Roy tried to protect Thea, or so he says, and she got stabbed from behind.”

Felicity felt her heart sink in her chest.

“Oh my god…” She brought a hand to her lips and her eyes fluttered close as she tried to process what he had just told her. “And what about Roy? Is he here too?”

“Yeah, he called 911 and was brought in with Thea. I know Lance spoke with him. He gave him the names of the attackers so hopefully, they’ll catch the bastards soon.”

“Yes, let’s pray they will.”

“Hey guys!” Tommy’s voice said from behind Felicity. She turned around and saw him walk toward her, a steaming cup of coffee in his hand and a concerned look on his face. “Here for you, I thought you could use some crappy hospital coffee.”

“Aw thanks Tommy! Always my knight in shining armour.”

“What can I say? I have a reputation to preserve. How are you holding up Ollie?” He asked turning toward his best friend.

Oliver just shrugged. Tommy and Felicity exchanged a look.

“Thanks for being here man,” he finally said, smiling at his best friend.

“No place I’d rather be,” Tommy stated. “Felicity, can I talk to you for a second please?”

He was trying to sound and look casual but it was too obvious and Felicity called his bluff.

Something was wrong.

“Sure, what is it?”

“Let’s walk a little?” He suggested.

“Sure,” she said, letting him guide her away. They were lucky Oliver was too lost to pay them any attention because they were really obvious.
“What’s going on?” She asked him once they were far enough.

“How did you know?”

“Come on, I’m not an idiot.”

“Okay, maybe it means nothing but I just saw Moira and Robert Queen harass a nurse so that she’d tell them where some Roy Harper guy is.”

Felicity felt like she had been slapped.

“Now, I’m no genius like you Smoak but I’m not an idiot either. I know Thea was brought in with her soulmate so I put two and two together and assumed Roy Harper was said soulmate.”

“Yeah he is!”

“See, no idiot here!”

“Tommy,” Felicity warned him.

“Okay, okay. Now I thought to myself, why would they be looking for him? And then I remembered they had been talking with Lance before walking straight to the nurse so I guess he told them about him.”

“Yeah that makes sense but, what do they want from him?”

“I don’t know but whatever it is, it can’t be good. We both know the Queens can’t be trusted around their children’s soulmates.”

That much they could agree on. Her heart picking up in her chest, Felicity said.

“Tommy please tell me you heard what room he’s in?”

He gave her a small smile that looked a bit like a proud smirk.

“I did.”

“Then where is he?”

“Room 115.”

“Thank you Tommy.”

“You’re welcome,” he said as she walked away from him.

She found the room Roy was in quite easily. She heard voices coming from inside, the door had been left ajar. She didn’t bother eavesdropping. She knocked, loudly and then walked in without waiting for an invitation. It was rude maybe but she had forgotten her manners when she had recognized Moira’s voice.

Roy was sitting in his bed and he looked like he had been through hell. And Felicity guessed that somehow, he had. He had bruises on his face and butterfly stitches were closing a nasty cut on his eyebrow arch. His arm was in a plaster cast. Felicity’s heart broke at the sight of him. An image of Thea lying in her bed, pale as snow crossed her mind.

Whoever had done this to them, they needed to pay.
“Felicity,” her name fell from Roy’s lips. He sounded surprised, looked astonished.

“I came as soon as I heard,” she said, rushing past Moira Queen. She was standing alone in front of his bed, facing him. Robert Queen was nowhere in sight. “How are you?” She asked gently, reaching for Roy’s hand.

“Never been better,” he joked and she gave him a small smile. His mouth was joking but his eyes… They were speaking the truth he didn’t dare voice. They were dark and told about the physical pain he was in and the burning despair ripping his heart in two. There was hurt in them too and Felicity could easily guess who had put it there.

“Well, why am I not surprised that you’re familiar with this boy Ms. Smoak?” Moira said, making the word “boy” sound like the worst insult in the world. Anger simmered in her chest.

“Mrs. Queen, what a pleasure to see you again,” she lied, her tone icy cold. “May I have a word in private please?”

It sounded like she was asking when really she was ordering. Moira seemed to notice it and just nodded in agreement.

“I’ll be right back,” Felicity promised, squeezing Roy’s fingers, the look on his face breaking her heart. Whatever she had told him, it must have been bad.

Once they were outside, Felicity took a second to just look at her. Moira Queen was her usual calm and collected self. Her hair was perfectly done, so was her make-up. There wasn’t a wrinkle on her clothes. Looking at her, you could never guess their daughter had been stabbed during the night and was still in the coma.

“What do you think you were doing in there?” Felicity asked without troubling herself with false pretences anymore. Moira obviously hated her but she hated her even more.

“Knocking some sense into that boy’s head not that this is any of your business.”

“Excuse me?”

“You heard me correctly Ms. Smoak. This is a private family matter that you shouldn’t concern yourself with.”

“I beg to differ Mrs. Queen. Whether you like it or not, Oliver and Thea are my family. He’s my soulmate and she’s like a sister to me. Roy, he’s her soulmate and that makes him family too ergo when you “knock some sense into him” it becomes my business.”

“Well, look at that… Ms. Smoak has finally grown a spine.”

Felicity clenched her fists at the insult. It was either that or punching Moira Queen in her smug little face. “You can go after me all you want, but don’t you dare touch my family.”

“That boy you call family is the reason why my daughter is hurt.”

“Since when do you care about your daughter? You’ve been hurting her for years with all your lies and schemes to control her life.”

Cracks appeared on the mask Moira Queen was wearing. “What are you saying? That I do not love my daughter?”
Felicity shook her head. “Oh no, I think you do. But your love is selfish and interested. You don’t love for who she is, you love her for who you want her to be. The boy in that room, his name is Roy and his love for Thea is pure and selfless and I won’t let you ruin everything because he doesn’t fill in your definition of the perfect son-in-law.”

“She’s hurt because of him, because he’s just a good-for-nothing little thug that we should just put in jail and throw the key away. My daughter deserves more than that. I raised her to get better.”

“He’s barely an adult and life hasn’t taken it easy on him. He needs help but I don’t expect someone who was born with a silver spoon in her mouth to understand that. And as for what your daughter deserves...” Felicity’s voice trailed off. “Considering your personal track record with your own soulmate and that crazy twisted life you’re living, I don’t think you’ll understand what I’m about to say but I’ll say it anyway. This isn’t about what Thea deserves, this is about what she needs. And what she needs right now is someone who loves her unconditionally, who accepts her and doesn’t try to change or control her. She needs someone who completes her and that person is her soulmate who also happens to be Roy Harper. “The good-for-nothing little thug” as you called him yourself. He’ll make her happy, something you were never able to do.”

“You don’t have to be with your soulmate to be happy.”

“I bet you’re saying that based on your own experience Mrs. Queen. How’s your life lately? Happy? How does it feel to be stuck in a loveless marriage? To sneak around with your own soulmate? To be losing both your children and having no one else to blame but yourself?”

Moira didn’t reply anything. She just stared blankly at Felicity.

“Yeah I thought so. Now, if you want to be near your daughter, far be it from me to stop you but leave Roy alone.”

“Very well, I will leave the boy alone then,” Moira said after a brief moment of silence.

“Good,” Felicity said, immediately turning away because she didn’t want to spend one more second in that woman’s presence.

“You know, when did you become pro-soulmate Ms. Smoak? I remember a time when you didn’t really care and you believed you could live a life without yours.” She paused for a second. “What was that boy’s name you dated in college again?”

Felicity froze, her heart stopped in her chest.

“How do you...?”

“Well, I had to make sure you were holding up your end of our bargain. I have to say, even if I wanted you gone, I never wanted you to die so I was glad when the police found you alive.”

“Barely alive,” Felicity said a lump in her throat so big it was distorting her voice to a point where she could barely recognize it herself.

“You’re very much alive now so it doesn’t make such a difference.” She paused.

“Why are you telling me this?”

“You seem to think you’re somehow superior to me because unlike me you place love above greatness and success. I want you to know that you’re not. Could I have told my son about you? Could I have helped your recovery? Yes, I could have but I didn’t. Now you think you’re winning
because I’m agreeing to leave the boy alone. You’re not. His past will eventually catch up with him and if he’s half-smart as you were once, he’ll take himself out of the equation."

“We’ll see about that,” Felicity said, her voice barely louder than a whisper.

“That we will Ms. Smoak,” Moira agreed before leaving.

Felicity took a second to collect herself. She hated herself for letting Moira getting to her but the Queen matriarch had known exactly where to punch to hurt her as much as possible. She had known about her kidnapping, about everything and she had done nothing. Well, that wasn’t really surprising now was it? But her cold and detached way to speak of it… It sounded like she wasn’t talking about another human being’s pain, let alone her own son’s soulmate. Did that woman have a heart? She had always doubted it but now she felt like she knew for sure.

She didn’t.

“Are you okay?” Roy asked her when she walked back in.

“Shouldn’t I be the one asking you this?”

“I’m okay,” he said, a disgruntled expression on his face.

“I’m okay too,” she said, sitting in the chair by his bed. “I hope the witch wasn’t too hard on you.”

Roy shrugged. “She didn’t tell my anything I didn’t already know.”

Felicity sighed. “Roy…” she started.

“No Blondie listen! She was right. Nothing would have happened to Thea if it wasn’t for me. I’m no good for her. I already knew it but last night confirmed everything.”

“You weren’t the one who stabbed her,” she argued.

“I might as well have been.”

“Roy no… I know I don’t know you very well…”

“You don’t know me at all, you mean?”

She frowned. “I thought we’d already agreed that wasn’t entirely true.”

“Whatever,” he grumpily said.

“My point is, I know you love Thea and you would never hurt her. What happened last night… It was an accident.”

“It wasn’t!” He was losing his temper. “They targeted me, they wanted to hurt me. And she was hurt because she was there for me.”

“Aren’t you a popular guy?”

“Felicity!” He winced in pain and held his ribs.

“Who were these guys anyway? What did they want from you?”

“Remember Rick?”
The name sounded vaguely familiar.

“Remember the guy who was harassing the woman with the little girl when we met?”

“Little Sadie! And her mother… Jennifer, right?”

“Yeah that’s her. The guys who did this… It was their way of asking me to mind my own damn business.” He paused for a second, a shadow on his face. “They fell on us maybe a few minutes after Thea came to me. I tried to protect her, I swear, I tried to keep her safe but… They must have realized she was important to me because the next thing I know one of them had a knife out and…” His voice broke and Felicity reached for his hand, tears filling her eyes. “There was so much blood. I’d never seen so much blood in my life before.”

“So if I heard you correctly, you were attacked last night because you tried to help a woman and her daughter and you still think you’re not good enough for Thea?”

“I can’t protect her Felicity. If I could, she wouldn’t be in the hospital.”

Felicity realized one thing then.

Roy was Oliver 2.0.

But before she could say anything a nurse walked in to check on Roy. The blonde waited outside, her brain running a mile a minute. Felicity wasn’t a specialist when it came to healing and soulmates but she knew that close proximity helped and boosted the healing process. Soulmate’s touch wasn’t just a concept, it was a real thing. She had experienced it herself quite a few times. Now, why people hadn’t already brought Thea and Roy together she didn’t know, but that was going to change. And if bringing Roy to Thea, helped Felicity knock some sense into the boy’s thick skull then it would be all for the better.

When the nurse finally walked out of the room, Felicity went to talk to her.

“Excuse me Carol? That’s your name, right?”

“That’s right, Ms…?”


The nurse frowned in confusion but Felicity didn’t give her time to say anything.

“I was wondering if it was safe to move him? In a wheelchair of course!” Felicity asked.

“Why do you want to move him?”

“He needs to see his soulmate.”

The nurse looked surprised.

“His soulmate is here?”

“Yeah they were brought in together last night. Would it be possible to move him?”

“Sure as long as he doesn’t tear his stitches. He has a cut…”

“On his ribs? I know,” Felicity said, remembering his wince of pain from earlier.
“I’ll go get you a wheelchair. Be careful with him.”

Felicity waited for her to come back with the promised wheelchair. When he saw her walk in with it, Roy arched an eyebrow.

“What’s that for?”

“We’re going out for a walk,” she announced. “Well, I’m going to walk and you’ll just sit down but you got what I meant.”

“Are you sure this is a good idea?”

“Nurse Carol said you could be moved as long as you were careful.”

“Listen Felicity, I appreciate that you’re here and that you want to help me but I…”

“Nothing,” she interrupted him, pulling the covers away from him.

“You know you’re kind of a pain in the ass…”

“And you’ve seen nothing yet so buckle up!”

He rolled his eyes at her but still helped her help him in the wheelchair. She took the cover from his bed and put on his legs so that he wouldn’t get cold.

“Thank you,” he said.

“You can thank me after everything,” she told him, punctuating her statement with a wink.

She pushed the wheelchair, and Roy in the wheelchair, to Thea’s room. The door was closed but she could see Oliver sitting in a chair through the window, talking quietly with Tommy. Roy started moving in discomfort.

“Aching to go in there?” She asked, knowing he was reacting to his soulmate’s presence.

“Why did you bring me here?”

“Because there is something you need to understand. Earlier, Oliver told me pretty much the same thing you told me about protecting Thea. He said he should have protected her better, he should have done better. Do you know what I told him?”

“I have a feeling I’m about to know.”

She ignored him. “I told him that protecting someone didn’t always mean preventing them from getting hurt. I know you love Thea and you wish you could protect her from everything. We all do when it comes to the people we love. But that’s wishful thinking. Whether we like it or not the people we love will get hurt because that’s how life works. People get hurt and sometimes they even die. What matters most is how we act when it happens. Do we blame ourselves? Do we live in the past? Do we think of the “what ifs”? Or do we move forward? Do we help our loved ones get better? Are we there with them every step of the way?

“Felicity…”

“I’m not done. Please, let me finish Roy.”

He nodded.
“I know you think this is your fault. I know you think you’re no good for Thea. I see where you come from, she just paid the price for a decision you made. But look at her Roy. She’s still here, she’s still breathing. She’s not dead, she’s fighting. Fighting for her life, fighting to come back to us, to you. You want to protect her that’s normal. You wish she had never gotten hurt, again that’s normal. But instead of questioning yourself, your presence in her life or your ability to protect her, you should start trusting her. Trust that she’s strong enough to take on everything life throws her way. Trust that she’s strong enough to be by your side. Trust that she is your soulmate and that she truly is the one made for you.” Felicity paused for a second, giving her words some time to sink in. “Now, I’m going to get you a moment with her and I would like you to think about what I said. Maybe it won’t change how you see things but I really hope it will.”

And before he could say anything, she carefully opened the door and walked in. The conversation between Oliver and Tommy stopped and they both looked up.

“Roy’s outside,” she told them.

“You brought her soulmate here?” Oliver asked.

The words “without asking me first” were left unsaid.

“Oliver please trust me on this,” she said, her tone gentle but firm. “He’s her soulmate, he can help.”

“She’s got a point here buddy,” Tommy agreed and Felicity smiled gratefully at him.

Oliver stared at the two of them before nodding his agreement.

“Okay,” he whispered.

“Tommy, can you help Roy in? Oliver and I need to talk.”

Oliver frowned but she shot him a look and he just sighed. The two men eventually got up and while Tommy helped Roy in just as Felicity had asked him, she and Oliver went a different way. They moved for a while with no purpose, walking around the hospital’s hallway. The barrier was still a place, his emotions a ghost in her heart and in her soul. She wanted the break that barrier and she would. Because even if she meant for Roy to learn from her mistakes, she had also learnt from him too and now she knew what was going on with Oliver meaning she could finally help him.

They kept walking until Felicity pointed at two empty seats and they sat down.

“I never noticed it before,” Oliver said, “but the words “we need to talk” do sound ominous.” He paused. “What do we need to talk about?”

“About you shutting me out,” she stated blankly.

“I’m not shutting you out,” he was quick to protest.

“Oh, make that you shutting me out and taking me for an idiot.”

“Let’s talk about the words you didn’t even realize you were hurting me, did you?”
“I didn’t mean to hurt you, I just wanted to…”

“Protect me, I know that now. When it appeared back in New-York, I thought it was mine, I thought it was a way for me to separate myself from you so that I could handle things. But when it didn’t go away and you started acting weird, I realized it wasn’t me, it was you. You were shutting me out. And I didn’t understand why you’d put a barrier between us, it made no sense to me why you’d keep me at arm’s length while you were going through so much. It wasn’t until I spoke with Roy that I got it.” Her voice trailed off. “You’re just trying to protect me, shelter me from your own emotions.”

He closed his eyes a look of sheer pain on his face. “Back at the hotel, after I hung up the phone, you felt everything I felt and it hurt you so much, I was hurting you so much, I couldn’t…” His voice failed him before he could finish his sentence and Felicity’s heart, who had been quite mistreated lately, broke all over again. “I’m so sorry Felicity but I couldn’t take it, not on top of everything else…” He looked away from her but she cupped his cheeks and forced him to look at her again.

“Oliver, we’re building a home here, with our friends and family, aren’t we?” He nodded. “And we have a life together, we’re partners, right?” Again, he nodded. “Now, how can I be a good partner to you if you don’t let me be there for you when you need it?” He opened his mouth but she put a finger on his lips to stop him from talking. “I’m not blaming you because I understand where you come from. I was scared when I stopped taking the Med because I wanted to protect you from my past. Protecting you was my first instinct because I lo… Because I care about you so much, I want you to always be okay. I fought that instinct and I let you in. Not only because we’re stronger together but also because I trusted that no matter how dark my past was you could take it. Now it’s your turn to trust me back.”

“I know how to help you Felicity but I don’t know how to let you help me.”

“It’s quite easy actually,” she said. “You do nothing but accept what I have to give you. Love, support, comfort. A hug, a shoulder to cry on, a hand to hold. I’ll give it all to you. Just let me in and trust that whatever it is that you’re feeling I can take it.”

“I’m not used to this. Me being the vulnerable one and you being the one picking up the pieces.”

“Hey!” She protested. “I’m not always the vulnerable one.” She paused. “But okay, I was the vulnerable one more often that you. Does it bother you? Because you know you can cry in front of me, I won’t think any less of you.” That made him chuckle. “I know how much you love Thea, I understand why you’re hurting so much. It’s like I said. Whatever it is you’re feeling, I can take it.

For the longest while, he didn’t say anything. He just stared at her and let his eyes do all the work his mouth couldn’t. She held his gaze, hoping he would see she had meant every word she had told him. He did and after he did, he leaned toward her and pressed his lips against her. It was a simple kiss, a chaste kiss but it was filled with so much love Felicity felt like she was going to burst. The barrier between them collapsed and she felt a wave of pure unadulterated love crash through her. It was strong and beautiful and vibrant and everything she could have ever asked for.

After everything they’d been through the last couple of days, she finally knew everything would be okay. She finally knew they’d be okay.

Because he loved her and she loved him and together they were one.
So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)

Chapter End Notes
Chapter 19 - Love of my life, oh I need this

Chapter Notes

Hey guys!!!!!

Here's the new chapter!!! I really hope you guys will like it! As promised, I'm updating more regularly. I think I'll be updating Our Love on Mondays, every two or three weeks, depending on how real life is treating me. And every Friday, I'll be updating my new story, an actor AU. Go check it out if you're interested :) Thank you so much for the support and the incredible feedback I received after I published chapter 18... I wasn't expecting that much so THANK YOU really, from the bottom of my heart. You're amazing guys!

Happy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 19:

“Oh I need

The darkness

The sweetness

The weakness

Oh, I need this

I need a lullaby

A kiss goodnight

Angel sweet

Love of my life

Oh, I need this.”

- Natalie Merchant, Skin

Oliver and Felicity remained on the seats in the hospital’s hallway for a little while longer. They needed to just be with the other for a while, and to bask in the warmth of their connection. It brought them peace, it brought them joy and it kept them centred, something they desperately needed after what they had just been through.
Felicity turned her body toward Oliver’s and wrapped both her arms around his, her chin falling to rest in the hollow of his collarbone. That was how perfectly they fit against each other. Oliver grabbed her legs and pulled them in his lap. It was as if he was trying to completely surround himself with her and Felicity could find no fault in that plan. She wanted to be around him, she wanted to hold him and even more, she wanted him to hold her back. After a while, his fingers started to draw meaningless patterns on her legs and up to her thighs. He didn’t seem to realize he was doing it, he just was. And far be it from Felicity to tell him to stop even though sometimes people crossed the hallway and shot them weird looks. She could feel the warmth of his skin through the thin fabric of her leggings and she’d be lying if she said the simple motion didn’t make goose bumps break all over her skin. It wasn’t anything remotely sexual. It just made her feel… good. The regular movement was soothing her heart and calming down the fears that had grown so big during the day. And she really needed that. Maybe, that was why he was doing it after all. Because he could sense her need to feel him not only in her soul but also on her body.

“Where would I be without you?” He suddenly asked, his bearded cheek still pressed against her hair.

“Exactly where I’d be without you,” she replied, staring at their joined hands.

“And where would that be?”

“Nowhere,” she breathed in the shell of his ear before she pressed a kiss to his temple.

He sighed a happy sigh and she felt contentment settle inside of him. This was the more relaxed he had been ever since he had learnt about Thea and just like his pain and fear had worsened her own, his new-found calm was affecting her, in the best way possible.

She turned her head slightly, so that her cheek would now rest on his shoulder. He let his head fall on her and she closed her eyes feeling some knots loosen up inside her stomach.

“How did it go with Palmer and the board?” He whispered.

She didn’t reply immediately, pondering her next words for a second.

“It went well,” she eventually said, because that was what they needed to focus on. “I handled everything like a pro, you would have been proud!”

“I’m proud of you,” he replied and she knew he truly meant it. His heart was swelling with pride in his chest. “I was never worried about anything. I knew you’d do great!”

She felt herself blush, touched by his unwavering faith in her.

“Thanks.” She paused for a second, then a small smile stretch her lips. “You should have seen me put John White back in his place. I was such a badass!”

He squeezed her calf. “Oh yeah?”

“Yeah,” she nodded. “You should have heard him say all those terrible things about you! But after I was done with him, he wasn’t saying anything anymore. It was awesome! Well, don’t get me wrong, I felt awful the whole time but afterwards… Afterwards, I felt good. Really good. And something tells me we’ll hear from Palmer very soon so all’s well that ends well, right?”

Oliver nodded but she felt his thoughts were somewhere else.

“And when Thea wakes up,” she went on, “everything will be as it should be.”
“If she…”

“When she wakes up,” she corrected him stubbornly. “Because she will wake up. The doctors said her life wasn’t in danger anymore and that she only needed time.”

He nodded again but she could feel his heart wasn’t really there.

“Do you want to go back? I should probably bring Roy back to his room anyway.”

“Yeah about that… We need to talk about him.”

Felicity frowned.

“What is there to talk about?” She asked disentangling herself from him to look him in the eyes.

“My sister was hurt by people who wanted to hurt him,” he stated.

“So?” She crossed her arms over her chest and frowned. He opened his mouth to say something but she raised a finger to stop him. “Before you say anything, if your next sentence sounds even remotely like “she was hurt because of him” you and I are going to have a problem.”

“Felicity…”

“Oliver!” She cut him off. “Do you know the boy? Have you had a single conversation with him? Did you even know he’d been brought in with Thea?”

“I had my sister to think about.”

“They’re a package deal,” she shot back. “Anyway, I’m not blaming you for not knowing about him, I understand Thea was your priority. She still is. But you don’t have to be wary of Roy. He loves her.”

“But these people…”

“Oliver please,” she said taking his hand, and pleading him with her eyes. “He blames himself enough already.” He sighed deeply. “If I had been hurt by someone who was trying to hurt you, would you blame yourself?” She realized the moment the words left her mouth how stupid that example was. Of course he’d blame himself. He was already blaming himself for how his parents had treated her and what they’d said to the media about her.

“You know I would,” he said softly, caressing her thumb softly.

“I know,” she said reluctantly. “And you know I’d tell you the same thing I’m telling you now. That you’re being a stupid stubborn man. With a very thick skull.”

He had the audacity to smile. He leaned in and kissed her soundly on the lips.

“You like my thick skull,” told he, getting on his feet and pulling her up too since he was still holding her hand.

“No I don’t and this conversation isn’t over mister.” She tightened her grip on his hand to stop him from moving. “Promise me you’ll be nice to Roy.”

He started to open his mouth.

“Oliver, please,” she added.
He scratched the back of his head. “He’s my sister’s soulmate. Isn’t that reason enough to hate him?”

She gave him a look.

“Okay fine, I promise I’ll be nice to him. But if he breaks her heart, I’ll break his face.”

“I’ll be there to give you a hand if that happens,” she told him.

“That’s my girl,” he replied, leaning down to kiss her cheek. She shook her head at him and they made their way back to Thea’s room. She didn’t tell him Roy would never break Thea’s heart, that he loved her too much for that. He’d realize that soon enough on his own.

They made their way back to Thea’s room, hand in hand. Tommy was standing in front of the window, his arms crossed over his chest. He turned his head in their direction when he heard them. His eyes seemed bluer than ordinary and shone with the lights of the hallway...

“Are you – are you crying?” She asked.

Tommy shook his head. And sniffled.

He definitely was holding back tears.

“No I’m not,” he defended himself.

Frowning, Felicity turned her head to look into Thea’s room. Felicity’s heart broke in her chest at the sight of her friend and her soulmate. Roy was still sitting in his wheelchair but he had leant forward so that he could both hold one of Thea’s hands close to his heart and stroke the skin of her forehead. It must have hurt him like hell to lean forward that but he was still doing it. Because he needed to be as close as possible to her. Because he needed to touch her. To feel her and make his own presence felt. And there was something in that gesture, something soft and tender and delicate and it brought tears to Felicity’s eyes. It wasn’t just a just a random soothing motion, it was a soulmate’s touch and there was some beauty to it, some purity as well, something that couldn’t be matched by anything.

As he caressed her forehead, he whispered things to her. Felicity couldn’t make out any word from where she was standing but she was it was things as soft as his hand on her.

She glanced at Oliver and she saw that he looked as moved as she was. He tightened his grip on her hand and even brought it to his lips, so that he could press a small kiss on the inside of her wrist. She felt a wave of emotions crash through her and she leaned into his side, savouring the moment.

A couple of minutes later, he motioned for the door and they walked inside the room.

“Thea?” They heard Roy say. “Thea can you hear me?”

“She awake?” Oliver asked, his voice rougher than normal because of the hope he was trying his best to contain.

Roy didn’t reply and the three of them held their breath as they watched Thea’s closed eyelids move, as if she was struggling, fighting to open them. They waited and they waited and Felicity feared that Oliver would break her hand because he was holding onto it so tightly, until finally Thea’s blue eyes fluttered open.

Felicity felt like a weight had been lifted from her shoulders.

From the moment she saw Thea’s eyes, even if they were lost and confused, she felt better. Lighter. She breathed a little easier. Her head even spun a little and if she hadn’t been holding onto Oliver,
she probably would have stumbled back.

And Oliver, oh Oliver.

No word was strong enough to encompass how he felt in that moment, when his baby sister came back to him.

Relief crashed through him and through her at the same time, overwhelming them, filling their senses with light and warmth.

Thea was awake.

She was going to be fine.

Finally.

Her eyes looked around, took the room in until they found Roy’s.

That’s when he spoke.

“Hello there,” Roy tried his hardest to be tough all the time and even his voice was rather hard. But not this time. This time it was barely louder than a whisper, light like a feather and soft like silk. “I’m your soulmate.”

She reached for his face with her free hand. She had just woken up and she was weak but still she raised her hand, her trembling hand Felicity noticed, and she cupped his cheek.

“I know silly,” she finally said, “why do you think I came to see you?”

He let out a relieved breath as well as a chuckle that made his shoulders shake.

“God, I love you,” he told her.

Everyone in the room froze. Even Roy tensed up, as if he hadn’t meant for the words to come out but they just had anyway. Thea was so surprised her hand fell from his cheek. Felicity felt Oliver’s eyes moved from his sister to her, probably looking for her own, but she was too busy holding her breath, waiting to see what would happen next.

And Roy didn’t disappoint.

He took a deep settling breath and grabbed the hand that had just fallen from his face. And, holding both his soulmate’s hands and staring right into her eyes, he repeated the words.

“I love you.”

This time it wasn’t something that he’d let out.

It was a statement. Pure and simple.

He loved her.

A wide and bright smile appeared on Thea’s lips.

“I know,” she whispered. “I know,” she said again, louder and Roy closed his eyes as if he was trying to capture this moment with his heart. He kissed Thea’s palm and Felicity discreetly wiped a tear with the sleeve of her sweater.
There was nothing more beautiful than two soulmates who loved each other.

Oliver let go of her hand and walked to his sister’s side.

“Hey Speedy,” he said.

“Hey Ollie,” she replied. “Hey Felicity and Tommy!”

Felicity turned her head and saw that Tommy had walked in.

“It’s good to see that you’re awake!” He said.

“Very good,” Felicity added. “We were all a little worried.”

“Only a little? Damn I should have made you wait longer.”

Felicity shook her head at her, laughing softly. In the meantime, Oliver leaned down and kissed her forehead.

“I’ll go get your doctor,” he told her before walking out of the room.

“And it’s time for you to go back to your room,” Felicity said, looking at Roy. “Nurse Carol will skin me alive if I keep you away from your bed for too long.”

“Does he really have to go?” Thea complained.

“Nurse Carol is a pretty scary nurse so yeah, I think it’s best if I take him back.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll be back as soon as I can,” Roy say, still holding tightly onto her hands.

“I’m sure we can get your doctors to prescribe him as your medicine,” Tommy added, punctuating his statement with a wink.

“Yes please,” she replied.

“Come on Mr. Harper, let me take you back to your room.”

“I’ll keep you company Speedy,” Tommy said, sitting down in a chair beside her.

She nodded absent-mindedly, her eyes locked on Roy.

“Don’t run, okay?”

“Never again,” he replied, leaning down to kiss her forehead.

“Good. Because if you do, I’ll run after you and kick your ass.”

He laughed, and winced probably because of the cut on his ribs.

“See you later,” he said.

“See you later.”

“I love you.”

“Oh for God’s sake, Felicity just go already or this will take forever. Kids these days…”
Felicity had a smile on her lips on her way back to Roy’s room. She helped him back in bed and made sure he was settled down comfortably before sitting down next to him.

“So…” She started. “You feeling any better?”

He nodded, his cheeks reddening just slightly. “Yeah much better. Thank you Felicity.”

“Thank me? I did nothing!”

“Yeah that’s not true. You came to me, twice, you talked to me and listened to what I had to say. You even took me to see her. That’s not nothing.”

“Well, I simply did what any decent person would have done.”

Roy shook his head. “You know most people wouldn’t have gotten involved. So thank you for your help and… you were right,” he added, albeit slightly reluctantly.

Felicity bit back a smile.

“Oh really? About what?”

He shrugged. “You know… About everything.” He paused for a second then said. “When she opened her eyes earlier… I can’t tell you what it did me, I don’t have the words. But for the first time in my life, I felt like I was right where I belonged.”

“Of course. You belong with her. And she with you.”

“I don’t want to lose that feeling,” he admitted.

“Then don’t. Stay with her, be with her.”

Roy chuckled. “Yeah I plan to. Haven’t you heard what she said? If I leave, she’ll kick my ass.”

“Honestly? I’ll give her a hand.”

They both laughed at that.

“Remember our talk at my house? When I told you fate shouldn’t be that hard?”

She nodded. “You also told me you didn’t want to turn your back on your forever.”

He scratched the back of his head and she saw his cheek redden a little bit. “Yeah I did say that too.” He smiled softly at her. “Anyway, I think things will be easier from now on.”

Felicity smiled back at him. “Can I tell you a secret?”

He nodded.

“They’ll be easier because you decided to let them be. You’re not going to be fighting against fate anymore, you made your choice.”

“Let me guess… You’re talking from experience?”

“What do you think?”

“I think you and I are going to see a lot more of each other in the future Blondie.”
She rolled her eyes at him. “You better start calling me Felicity then.”

“I’ll think about it,” he teased her.

If anyone else had been calling her Blondie, she’d have digitally ruined their lives in a second. But coming from Roy… It was okay. She really liked him and not only because she could see a lot of herself in him. No, she liked him because he was a nice guy and hadn’t given her any reason not to like him yet. And that light teasing between the two of them, it felt right somehow.

“Oh… Abercrombie,” she teased back.

He gave a look and pointed at his bruised face. “I don’t really look like a model at the moment.”

“You’ll heal,” Felicity said. “Speaking of healing, I wanted to tell you that I’m a terrible cook but there is this great Thai restaurant down my street and I know for a fact that my couch is really comfortable.”

He frowned. “Why are you telling me this?”

“Because you’re hurt and I wouldn’t be able to live with myself if I didn’t offer you to stay at my place, at least until you recover.”

“You’ve done enough for me already Blondie, you don’t have to offer me your home too.”

“I know I just… I thought you could come. Your house… It’s not located in the best part of town, let’s face it. And like I said, you’re hurt. I could, I don’t know, I could help you out.”

“Like I said, you’ve already done enough.”

“Okay. At least consider it? Please? I’ll come back to see you tomorrow.”

“Fine.”

“Good.” She got on her feet. “Try to get some rest. Don’t sneak into Thea’s room during the night, okay? That wouldn’t make Oliver happy.”

“Promise. Bye Blondie.”

“Bye Abercrombie, see you tomorrow!” She waved a hand at him and walked out.

She made her way back to Thea’s room. Tommy was waiting outside alone.

“Doctor’s inside,” he told her when he saw her.

She nodded weakly and sat down next to him, suddenly feeling utterly exhausted. Her sleepless night, the events of the day and all the time she had spent fearing and worrying were catching up with her and hitting her hard.

“You okay Felicity? You look about to collapse.”

She nodded.

“Yeah, just a little tired.”

“Yeah I know what you mean. I can hear my bed calling my name,” he said.
She laughed but it was soundless. She felt really tired all of a sudden.

“Thank you Tommy, for what you did today. You really are the best friend ever.”

“They’re more than my friends you know? Oliver and Thea. They aren’t just my friends, they’re my family. Even more than my father.”

“I know,” she said, taking his hand and squeezing his fingers. “I also know they feel the same way about you.”

The door to Thea’s room opened and Oliver walked out with someone Felicity assumed was her doctor.

“You can breathe a little easier, I’m sure your sister will make a full recovery,” he said. “She only needs to rest.”

“Thank you so much doctor, for everything,” Oliver replied, shaking his hand.

The doctor nodded. “I’ll be back in the morning.”

He left then and Oliver turned toward them.

“She’s resting again,” he told them. “And speaking of resting, you guys should go home. Tommy you’ve been here longer than I have and you Felicity haven’t slept so… Go home guys.”

“What about you?” Felicity asked, concerned.

“I’ll stay until I’m kicked out.”

“Then I’ll stay too,” she decided.

“Felicity please,” Oliver pleaded. “You’ve had a very long day. Get some rest. For me.”

But still she hesitated, she didn’t want to leave him alone.

“Are you sure you’ll be okay?” She insisted, scanning Oliver’s face and his emotions.

“I promise. Now go.”

“Come on Felicity,” Tommy said. “I’ll give you a ride.”

“Alright then, if you’re sure…” She leaned up on her tiptoes and kissed him briefly on the lips. “Call me if you need anything,” she whispered.

“I promise.”

He and Tommy hugged, in a very manly way patting each other’s back vigorously. They also exchanged a few words, that Felicity didn’t catch but she felt like she wasn’t meant to. Then Tommy linked his arm with her and the both of them got out of the hospital and walked to his car. Tommy, always smart and thinking ahead, had parked it behind the hospital so that he wouldn’t have to get out by the front door and meet the crowd of journalists gathered together there and most definitely waiting to catch them or Oliver or the Queens. The news of Thea’s attack had spread like wildfire. Felicity’s phone had blown up with notifications when she had turned it back on after her flight. She had wanted to turn it back off almost immediately.

When Tommy dropped her at her building’s entrance, she rushed inside and stopped by her janitor’s
office where her luggage were waiting for her. The crew of Ray’s jet had seen to it, as they had promised. Then, finally, she got in the elevator and to her apartment.

She shut the door close behind her and dropped her keys inside a bowl. Everything was still and perfectly calm. She leaned against the door and closed her eyes, exhaustion making her eyes and limbs feel heavy. She had been caught in a storm for the last couple of days and she had finally escaped. And somehow it felt weird. The calm. The silence. Shaking her head, she took off her shoes and pushed them aside not caring where they ended up. She dropped her coat on the back of her couch but it fell on the floor and it was soon followed by her purse. She heard some noise coming from her bedroom and before she could say or do anything she saw a ball of fur make a beeline for her. Arrow rubbed herself against her legs, meowing loudly. Felicity leaned down and lifted her up.

“You must be so hungry kitten,” she said petting her and heading for the kitchen. “I’m sorry but Thea couldn’t come to look after you. She was hurt but she is fine now. Not that you care or anything,” she added, dropping her on the counter and filling her bowl with food. The kitten started eating immediately and Felicity petted her back until she started purring.

She made herself something to eat as well and poured herself a glass of wine – she had kind of earned it after what she had been through. Then, she headed to the bathroom for a long and hot shower. She walked out dressed for bed and with her hair tied up in a messy bun on top of her head. She was in the middle of unpacking her stuff, Arrow sleeping soundly on her bed, when her phone rang.

She froze when she saw the caller ID.

Agent Jackson.

Her legs wobbled and she sat down on her bed. With shaking hands, she picked up.

“Felicity Smoak,” she said, her voice surprisingly collected.

“Felicity? This is Anthony Jackson, do you remember me?”

“Yes Agent Jackson, I remember you.”

“How are you doing Felicity? I’m hearing a lot about you these days.”

Felicity chuckled awkwardly, unease building within her. She felt constricted in her chest.

“I’m doing great, thanks for asking.

“I’m happy to hear that. It’s been a while since we spoke.”

“Yeah that’s right. I’m sorry Agent Jackson but, uh, what can I do for you? I’m guessing you’re not calling just to ask me how I am doing.”

He let out a long breath. “Yeah you’re right, I’m not. There’s something I need to tell you.”

She stiffened. “What is it? Nothing too bad?”

“No, no, nothing too bad, don’t worry. It’s about Cooper.”

Felicity closed her eyes for a second and she swore she felt the scar of her ribs throb at the sound of his name.
“What is it?”

“The doctors at the mental facility where he’s being held are releasing him.”

“They’re releasing him?” Her voice was barely louder than a whisper.

“Yes, he’ll be transferred to a correctional institution with maximal security near Boston where he’ll serve the rest of his sentence. Transfer should be taking place mid-march.”

Felicity let out a small breath. Her heart was pounding in her chest and her blood was beating her temples almost violently.

“So he’s going to prison?” She said when she was able to form a coherent sentence again.

“Yes Felicity, he’s going to prison. Doctors think he’s stable enough now. I thought you’d want to know.”

“Yes thank you. Thank you for calling, I really appreciate it.”

“You're welcome. Take care of yourself Felicity.”

“Thank you, you too!”

She hung up after that and fell on her back, thumb and forefinger rubbing her temple. She sighed heavily, feeling a tight knot loosen up inside her chest. Cooper had been sentenced to a life in prison for all the monstrous things he had done to the first girl he had taken and for the kidnapping of Felicity as well as her attempted murder. But because he was mad, totally insane, he had been held in a mental facility where doctors and psychiatrists had put him under the Med and helped him until he could be sent to a real prison.

And that time had finally come according to Agent Jackson.

And Felicity would be lying if she said it didn’t make her happy.

She gasped when Arrow decided that her stomach made a far better spot to sleep on than the pillows on top of her bed. She smiled at the kitten who just curled herself into a ball. Felicity’s hand came up and she petted her.

The presentation had gone well.

Thea was okay.

Cooper was finally going to prison.

“All’s end well that ends well”

That was what she had told Oliver. She was starting to think that maybe, just maybe she had been right.

She fell asleep on that thought.

The nightmare didn’t start immediately. No. It waited, lurking in the shadows of her mind, until she was sleeping deeply. It waited until it could catch her off guards and drown her in terror.
She heard his laugh first. Crazy. Maniac.

It echoed in her ears and in her soul and she felt his presence as if he was there with her. And in some ways he was. He was the demon in her head, the monster in her heart.

She couldn’t see him, couldn’t see anything really. But she could feel his presence around her or the weight of his eyes on her. She could hear his voice whispering the most horrifying and disgusting things to her. She could hear him make her mad promises. He told her he’d make her his and she wanted to scream at him but no sound would come out when she opened her mouth. She wanted to run away but she couldn’t move a muscle.

She was a prisoner.

Prisoner of her nightmare, prisoner of her own mind.

Everything was so dark and heavy around her she felt like she was suffocating.

She felt hands on her and the cold and cruel caress of a blade on her skin.

Another soundless scream fell from her lips.

More laughing that made her heart leap in her chest.

And she was cold, so cold.

“Felicity.”

Suddenly, there was light at the end of the tunnel.

“Felicity,” she heard again, more clearly.

The light shone brighter.

“Felicity, wake up. You’re having a nightmare, wake up please.”

She woke up abruptly, a screech and a gasp falling from her lips in the most incoherent way. She struggled with her sheet and covers until two strong hands grabbed her wrists and stopped her erratic movements. Scared out of her mind, she tried to get free.

“Hey, hey Felicity stop! It’s me.”

She looked up and met Oliver’s blue eyes. She looked around her, her breathing uneven, her heart racing in her chest.

The lights on top of her bed were on, casting a low light on the room. Her bedroom. She was safe in her bedroom and Oliver was sitting in front of her on her bed.

She stopped fighting his hold on her and he let go of her.

“Oliver,” she whispered, her voice shaking and her eyes burning because of the tears she was
holding back.

“Yes, yes I’m here,” he said, pulling her to him. She crashed against his chest and buried her face in the crook of his neck, her limbs trembling like leaves in autumn. “It’s okay, you’re okay,” he whispered, rubbing her back and pressing kisses everywhere he could. Her temple, her hair, her cheek. Everywhere.

She fisted his shirt, clinging to him and he pulled her closer to him until she was in his lap, her legs awkwardly tucked underneath her. His emotions were an incoherent mess inside of her, torn between anger, horror and fear.

“I’m sorry,” she cried, her voice muffled against his skin.

This was her first nightmare since she had stopped taking the Med and it seemed that Oliver had been with her the whole time.

“Felicity no…” He pulled away from her then cupping her cheeks between his hands. That was when she realized he was trembling too and that pain was starting to trump all his other emotions. “This isn’t your fault okay?” He whispered, his thumb catching a few tears.

“You shouldn’t have to go through this,” she said.

“You shouldn’t either,” he replied simply, lowering his head to kiss her forehead.

His lips lingered on her skin and she closed her eyes. Then they travelled down, kissing her temple, her left cheek her nose, her right cheek, the side of her jaw, her chin and finally her lips. It was nothing more than a peck, short and brief but it was comforting. Then his hands moved from her face to her legs and he helped her put them on either side of his thighs until she was straddling him. He wrapped his arms around her waist, hugging her close and she wrapped around his neck, hugging him back. She found solace in his embrace and even though she knew it was impossible, she wished she could just melt into him and never ever get out again.

“How did you get in?” She asked after a while, after her breathing had settled and her body had stopped trembling.

“I used the key you gave Thea before we left for New-York. I had this feeling when I left the hospital, I can’t explain it… I just knew I needed to get to you so I came straight here.”

“I heard your voice,” she said. “In the nightmare. It was as if you were there with me.”

“I was.”

She closed her eyes and sighed. She was already feeling the last remnants of her nightmare leave her. Months ago, it would have taken her hours to calm down. Now she only had to be with Oliver to immediately feel better. She only had to look at him for her nightmares to become just that, nightmares. He only had to hold her in his arms for her demons to be gone. He was all she needed, he had always been. She remembered that one time on a roof in Coast City when he had found her after she had been having nightmare after nightmare. That night, neither of them had known about their connection, but still he had held her and she had felt better. And she knew that, as long as they basked in their love, its light would keep the darkness at bay.

“Will you stay the night please?” She asked, her voice soft and low.

He nodded. “Yeah, I’m not going anywhere. Do you mind if I take a shower though?”
She shook her head no but she reluctantly disentangled herself from him. She didn’t want him to go anywhere, she wanted to stay in the nest of his arms a place that had been carved for her body only, where it was safe and warm.

He got on his feet and, ironically enough, the distance allowed her to notice he was all tensed up. Concern made Felicity frown. She focused on his emotions, scared that he was pulling away from her again. He wasn’t but still, there was something odd with him, something dark and angry.

“Are you okay?”

She had to crane her neck to look in his eyes since he was up and she was still sitting down but she didn’t care.

“I should be asking you this,” he replied.

“Well, I’m asking.”

He ran his fingers through his hair but didn’t answer her question. He was fidgeting, as if he was getting antsy.

“Oliver,” she insisted.

Blue met blue when their eyes crossed and she knew the exact moment he was done for. He snapped and suddenly his hands were everywhere. Her waist, her arms, her neck, her cheeks, her hair, he was touching her everywhere as if he needed some reassurance that she was really here, that she was with him.

“I’m so angry Felicity,” he eventually confessed, his voice barely louder than a whisper.

She stilled.

“What he did to you, what he wanted to do to you…” She grabbed his wrists, stopping his hands on her shoulders. “It makes me so angry. And it drives my side of the bond crazy… I – I want to kill him for ever laying a hand on you. And what he said, god, what he said about making you his…” He took a step away from her, his fists falling clenched tightly at his side and she felt a wave of raw anguish and possessiveness build up in his chest. “I’m so sorry Felicity, I know you don’t need this right now but…” He let out a shaky breathless sigh. “This is driving me insane. You’re – you’re mine not his and the mere thought of what he did to you, what he wanted to do to you, it’s killing me.”

For the longest while, she didn’t say anything.

She didn’t move, she didn’t breathe she just stared at him.

Then she said, very calmly.

“Come here.”

He shook his head. “Felicity, I don’t think I can – I can’t control myself right now. Let me… Give me a moment, I’ll go clear my head.”

“Oliver, I said come here,” she repeated, her voice stronger than previously.

Her tone surprised him. He took a hesitant step toward her. She deftly unbuttoned the cardigan she had thrown over her top and took it off. Then she lifted her arms and got rid of her top, revealing the
lacy crop top she was wearing underneath it.

His eyes widened at her actions.

The chilly air of the room had goose bumps breaking on her arms immediately.

She didn’t waver.

Instead she reached for his hand and placed it on her chest, right above her heart. It picked up in her chest the moment his skin touched hers.

“I understand,” she said, looking up to meet his eyes. “You’re right Oliver. Can you feel my heart? It’s beating for you, only for you. I’m yours, yours to love and yours to touch. Only yours.”

“Felicity,” he said, and there was an underlying tone to his voice. His eyes were feverish on her and he dug his fingers lightly in her skin, as if he was aching to move, to touch, to do something but was holding back.

Slowly, she moved his hand from her heart to her shoulder, and to the thin strap of her top. He hooked a finger around it.

“How about we go take that shower together?” She suggested.

He cupped her shoulder and she felt anticipation build, she didn’t know whether it was his or hers though.

His eyes fluttered close. She rose on her feet and wrapped her arms around his neck. She pulled until his forehead touched hers. She placed one of her legs up against his hip. He placed his hand under her thigh and very delicately he lifted her up. She gasped at the sudden movement but quickly caught up with him and wrapped both her legs around him, locking her ankles together behind his back.

“Are you sure you want to be doing this?” He whispered, his blue eyes scanning hers, searching and pleading at the same time. Pleading with her to say yes, to be on board.

She didn’t reply.

Instead, she covered his lips with hers and kissed them tenderly, her fingers getting lost in his hair. He moaned against her lips and opened to her. Their tongues met and in a second they were kissing as if they hadn’t kissed in days. It was like lighting a match. Passion ignited between them and soon enough they were kissing and devouring at the same time, caressing and exploring, giving and taking. Felicity, who had been the one in charge soon found herself deprived of her leadership. Oliver took it from her, yanked it from her eager hands and just consumed her.

He took control of the kiss, moving one of his hands to the back of her head to move her head in a way that allowed him to deepen the kiss. He tasted her, wrecked her insides with just his mouth and started a fire in her veins with his other hand still firmly holding onto her thigh and almost clutching her. A feeling of possessiveness she had never felt in him poured inside her through their uncomplete bond and she felt warmth pool low in her belly as his desire for her, his ache for her woke all her nerve endings.

It was raw and pure, naked and unadulterated, a side of Oliver he had never let her see.

She loved it.

No, scratch that.
She adored it.

She didn’t realize they were moving until he bumped them against the wall outside of her bedroom. He pressed her against it and started raining open-mouthed kisses down the column of her throat. He nipped at her skin, right in the hollow of her collarbone and it sent a shot of electricity down her spine. She stiffened and her back arched in reaction, pressing her breast against the hard lines of his chest.

“God,” he groaned, his breath warm against her skin. “You have no idea how much I want you. How much I need you.”

“I beg to differ,” she replied, her breathing uneven.

He pressed himself deeper against her and she moaned when she felt his very evident arousal against her core. She fisted the fabric of his shirt and yanked it from his pants. He kept her plastered against the wall with his hips only and with both his hands he reached for the hairband keeping her blonde locks tied up and he undid it very carefully, not wanting to tear her hair out. Blonde curls fell freely on her shoulders and watched it happen with a dreamy smile on his lips. She smiled back at him, and he leaned in to capture her lips again.

They started kissing again, at first slowly, then more intensely, and more clumsily too. She deftly undid the buttons of his shirt and eagerly pushed the lapels aside, excited to have more skin to touch and caress. Her eyes fell on the arrow mark on his chest. It had grown so much because of the desire coursing through his veins and she raked her nails over it. Oliver shut his eyes, the pleasure when she touched him there, more intense, the sensations stronger. He hauled her up against him again and resumed his walk to the bathroom. He deposited her on the counter, his lips still sealed to hers.

“God Felicity,” he groaned against her lips when her hands started to undo his belt and the buttons of his jeans.

He tossed his shoes and socks away as she pushed his jeans down his legs. He wiggled out of them, ending up in just his shirt and briefs. She shot him a wicked smile and pulled away from him, just enough to get rid of her flimsy crop-top.

His eyes narrowed on her naked chest and she felt blush creep up her cheeks under his intense eyes.

“You’re so perfect,” he whispered mesmerized, caressing one of her already erect nipples with his thumb. She sucked in a breath. “So fucking perfect,” he repeated, dropping a kiss at the centre of her chest.

Her fingers got tangled in his hair. “No,” she breathed out, pulling at his hair to make him look at her. “You’re perfect.”

He gave her a sheepish smile before stealing another kiss from her and she tried to think about what he tasted like but just like always his mouth completely fried her brain and all she could do was feel all the things he could make her feel.

They kissed and nipped and sucked until their lungs were burning for air. Only then did they tore away from each other. Felicity pushed his shirt off his shoulders. He walked away from her to start the shower. She stared at him, fascinated with the way the muscles of his back flexed as he moved around gracefully. She clenched her thighs together, hoping to alleviate the ache she felt growing there.

He really was perfect.
He turned his head toward her his blue eyes dark with desire for her. They darkened even more when they fell on the scar on her ribs. Out of instinct, she covered it with her hands. He rushed to her and kneeled at her feet. He was so tall and her so small, he could still reach her belly button. He licked his lips and she bit hers in reply. Gently, he pried her hands away from her scar. He traced it with his thumb and she felt a hint of anger rush back in. But then his thumb travelled down and fell on her own arrow mark, which had also grown because of all their kissing and touching. It was partly hidden by her pants and underwear so Oliver tugged at the hem of both until it was totally uncovered.

He kissed it with only his lips, it was a rather chaste kiss but it send jolts of electricity down Felicity’s spine. She pressed herself further against him, seeking more, needing more. But he got up, his fingers hooked in the hem of both her pants and underwear.

“Are you sure?” He asked again and she looked at him through hooded eyes.

She nodded firmly.

“I need you,” she whispered.

That seemed to be his undoing. He pushed down the rest of her clothes, baring her completely for the first time. He took off his own underwear then and there they stood, completely naked. Their eyes met and Felicity felt all the love, desire, ache and longing she felt in her heart reflected in his. She gently cupped his cheek with her hand. He kissed the inside of her wrist. Then he trailed kisses down her arms, up her shoulders and neck until he reached her ear.

“I want you to scream my name Felicity,” he whispered.

Knots formed in her stomach and she clenched her thighs in anticipation.

She swallowed, hard.

“I suggest you get to work then Mr. Queen,” she whispered back.

His eyes darkened even more. She couldn’t see that blue she loved so much anymore and strangely, she was okay with it. Both his hands kneaded her bottom and she hopped in his arms. His hard and bare length pressed right against her core where she was already so wet she felt almost embarrassed. They both moaned in pleasure and their lips met again, resuming their complicated dance of tongues and teeth.

Oliver turned them around and walked inside the shower. Steam had already fogged the glass wall. Felicity gasped when she felt hot water run down the curve of her back. Oliver let go of her and pressed her against the slick tile wall of the shower.

“Oliver,” she hissed as the tiles were still pretty cold. “What are you doi…” The rest of her question died on her lips when he cupped her centre with his hand.

“How are you so wet already?” He marvelled, opening her with his fingers. Pleasure shot through her and her hips moved on their own volition to meet his hand.

She leaned her head back against the tiles her eyes shut, his name a moan on her lips. He teased her a little, his thumb grazing over the sensitive bundle of nerves on top of her apex. She tried to close her thighs over his hand but he put his own leg between hers to stop her.

“Oliver,” she whispered, her nails digging in his shoulders.
He circled her nipple with his tongue before sucking it into his mouth. She cried out, digging her nails deep enough into his skin to make him hiss. His fingers kept teasing her core, moving from her clit to her entrance but never really touching her enough to make her really feel him. He was playing with her and driving her insane. Her head was spinning, her lungs burning.

“More,” she begged, but he was too busy sucking her other nipple into his mouth to indulge her. She gasped in pleasure, tension starting to build low in her belly. Oliver took his hand away from her and used both his hands to steady her hips against the slick tile wall. Then he knelt in front of her and pressed a kiss at the juncture of her thighs and she tensed up for another reason altogether.

He felt it and looked up to meet her eyes.

“Felicity, it’s me,” he said trying to reassure her, his fingers drawing soothing patterns on her wet skin.

She felt herself blush. “Yeah that’s part of the problem,” she mumbled.

He blinked. “What?”

“Please, you know how I’m feeling, don’t make me say it,” she said.

“I want you to say it,” he replied, his voice steady, his eyes unwavering.

She shut her eyes. “This is – uh – I’m embarrassed. This is – these are my lady parts.”

He bit back a laugh. “I’m well aware. I’d like to get up close and personal with them if that’s alright with you.”

She choked. And blushed even harder. “Oliver,” she slapped his shoulder. “It’s…”

“It’s you. All of this,” he traced her belly, her core and thighs with his fingers, “is you. And I want you, all of you. And I know you’re embarrassed because this is new and intimate but you should know that I want to try a lot of new things with you and do a lot of intimate things with you and that I plan for us to enjoy all of them. Abundantly. So really, there is no need for you to be embarrassed.”

She swallowed.

“If it’s awful you’ll stop right?”

This time he laughed but he wasn’t mocking her. It was affectionate, loving. It was warm and just plain Oliver.

“It won’t be awful so I’ll never stop.”

“Oliver,” she warned him.

“At least not until you scream my name. Loudly.”

She swallowed hard, feeling hotter than ever.

“That’s a big mouth that you have here Mr. Queen.”

A flash of raw desire lighted his eyes. More fire flooded her veins.

“You think?”
“Yeah,” she said, panting, when he started kissing her thighs again. “You might want to put it to work and oh fuck!” She shout when he licked a strip at the juncture between her thighs and her core. Her lips lifted off the tile wall on their own volition and he had to bring both his hands to steady her back against it. He rubbed his stubble against the soft and tender skin of her thighs and she writhed against him, yearning for more. He chuckled at her eagerness and licked her again, on the other side. Her hands fell on top of his head and held onto his hair. He was nowhere near touching her like she knew he could and yet she already felt like going down in flames.

“Oh,” she half-panted, half-begged.

Without warning, his lips wrapped around her clit and she shout, banging her head against the shower wall in the process. The pain never registered, only the pleasure, the hot and burning pleasure that was coursing through her veins. He hummed against her and she keened, her hips pressing more firmly against his eager mouth. He tightened his hold on her and released her bundle of nerves. He licked a strip down her entrance and before she could comprehend what was happening, his tongue was deep inside her. Her back arched and a silent cry fell from her lips. His tongue stroke her inner walls and she keened. Then he licked her again, up and down, playing leisurely with her folds. He kissed her lips, right then left, left again then right. His stubble scraped against her sensitive flesh and combined to the roughness of his tongue, it made her want to pull him closer and push him away at the same time.

It was too much.

Too fucking much.

But in the meantime, it wasn’t enough.

She was desperate for more.

She was aching for more, her toes curled on the wet floor of her shower.

“Fuck,” she swore, losing the rest of her mind to his wicked tongue. “Oliver!” She shout, her voice echoing against the shower walls when he brought a finger to her entrance and plunged in without any warning. He stroked her walls, moved in and out rapidly, his tongue playing with her sensitive clit in tandem. She tightened her grip on his hair and felt her fingers tingle in response. Her senses were overwhelmed with feelings and sensations, she felt ready to explode. And yet, she wasn’t quite there and Oliver knew it, felt it. So he upped his game.

The damn bastard.

Another finger joined the one currently inside her and she gasped feeling fuller. He sucked her clit into his mouth again, adding enough pressure this time to send tremors down her body. She cried out his name but she didn’t know if he could recognize it. She barely did. He crooked his fingers inside her, searching for that sweet spot and she jerked against him when he found it. She felt him smile against her clit and he kissed her folds again moving up and away from where she wanted him.

“Oliver what are you…”

“Felicity look at me,” he cut her off.

Her eyes were still closed. She tried to open them but she was so lost in her pleasure, in the feeling of his fingers moving inside her that she couldn’t.

“Felicity, open your eyes,” he demanded and there was something in his voice, something urging and determinate that made her open one eye, then the other.
His lips were hovering her soulmark.

Her throbbing soulmark.

Her heart leaped in her chest.

“What did you say earlier? In your bedroom?” He asked.

“I’m yours,” she panted.

“That’s right,” he nodded, brushing his cheek against her hipbone. Her skin was so sensitive she reacted immediately and moved frantically away from the tile wall. “You’re mine Felicity. Mine to love, mine to touch.”

“Yes, yes, yes,” she agreed, tension coiling within her, ready to break.

“Come for me Felicity,” he whispered. “Come for me,” he repeated, pressing an open-mouthed kiss on her soulmark.

She fell over the edge into an intense orgasm. Suddenly, she felt nothing but Oliver and his lips covering her throbbing soulmark and his fingers buried deep inside her. He was the only she could feel, the only thing that mattered to her as waves and waves of pleasure crashed through her. Her legs failed her and she collapsed in his arms, crying out his name.

“Oliver,” she sobbed, clinging to him.

“I’ve got you,” he whispered, peppering her face with kisses. He cupped her cheeks and kissed her deeply and she kissed him back not caring that she could taste herself on his tongue. They kept kissing and touching and kissing some more, reaffirming what had always been true.

They belonged with each other.

“Felicity I’m begging you, stop doing that,” Oliver told her.

His voice was strained as if he was trying to contain himself. That only made Felicity grin wider.

“I’m not doing anything,” she replied innocently, adjusting her position in her seat.

“Yes you are,” he argued, his eyes not leaving the road. “Vixen,” he added under his breath.

“I don’t remember you complaining last night.”

And just like that, her mind was back there.

To the previous night in the shower where he had touched her and made her come apart. And then she had touched him too and she had made him come apart and they had fallen in bed in a tangle of limbs, safe in each other’s arms.

“Fe-li-ci-ty,” Oliver warned her.

She let out a happy laugh and leaned to kiss his cheek. He groaned in annoyance.
“Will you please think about something else?”

“Someone isn’t so smug anymore?” She teased him, remembering their bickering over breakfast. She’d felt deliciously sore in all the right places when she’d woken and he had taken great pride in that.

Maybe too much pride.

And maybe, just maybe, that was why she was torturing him with thoughts of the previous night.

“Felicity, there will be journalists in front of the hospital. I’d rather not have them think I’m happy to see them.”

“Oh, okay, I’ll think about something else,” she promised, feeling merciful.

She covered his hand on the driving stick with hers. He turned his head to meet her eyes and they smiled at each other. She felt so close to him in that moment, it was hard to believe that she had spent the previous day worrying about a wall separating them.

When they arrived at the hospital, they walked past the journalists and rushed inside, ignoring both the flash of their cameras and their questions. They walked to Thea’s room. She was awake and looked much better than she had the previous day. There were more colours on her cheeks and that light that was always present in her blue eyes was shining brighter than ever.

“You two look happy,” was the first Thea told them when she saw them walk hand in hand and smiling.

“Of course we’re happy, why wouldn’t we be happy?” Felicity started to babble. “Everything’s fine, you’re awake and okay and look outside the sun is out.”

Thea stared intensely at the two of them.

“Gross,” she grunted.

“We brought you some stuff,” Oliver said, hoping to change the topic of conversation. He dropped a bag by her bed. “Felicity picked your clothes,” he added and Felicity laughed, thinking at the face he’d made when she had teased him about selecting his sister’s underwear.

“Thank God! I want to get out of that hospital blouse.”

“I’ve brought you comfy pajamas,” she said, taking them out of the bag.

“Please tell me those aren’t the ones with the teddy bears…”

“Why do you care? Is there someone you want to impress?”

Thea glared at her. Oliver glared at her too.

Felicity rolled her eyes at them.

“You guys are no fun,” she sighed, showing Thea the pajamas she had picked – and no they weren’t the ones with the teddy bears printed on them, she was a good friend.

“The doctor came back this morning. He said I’ll probably be discharged at the end of the week. Maybe on Friday. Then I’ll be on bed arrest for a couple of weeks,” she sighed. “I’ll be missing school a lot.”
“Don’t worry, we’ll find a solution,” Oliver told her, kissing her forehead. “Right now, you need to focus on healing and resting.”

“That shouldn’t be too hard,” she said, resting her head back on her pillows.

Felicity’s heart clenched in her chest. Thea looked better than she had the previous day, yes, but she still looked pretty tired and her features were still strained. And for someone who had just been assaulted and stabbed, she seemed to be doing surprisingly well too. Felicity suspected it had something to do with her finally meeting her soulmate. The joy of finally being together after a lifetime apart must have helped her deal with the trauma. And yet, Felicity still looked at her friend with careful eyes, just in case. She knew Thea well now and she knew she’d do her best not to show her wounds. She felt comforted in her idea when she saw that Oliver was staring at her cautiously too. He had told her they had spoken a little the previous night after she and Tommy had left and that she hadn’t seemed too pleased when she had realized she’d have to talk to the police.

She probably didn’t want to relive the attack something Felicity completely understood.

“I want to see Roy. Can I see him?” She asked, sounding hopeful but in the meantime, the underlying worry in her tone was unmissable.

“I’ll see if I can get him,” Felicity said, getting up.

Oliver followed her outside.

“We’re lucky I’m not a jealous man with all the time you spend with the kid…”

Felicity arched an eyebrow, her arms crossed over her chest.

“What?”

“Not a jealous man uh?”

“If we weren’t in the middle of a hallway, I’d take my top off and show you all the marks that prove just how wrong you are.”

He wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her into him.

“I’m not jealous,” he said. “I’m possessive,” he punctuated his statement with a hard kiss on her lips.

She rolled her eyes at him and pushed on his chest to free herself.

“What helps you sleep Mr. I’m-Not-Jealous, see if you can get Thea in her pajamas, I’ll go get Roy.”

“You really think he’s good for her?”

“Why don’t you try to talk to him and see for yourself?”

“That guy is the boyfriend to end all boyfriends for my sister. I’m pretty sure I’m supposed to doubt him.”

“Yeah… But you promised me you’d be nice to him yesterday. If you want a repeat of last night in the foreseeable future, I suggest you stick to your word.”

When she reached Roy’s room, she saw Detective Lance walk out of it. His eyes widened when he saw her and she felt awkward. It was the first time she was seeing him since she had figured out that
he was her mother’s mysterious boyfriend.

“Detective Lance,” she greeted him, shaking the hand he was holding out for her.

“Ms. Smoak, what a pleasure! I’m guessing you’re here to see Ms. Queen? I’m on my way to see her.”

“Yeah I’m also here to see Mr. Harper,” she added.

“Oh right, they’re soulmates! Poor kids… It’s terrible what happened to them.”

“Any news on their attackers?”

“They’re hiding, people are helping them stay out of the radar but we’re doing everything we can to catch them.”

“Thank you detective.”

“Only doing my job Ms. Smoak. I guess I’ll see you around?”

She nodded. “I guess so.”

She started walking away when he called her back.

“Are you close with Harper?”

“Kind of, why?”

“He could really use a friend. These guys… They didn’t pull any punches with him.”

Felicity frowned. “O – kay,” she said not really understanding what his point was.

She pushed the door to Roy’s room and walked in.

He smiled when he saw her, it was small and shy but it was a real smile and it made her really happy. Something told her he didn’t smile much. She noticed he was dressed and out of bed.

“Hey Blondie!”

“Her Abercrombie!”

“You look happy,” he said.

She blushed. “Maybe I am,” she replied mysteriously.

He made a face. “Gross.”

“Watch it if you want me to take you to see your soulmate! But maybe you don’t need my help, as you’re up and dressed.”

“I’m being discharged,” he explained. “They kept me for the night because I had a concussion but I’m all better now. Head’s pretty solid,” he added, patting the top of his head. He clenched his jaw and she guessed the movement had caused him pain on his side.

“So…” She started. “Have you thought about my offer?”

“Yeah actually I have… I think I’ll take you up on it.”
“Really?”

“Yeah but just until I recover.”

“Okay, just until you recover.”

“I’m serious.”

“Okay.”

“Stop saying okay!”

“Okay…” She laughed and he snorted.

“Thank you Felicity,” he said right after.

“Don’t mention it.”

He nodded. “I have papers to sign and then we can go see Thea.”

“Alright, lead the way,” she said.

And they walked out of the room.

Oliver and Felicity spent some time with Thea and Roy in her bedroom but the two of them had a lot to talk about and so at some point Felicity dragged her soulmate out of the room and down to the cafeteria where they talked about nothing and everything at the same time. She went back to her apartment with Roy that night and they ate pizzas on the couch, bonding over video games. Sunday was spent in the exact same way except that more people came to visit Thea.

The work week passed in a flash. They were extremely busy between their partnership with Palmer Tech and the new projects they wanted to develop. Slowly, Q. Inc was growing, expanding and it made no doubt in Felicity’s mind that soon enough, the company would be big enough to put Queen Consolidated in the shade. Felicity was happy they had a lot of work to do because it helped her take her mind off things. The media were giving them a hard time in spite of their many statements asking for the respect of their privacy. They still wanted to know their story, only having heard Oliver’s parents version of it. Their interest in them hadn’t had time to die down, like Felicity had hoped. It had even been doubled by Thea’s attack and now they wanted to know everything there was to know, from Oliver and Felicity’s story to Thea’s story, her soulmate and her attack. Because yes, they knew about Roy and they knew he was Thea’s soulmate, courtesy of another interview from the Queens. He hadn’t reacted well when he had seen his name hit the headlines. Felicity could tell he had wanted to run away but he hadn’t. For Thea. The craziness of the situation reminded Felicity of Ray’s soulmate Anna’s words when she had briefly seen her in New-York. As a journalist herself, she had suggested she and Oliver talked about their options to “turn the tables” with her. That conversation had never happened as they had to leave abruptly but Felicity was starting to seriously consider giving her a call. It couldn’t hurt to listen to what she had to say, right?

Aside from that, Thea got out of the hospital on Friday and on Saturday, Oliver organised a movie night. He invited Felicity and Roy to join them, as they all deserved a quiet night off after the week they had had. He had started to warm up to Roy, to Thea’s greatest pleasure. The both of them were recovering well from their ordeal and Felicity had started helping Roy look for another, steadier job than his current part-time job in a garage.

“We ran into the delivery guy on our way,” Felicity said, showing up the pizza boxes she was holding when Oliver opened the door.
“Hello to you too,” he replied, leaning down to peck her lips. “Roy,” he added, holding out his hand for him to shake.

Felicity dropped the boxes on the coffee table in front of the TV. Thea was sitting on the couch, a blanket wrapped around her leg.

“How are you doing today?” She asked.

“I’m fine,” she said. “I – hey!” She said when Roy made his way to them.

“Hey,” he greeted her, kissing her cheek and sitting down next to her. She immediately adjusted her position so that she was leaning into his side, her head resting against his shoulder. Felicity smiled internally. Roy had spent a lot of time by her side at the hospital during the week and that time spent together had done them a lot of good. It had not only helped them heal better but it had also eased their minds and souls. The both of them seemed more at ease, more content. They were slowly learning to know each other and it made them happy. Happiness looked good on them and Felicity wished for them to remain that way for a long, long time. They deserved it.

“So what are we watching?” Felicity asked.

Thea opened her mouth to reply but Felicity interrupted when she heard her phone ring.

“Sorry it’s my mom,” she said when she saw her mom’s smiling face on the screen. “I have to take it. Hello,” she said picking up.

She heard a loud sniffing sound on the other side of the line. Concern immediately rose in her chest.

“Mom?” She asked, walking away from the couch to the windows.

Another sniffing sound and a sob.

A gut-wrenching sob that had Felicity’s hand tighten her grip around her phone.

“Felicity?” Thea asked.

“Is everything alright Blondie?”

“Fe – Felicity… Oh baby girl…” Donna cried.

“What’s going on?” She asked, trying her best to ignore the three pairs of eyes set on her.

“I – I don’t know. I just – I just had this feeling – oh my god, he’s dead Felicity, I think he’s dead.”

The hand that wasn’t holding her phone had started shaking. She realized it when Oliver took it and squeezed her fingers. She looked up and met his worried blue eyes.

“What – what are you talking about mom? Who’s dead?”

Oliver’s eyes widened.

“I don’t know Felicity, I can’t explain it. I just – I just had this feeling, this icy feeling and then it was like my heart was breaking and I – and I just knew. I knew something had happened.” She hiccupped and sniffed and sobbed and then she said. “I think your father’s dead.”

Felicity stiffened at her words.
Her heart skipped a beat then picked up in her chest. She felt blood rushed to her temples but when she spoke her voice was clear and steady.

“Okay,” she said.

“I – I – The Med. I can’t. Felicity I need to know. I can’t take it, I need to know, I need to see the mark, I need to know, I need to…”

“Mom no!” She raised her voice. She didn’t mean to but she did. Donna gasped on the other side of the line. “Mom please don’t do anything. I’m coming. I’m coming over and we’ll figure this out, okay?”

“But Felicity I have to know, I have to…”

“Mom please,” she cut her off. “Please, I’m begging you, wait for me. I’m coming.”

For a second, Felicity only heard crying.

Then Donna’s broken voice said.

“Please hurry baby.”

Felicity hung up.

“What’s going on?”

Oliver’s emotions were a strange mix of concern and comfort, because he could feel her distress and he wanted to make her feel better, even if he didn’t know how.

“I’m going to Vegas,” she announced. “I’m going to Vegas right now, I need to book a flight.” She was already typing on her phone but she kept missing the right keys because of her shaking hands. Oliver’s steady ones clasped over hers.

“Felicity what’s going on?”

“My mother wants to stop taking the Med.” Horror built within her at the thought. “She wants to stop taking the Med but she can’t Oliver, she can’t. It will destroy her if she does. All those years she spent trying to get better… They’ll be ruined. I remember what the doctors said. One drink is all it takes to fall back in. Well one missed pill is all it takes. She can’t stop.”

“Oh, she can’t stop, I get it. But why does she want to stop? What happened?”

“My father… It’s about my father.”

Silence followed her declaration.

She felt the tension that had been building inside her ever since she had picked up the phone loosen up. Her shoulders fell and then it hit her.

Her mother thought her father, the man who had abandoned them years ago, was dead.

“She thinks my father is dead,” she said, the words sounding weird to her ears.

“What?” Thea asked and she made a muffled noise that sounded like “humpf” when Roy elbowed her.
“Book two tickets,” Oliver told her, squeezing her hands.

She shook her head. “You’re not coming with me, you – you have to stay here, Thea needs you.”

“Felicity I’m not letting you do this alone.”

“Yeah you need him more than me,” Thea said, putting a hand on her shoulder. She had moved from the couch, Roy not too far behind and she was looking at Felicity cautiously. As if she was made of glass and might break any minute from now. “And Roy can stay with me,” she added.

“I’ll take good care of her,” he promised.

“Yeah not happening… I’ll call Tommy to come check up on you,” Oliver decided.

“This is too much trouble,” Felicity said. “I’m going alone. It’s my problem Oliver, I’ll handle it.”

He pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed in frustration. “Okay, I’ll let that one go because you’re upset. I’m coming with you, period.” He took her phone from her and took a step away from her.

Thea wrapped her arms around Felicity’s shoulders and hugged her tight. Felicity covered her hands with hers.

“I’m fine,” she answered the unasked question.

“You don’t look fine blondie,” Roy pointed out. “Maybe you should sit down.”

She shook her head.

She felt empty, just empty.

“What did your mother say about your father?” Thea cautiously asked.

Felicity shrugged.

“Not much.”

“Plane taking off at seven tomorrow morning,” Oliver announced, putting her phone on the kitchen counter and walking back to them. “We’ll stop by your apartment in the morning so that you can pack a few things, okay? Roy can sleep in one of the guest rooms.”

“I have a bedroom you know?” Thea pointed out.

Oliver gave her a look. “Don’t push it,” he said.

She rolled her eyes at him.

“I think I’ll be going to bed,” Felicity told them, disentangling herself from Thea’s arms.

“I’ll come with you,” Oliver immediately said.

She raised a hand to stop him. “No… movie night is important, don’t let that ruin the evening, okay?”

“You’re not ruining anything…” He started to argue but then he stopped himself, feeling her need to be alone through their bond. “Alright.”

She excused herself from Thea and Roy then and escaped to Oliver’s room. She shut the door
behind her and leaned against it for a second. Then, on wobbly legs, she walked to the bathroom attached to his bedroom, memories from her childhood spinning in her mind. She saw her mother refusing to eat or to wash herself. She saw her not going to work, forgetting about the bills. She saw her get stuck in her own head and talk to her father as if he was there even if he wasn’t. She saw her mother not recognize her. Her heart broke in her chest at that particular memory. That would happen again if her mother stopped taking the Med. Things would even be worse if her soulmate was indeed dead. She couldn’t stop taking the Med. When her father, it had destroyed her back then. If he was dead now, if Donna felt him gone for good, if her mark turned white… It would kill her. But he was still her soulmate… Could she really stop her from finding out the truth about him? Did she have the right to do that? Wouldn’t it be worse if her mother never knew for sure?

She didn’t know.

She didn’t know what to do, what to think.

Felicity felt a panic attack bubble up in her chest. She gripped the edges of the sink and forced herself to breathe.

In. Out.

Slowly.

In. Out.

“I think your father’s dead.”

She heard her sobs again in her head.

And she felt one of her own form in her throat.

Her mother’s pain, her distress… It had been so raw, so evident in her voice. It was killing her. She wanted to be there with her, to hold her, to ease her pain. She wanted to tell her everything would be alright, that she’d fix the situation, that she’d make things better.

She heard the door behind her open.

“Felicity…?” Oliver’s unsure voice asked.

“What if he’s dead Oliver?” she asked tears filling her eyes. “How do I make things better if he’s dead? How do I help her?” She paused and ran her fingers through her hair. “She can’t lose him twice Oliver, she can’t take it. And I – I… I can’t lose her again.” She broke in tears and a sob shook her entire frame. In a second, Oliver was there, his arms wrapping around her, holding her tight.

“You won’t lose her,” he whispered against her hair. “I promise you won’t. We’ll find a solution. We’ll fix this, okay?”

“But what if he’s dead? We can’t fix death. And if she stops taking the Med, even for a day…” Her voice trailed down. She shut her eyes and more tears flowed her cheeks. Oliver tightened his hold on her.

“You’ll talk to her,” he said. “And if she loves you as much as you love her, she’ll keep taking the Med. She won’t interrupt her treatment and she’ll keep living her life.”

“He’s her soulmate Oliver… Doesn’t she deserve to know if he’s dead or alive?”
“What difference would it make if she knew the truth? He’d still be gone from her life. From both your lives.”

“Wouldn’t you want to know if it were me?”

“If you died, I’d die right along with you,” he said softly.

She opened her mouth to argue with him, to tell him to stop being stupid but no words came to her.

Because he was right and she knew it, deep in her heart.

If he died, she’d die right along with him too.

And that realization brought more tears to her eyes because she didn’t want to even entertain the thought of him dying.

“Tell me what I can do Felicity,” he whispered against her hair. “Tell me what you need.”

She was in pain and she was scared and she wouldn’t feel better until she was with her mom.

“I just need you to hold me,” she whispered back.

“Okay,” he said, kissing the crown of her head and picking her up.

He walked them to his bed and gently put her on the mattress. She took off her shoes while he circled the bed and climbed behind her. They settled on their side and he spooned her, completely engulfing her in his warmth. His hand found hers and they intertwined their fingers together. She took a deep breath, one that made her whole body shake and he pulled further against him. He kissed the top of her head again and said nothing for a while.

Time passed.

She stopped crying.

He kept holding her in his arms, comforting her with his body around hers and his emotions inside her.

She found a semblance of peace while she lied in the dark with him because he was her soulmate, she loved him and he was all she had ever needed.

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)
Chapter Notes

Hey guys!

Here's the new chapter! I hope you'll like it! It's a Smoak ladies + Oliver centric chapter but don't worry guys! The other characters of the story (Thea, Tommy, Roy, JJ, will be back in the next chapter).
As always, thanks for the support, for leaving kudos and comments! You guys rock!

Happy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Last Sunday, March 26th, it was the first anniversary of the fic and I made a special Tumblr post. Go check it out if you're interested ;)

Chapter 20:

“And it’s the fight, and the fight of our lives

You and I, we were made to thrive

And I am your future, I am your past

Never forget that we were built to last

Step out of the shadows and into my life

Silence the voices that haunt you inside

And just say the word, we’ll take on the world

Just say you’re hurt, we’ll face the worst

Nobody knows you, the way that I know you

Look in my eyes, I’ll never desert you, and

Just say the word, we’ll take on the world, we’ll take on the world.”

- You Me At Six, Take On The World
Felicity couldn’t sleep.

She couldn’t get her mother’s voice out of her head.

“I think he’s dead.”

Donna hadn’t sounded that hurt and that desperate in years.

It was just an echo that Felicity was hearing in her head, only a memory. It didn’t hurt any less than it had earlier when it had actually been her mother on the other side of the phone. She still felt like someone was stabbing her in the heart, like someone was slapping her across the face.

She was hurting Felicity, she was hurting for her mother.

And she was afraid, oh so afraid.

After her mother had gotten better at the soulmate’s clinic, Felicity had felt hope seep into her. She had been sure the worst had been behind them, that she’d never see the shadow that had been her mother ever again.

She was afraid now because the woman that had called her… She had sounded a lot like that shadow she had lived with for the better part of her childhood and teenage years.

She barely managed to repress a shiver. Oliver felt it and he tightened his grip on her. He wasn’t sleeping either and she knew it was because of her. She was keeping him awake, her emotions were keeping him awake. She felt on edge and he was the reason why she hadn’t fallen over yet. How had she lived without him in her life for so long? She had no idea.

They were both lying on their sides on his bed. His room was plunged in the dark, except for the silver light of the moon that was coming through the partially open curtains. Her back was pressed against his front and he had buried his head in her neck. He could feel his steady breath tickle the patch of skin below her ear. He had wrapped an arm around her waist to hold her close to him. His hand had slipped under her long-sleeved tee and was now drawing meaningless figures on the skin of her stomach. Sometimes his fingers would travel further down and brushed her soulmark. Contrary to the last time he had touched it, it didn’t fuel her hunger for him. It just… soothed her a little, reminded her she wasn’t alone and that he was here for her if she needed him.

She pressed herself further against him.

Felicity loved being in Oliver’s arms. She loved his warmth, she loved how he could so effortlessly make her feel loved and safe. How he could, just by being here, just by holding her, make her feel better. She really loved it.

But sadly, that night, even he couldn’t make her feel better. Being with him wasn’t enough to quench her fears and calm her heart.

But still she was grateful for him, for his presence. Maybe he couldn’t make her feel better but he could still hold her and keep her from shattering into pieces.

Or maybe not.

His voice broke the silence between them.

“You never speak of your father.”
She tensed up immediately against him.

Her eyes fluttered close and she sighed deeply, hoping to release some of the tensions that were building inside of her.

“There’s not much to talk about,” she eventually replied.

“I just want you to know that if you want to talk about it, I’m here,” he whispered against the shell of her ear.

“I don’t want to,” she hurriedly said.

His fingers circled her belly button. His touch was light but still, goose bumps broke all over her skin.

“I understand that you’re worried about your mother and that she is your priority right now but I don’t want you to use her as a mean to prevent you from dealing with your own emotions.”

His words left her speechless.

Utterly speechless.

Because she had been doing just that, focusing on her mom and only her and shutting her own feelings down. It was what she had always done. Worrying about her mother had always been easier than worrying about herself. Still, the truth was when her father had walked away, it had hurt her, deeply. But in the end her pain had been nothing compared to her mother’s so Felicity had shut it down and tried her best to keep both she and her mother afloat. She had buried her feelings so deep inside of her, it had become difficult for her to remember it wasn’t just her mother’s soulmate that had left. It was her father too. Her father had left her, his daughter.

He had abandoned her.

Felicity felt tears burn her eyes at the thought. She closed them and tried to swallow the lump that had formed in her throat. There was a reason why she never spoke of her father and it wasn’t because there was nothing to say. Quite the opposite. But still, she didn’t want to talk about it. Some things were just better left alone.

“It’s not just her soulmate’s life that might have ended,” Oliver went on. “It’s your father’s too.”

Felicity’s lower lip started trembling.

Of course her soulmate would remind her of the one thing she could barely remember on her own. Of course her soulmate would understand what exactly was happening to her.

And of course he would not let it go. Never.

“I know I don’t know much about your relationship with him but it has to hurt you too…”

“It has to nothing,” she cut him off abruptly, pulling his hand away from her and sitting down. “You said it yourself, you know nothing about us so don’t try to tell me how I must be feeling.”

“Felicity…”

His voice was so soft it felt like a caress.

She got up, suddenly needing to put some distance between them.
Opening the box containing all her memories of her father wasn’t something she wanted to do. Just like talking about her feelings. She didn’t want to do that either.

She opened her mouth to tell him just that but found out that she couldn’t. There was a knot in her throat preventing her from speaking a word and the tears she had tried to hold back started rolling down her cheeks. She met Oliver’s eyes. They were pleading with her, begging her to say something, anything. To open up, even just a little bit.

But she couldn’t. Everything just hurt too much.

Her pain had morphed into a dark monster inside of her. The monster had grown over the years. It had fed on absence of calls or letters. Missed birthdays and Father’s day spent apart had made it darker and uglier. Felicity had become afraid of it.

She had become afraid of her own pain.

And the monster was waking now for it had been poked.

And she just stood there, in the middle of the room, completely paralyzed.

She remembered being a little girl. She remembered her father helping her put her shoes on. These shoes were her favourite because of the purple butterflies on them. She remembered her father taking her hand and walking out of their small apartment with her. His hand had been huge but gentle. She remembered perfectly how it had felt holding her own chubby one. Her teddy used to be her best friend back then, wherever she went, he went too. She had made no exception that day and she had held her teddy close to her chest as they had walked down the street. They had gone to her favourite park, the one with the carrousel because she had been “extra good” and had helped “daddy with his computer”.

Her father had bought them ice-cream first. Vanilla for her and pistachio for him. Half of her scoop had ended up smeared on her cheeks. After that he had let her go on the carrousel. They had picked a horse for her together. It had been a beautiful white horse with a golden mane and a blue saddle. Her father had promised to watch her teddy for her. She remembered how he had waved at her when she had passed by him, happily giggling on her horse. He had smiled, had blown kisses in her direction. She had smiled back and she had blown more kisses back. Until the last ride. She hadn’t seen him. The spot where he had just been standing had been empty. But when the carrousel had stopped… He had been gone.

She had never seen him again.

She had never seen her teddy again either. He had taken it along with him, just like he had taken everything else.

It was her last memory of him, the one that cut her the deepest. She hadn’t seen anything coming. Everything had gone from bright and warm to cold and dark in a second. She had been so happy and carefree that day. She had laughed so much. She could still hear the echo of her giggles in her ears. A bitter taste filled her mouth. She felt like the happy little girl she had been was laughing at her now, laughing at her pain and mocking her foolishness.

Because yes, Felicity was a fool for she had known this would happen.

She had known the moment she would indulge herself, the moment she would try to make sense of the monster that had grown in her chest, she’d break.

And there she was, standing in the middle of her soulmate’s bedroom, with her heart breaking in her
chest the same way it had all those years ago when she had realized her father would never come back. He would never come back and she’d never know why.

She had known it would happen and yet she had let it happen. She had let the monster wake and she had let it swallow her. She was lost in the dark now and she felt cold, so cold. There was a void where her heart used to be. She was surrounded by shards of glass, each cutting her soul even deeper than the previous one. She was in agony, so much that she started to feel numb.

She blanked out.

For a full second, she was completely gone.

But then, she felt something stir in the void in her chest. Something deep and precious. Something warm and beautiful.

Love. It was love.

It filled her veins, brought back warmth in her shaking limbs.

Love, pure and unadulterated love.

It filled her soul, closed the cuts, put the pieces of her heart back together.

Suddenly there was light at the end of the tunnel.

“It’s okay Felicity, it’s okay, you’re alright,” she heard Oliver whisper against her hair.

Her arms shot up and she gripped his forearms tightly. She clung to him with everything she had. She had collapsed on her knees and he had joined her on the floor, pulling her close to him and wrapping his arms around her shaking body.

She had fallen but he had caught her.

Her lifeline.

She sobbed and tightened her hold on his forearms. He tightened his hold on her.

“It’s okay Felicity, I’m here, I’m right here.”

He was rocking her body and peppering kisses in her hair. He was surrounding her completely, with his arms, his warmth and his emotions inside her. He was sheltering her, offering her the comfort of his body, the comfort of his soul. She took everything he had to give, drawing strength from him. They were the only things she needed, he was the only thing she needed.

He cradled her against his chest, holding her as if she was something precious but not fragile. The monster in her chest didn’t stood a chance against her soulmate’s touch. Their bond was stronger than anything in the world, a force to be reckoned with. No matter how hurt they had been in the past… There was nothing their love for each other couldn’t heal.

In his embrace, Felicity felt whole again.

Her pain untightened its iron grip on her heart, her muscles relaxed, she stopped shaking. Some of the tensions inside her loosened up a bit.

“I’ll never see him again,” she hiccupped, feeling strong enough to talk again.
“What?” He asked, never letting go, never stopping the steady rocking of his body.

“I’ll never see him again,” she repeated, louder. More tears spilled down her cheeks, burning her skin. “If he’s dead… I’ll never see him again.”

That made Oliver stop. He cupped her cheeks between his hands, gently cradling her head as if she was made of glass and he forced her to look up. His thumbs swept away her tears and rubbed the smooth skin of her face tenderly.

Hope was an odd thing. Hope kept people alive, kept them going. Hope gave people strength, helped them through every day. It took root even when people didn’t want it to. It thrived everywhere, even in the darkest places.

Hope really was an odd thing.

Felicity had hoped, in spite of herself, that she would see her father again. She had been mad at him for most of her life, she had resented him, hated him. She had prepared speeches for the day she’d finally see him again. She had listed all the things she wanted to tell him. All the blames, all the insults. She had prepared them all. She hadn’t deluded herself. She hadn’t pictured herself welcoming him back and falling into his arms. She had pictured herself yelling and shaking him. But it didn’t change the fact that deep down in her heart, she had hoped she would see him again. The part of her that was still a little girl had hoped her daddy would come back home, eventually. And her hope had been like the bulb of a flower that survives in the earth during winter to blossom when spring comes back. She had buried her bulb deep in her heart, let her hatred feed it. Life had been her winter. And just like winter, life was cold and cruel. And if like had taken her father… There would be no spring for them. No explanations. No closure. No second chance at life. If her father was dead… then her hope was dead too and a part of her along with it. The little girl wearing shoes with purple butterflies on the carrousel’s horse was dead too.

“It hurts,” she said, her voice shaking so much she barely recognized the sound of it herself. “God, it hurts so much.”

“I know, I know,” Oliver nodded, leaning down to kiss her forehead. His lips lingered on her and she closed her eyes. She bit on her lower lip, trying to stop the flow of tears running down her cheeks.

“I loved him so much Oliver, we were so close… I don’t know what happened, what caused him to leave. One day he was here and then he was gone. My mother was his soulmate, I was his daughter… How he could he leave us like that?”

“I don’t know Felicity,” Oliver said, his eyes shining with unshed tears. It hurt to look at him. She could see her pain mirrored in his gaze, naked and raw. She hated it, she wanted to look away but she couldn’t because he was still holding her face between his hands.

“I never told my mother but the day he left…” She felt something tightened in her throat and she had to stop talking for a second. “The day he left,” she started again, “we fixed his computer. I helped him and I was so happy because I had been the one to mess with it in the first place. And for so long, I thought he had found out and left because of that, because of me, because I had done something wrong and…”

“Felicity, hey, hey,” Oliver quickly interrupted her. “You were just a child, you did nothing wrong. Whatever it is that made him leave… It wasn’t something you did.”

“We don’t know that…”
“Yes we do.” One of his hands moved from her cheeks and to her sticky forehead and carefully brushed a few strands away. “It wasn’t your fault.”

“Then whose fault was it?”

“His,” he replied, his tone confident and unwavering. “His fault only.”

She pursed her lips. “When the mediator came to me and exposed your parents’ offer…” She shuddered at the memory of that day and she felt Oliver tense up against her. “When I accepted, I felt relieved. Parts of me were happy to give you up because I knew I’d never feel all the pain and misery my mother experienced after my father left. I was happy to leave you before you could leave me”

His eyes widened and Felicity realized that as much as they had talked about his insecurities, his fears of her leaving him, they had never talked about her own insecurities, her fears of him leaving her. He seemed to realize that too and sucked in a sharp breath.

“You know I can’t live you without you, right? I’ll never leave you.”

“Yeah that’s what my father said. He married my mom, took vows. For better or for worse.” Her shoulders fell, her heart sank in her chest. “Words don’t mean anything.”

“Felicity…” Oliver said.

She barely repressed a shiver.

God he had a way to say her name… A way that made it sound like it was his favourite word in the world. A way that made it sound like it wasn’t just her name.

“I’m not your father,” he told her, his voice soft and gentle, a caress on her abused heart.

“I know, I know,” she said, cupping his cheeks between her hands. He leaned into her touch, his beard tickling her palms.

“Then where does this come from?”

She shrugged. “I’m such a mess,” she whispered her voice breaking. “You didn’t sign up for this, for a screwed up soulmate with more baggage than she can carry.”

“It’s a good thing that I’m here to help then, don’t you think?”

She snorted.

“You’re not a mess Felicity. Pain doesn’t turn you into a mess, it makes you human. And you’re such a beautiful human being… God, I wish you could see yourself through my eyes, see how strong and beautiful you are. You say I didn’t sign up for a screwed up soulmate and you’re right, I didn’t. I signed up for you and only you. I wouldn’t want anyone else to be my soulmate and I’m not saying this because you are my soulmate, my other-half, part of my soul. I’m saying this because your heart calls to mine. Even if you weren’t my soulmate, I’d still want you and only you.”

“I’m so sorry…” She sighed, letting go of his cheeks. She let her head fall forward and buried her face in the crook of his neck. He wrapped his arms around her waist, pulling her in his lap while she put hers around his neck, clinging to him.

“You don’t have anything to be sorry for.” He paused for a second, took a deep breath. Then he
spoke again.

“My parents… They are who they are and they’re not changing but at least I know that. I’ve found closure. And I know it’s killing you that you might never get that, closure. It’s killing me too because there’s nothing you deserve more. Your father… He was supposed to be the man who loved you the most. He was supposed to be there for you, to protect you and to keep you safe. For your birthday, for the good days and for the bad days, he was supposed to be there for it all. He wasn’t and that makes you angry, even more so because you don’t know why he missed your whole life. Why he didn’t see you graduate high-school, why he didn’t take you to MIT. You deserve to know the truth and to be able to tell your father all the things you have to say to him. I wish I could give you that chance but I can’t. I can only give you a promise.”

She pulled away from the safety of his body and “A promise?”

He nodded. “The promise that I’m not your father and that I will never be him. I will never leave. I’ll be here to kiss you in the morning and to kiss you goodnight. I’ll listen to you tell me about your day. I’ll comfort you when you’re sad, support you when life gets rough. I’ll wait for you at the end of the aisle with the happiest smile on my face. I’ll hold you when you’re pregnant with our children and I’ll satisfy all your desires because I will always be here. You said words don’t mean anything but they do. They mean everything when they’re spoken from the heart.”

He grabbed her hand and put it on his chest. His soulmark was pulsing under her palm, even through the fabric of his clothes. She felt how fast his heart was beating and the quick, steady beat drew a smile on her face.

She felt Oliver’s emotions pour inside her through the thread connecting them, that thread that was growing stronger with each passing day. She felt how much he cared for her, how much he respected her and how much he wanted her. It soothed her pain a little, made her breathe a little easier. He meant every single word he had said to her. And so she believed because he did.

“God,” she said, breaking into tears, “you’re so perfect!”

“For you,” he added. “And you’re perfect, for me.”

She smiled through her tears and brought a hand to his cheek, staring into his blue eyes. She loved them so much, she knew they were the last thing she ever wanted to see before she closed her own forever. She felt her heart clench in her chest. She thought about what he had just said.

“I’ll wait for you at the end of the aisle with the happiest smile on my face.”

“I’ll hold you when you’re pregnant with our children.”

“I lo…” She started to say.

She was interrupted by the shrilling sound of his alarm clock.

They both jumped, startled.

And whatever it was that Felicity was going to say got lost.

“We need to go,” Oliver said. “Are you going to be okay?”

“With you by my side? Always.”

“Good. There’s no place I’d rather be,” he told her, leaning down to briefly kiss her lips.
He moved her from her lap and got on his feet. He extended his hands toward her and helped her up. She swayed a little and he put a hand on her hip to stabilize her.

“Are you sure you’re okay?”

She nodded and wiped her cheeks. “Yep, just give me a sec,” she told him, making her way to the bathroom.

She didn’t linger on her reflection in the mirror. She barely looked at it actually. She could imagine all too well how terrible she looked. Puffy eyes, angry red cheeks, smudged make-up, tousled hair… She didn’t want to see any of it. She sniffled and took a deep breath. It was time to clean herself up, time to calm down and to move forward.

She got rid of her make-up, did her hair again, cleaned her face with Oliver’s soap. The familiar smell comforted her, somehow. At first, her hands were still shaking. But the more Felicity took care of herself, the more she got back in control. She had allowed herself to face her fears and her demons. She had broken down. Oliver had put her back together but it was her job to keep herself in one piece. And she would do just that. The part of her that was still a child and that had cried so hard needed to go now and let Felicity the adult, the responsible girl who had always looked after her mother, step in.

When she walked back in Oliver’s bedroom, he was sitting down on his bed, a small travel bag next to him.

“Bathroom’s all yours!” She told him, giving him a small smile.

He nodded and got on his feet. He leaned down to kiss her cheek on his way toward the bathroom and she brought a hand to her tingling skin.

Oliver came back a few minutes later, carrying a small toilet bag. He put it in his traveling bag, zipped it and turned toward her.

“I’m ready,” he said.

“Then let’s go!”

She extended a hand toward him, which he grabbed easily. They drove back to her apartment with his car. She left hers at his apartment, Roy would be using it during her absence. She quickly packed her bag. She didn’t know for how long they’d be gone, she hoped it wouldn’t be for too long, so it was kind of hard to decide what to bring exactly but she managed. Once she was done, they left and drove to the airport.

She texted her mother before their plane took off, informing her they were on their way and would be there soon. She didn’t reply and when a flight attendant asked Felicity to turn her phone off, she complied reluctantly. She fidgeted in her seat during the whole flight. Oliver tried to calm her down with a hand on her thigh but it didn’t work. The closer she was to see her mother, the more worried she felt.

It was the unknown that worried her, the fact that she didn’t know what to expect.

Two hours, the plane was initiating its descent. Felicity stared at the city through the window. The sun had just risen, bathing Las Vegas in its golden light. She hadn’t been here since she had graduated from MIT. It was her hometown, where she had grown up and spent most of her life. She thought it’d do something to her but it didn’t. She felt nothing in her heart. No happiness, no sadness, no nostalgia, nothing.
“God…” She sighed. “Can you believe I haven’t been here in almost five years?”

Oliver leaned against her to get a better look at the city.

“Are you happy to be back?”

She glanced at him. “You know I’m not.”

“Touché.” He turned his head slightly and nuzzled her neck, pressing a small kiss below her hair. “Why?”

She didn’t reply immediately. “I think it’s because even if this is where I grew up, this place never felt like a home to me.”

The moment the words left her mouth, she realized how true they were. Vegas had never been her home, she had never fit there. It was where her father had left her, where her grandmother had died, where her mother had stopped being her mother. It was a place where she had had to be an adult before her time, where she had lived in a crappy neighbourhood, where she hadn’t had any friend, except for Georgia.

She shook her head. This was not the time for her to throw herself a self-pity party.

Oliver must have felt the sudden change in her because he nodded in reply to her words and his scruffy cheek rub against the tender skin of her neck, making her smile.

Half an hour later, they were in a cab on her way to her mother’s apartment. Felicity had actually never been there but she knew where it was located and she had a key to the place, courtesy of her mother. As they drove closer to the place, her anxiousness reached its peak. Her palms were sweaty, her heartbeat quick in her chest and she couldn’t help but stomp her feet in impatience.

“You know what?” Oliver said, staring at their tangled fingers resting on her thigh, he had once again tried to calm her down and failed. There were some things even he couldn’t help her with.

“What?”

“I hope no one recognized us at the airport otherwise you can bet rumours of us eloping will be flooding the news by tomorrow.”

Her eyes widened behind her glasses. “Are you trying to distract me or scare me?”

“Distract you. Is it working?”

She shrugged. “Kind of…”

He smiled and leaned in for a quick kiss. She rested her forehead against his shoulder when they parted, groaning.

“What was that for?”

“I think you actually scared me…” She sighed, reaching for the lapel of his jacket with her free hand and holding tight. “God, why can’t people just mind their own business?”

“No idea. But just so you know, it’s too late for you to bail out on me. I’m keeping you whether you like the attention of the media or not.”

She chuckled lightly. “It’s a good thing I’m not planning on going anywhere then?”
“It’s a very good thing,” he agreed, squeezing her hand.

She smiled at him. Then snorted.

“What?” He asked, tilting his head confusion written all over his face.

“You did it! You distracted me.”

He smirked and kissed the top of her hand.

They remained silent for the rest of the drive.

When they walked inside the elevator in her mother’s building, Felicity took a deep breath. She squared her shoulders, steeled her spine.

It was time to be strong.

Oliver noticed the change in her demeanour. He squeezed her fingers, reminding her of his presence. Reminding her that she wasn’t alone, not anymore.

When Donna had given her a key to her place, she had said it was just in case. A precaution. And Felicity had found it silly because she had never thought she’d need to use it. And there she was, months later using the same key she had tried to convince her mother to take back to get inside her apartment. It was funny how life worked out.

“Mom?” Felicity called out, stepping in the hallway. The apartment was plunged into semi-darkness and there was a stale smell that made both Felicity and Oliver grimace.

“Mom?” Felicity called out again walking inside the living-room.

The state of the room broker her heart. It was a mess. There were no others to describe it.

The curtains were drawn but rays of sunshine were still filtering through, explaining the semi-darkness. Half-empty take out containers and pizza boxes were sprawled all over the coffee table. Beer cans and empty bottles of wine were scattered around the room and there were even some on the kitchen counter. Felicity also noticed dirty dishes and empty glasses in the midst of this chaos. There were pillows and blankets on the couch and Felicity could still make out the shape of her mother, as if she had been lying there not so long ago.

Oliver dropped their bags next to the bar stools as he looked around the room. She felt worry and concern rise inside of him. Ever since Felicity had gotten her mother’s call, he had done his best to remain calm. He had been her rock, her lighthouse in the storm. But now that they were actually in Vegas, now that they were seeing things with their own eyes, even he couldn’t stay collected.

Felicity clenched her fists, anger building up in her chest. Judging by the mess surrounding her, her mother hadn’t been feeling well for a while and she hadn’t known. She hadn’t even suspected anything. She should have called her, checked up on her… God when was the last time she had called her mother? She couldn’t remember.

“Mom!” Felicity called again, except this time she was almost screaming and Oliver flinched, surprised.

She walked out of the living-room and went down the hallway she assumed led to her mother’s bedroom. She opened every door on her way, checking inside to be sure her mother wasn’t lying on the floor, unconscious. There had been so many bottles of alcohol in the living-room…
“God, please let her be okay.”

“Mo…” The rest of the word died on her lips as she finally found her mother’s bedroom. She was lying on her stomach in her bed and there was a half-full bottle of wine on her bedside table. Clothes were scattered all over the floor as well as empty bags of junk food. There was the same stale small mixed with sweat and if Felicity hadn’t been so worried, it might have turned her stomach.

She was by her mother’s side in a second, Oliver right behind her. She looked tormented as she slept. Her lips were pinched in a thin line and her eyebrows creased.

“Mom,” Felicity said, firmly shaking her shoulder. “Mom wake up!” She demanded.

Donna stirred and Felicity looked up to meet Oliver’s eyes.

“Mom?” She asked, her voice gentler. “Mom it’s Felicity.”

She brushed a strand of her hair away from her face. Her blonde hair, which was always perfectly conditioned and done was now all dirty and greasy. She pointed at the curtains and Oliver, getting the message went to open them. A stream of golden light filled the room.

“Sleep,” Donna slurred, burying her face away in her pillow.

“I’ll go fix us something for breakfast and clean up a bit. Try to… Try to get her in the shower.”

Felicity chewed on her lower lip, feeling embarrassment unfold in her stomach. “Shouldn’t I be taking care of the mess?”

Oliver shook his head. “Take care of your mother okay?”

She nodded.

It took her a while but she eventually managed to drag her mother out of bed. She seemed to be caught in some sort of a haze, one probably made of sleep and alcohol. She looked distant and her eyes, usually vivid and filled with life, were empty. And Felicity knew that even when Donna was staring at her she was actually seeing right through her, as if she wasn’t here at all, her eyes focused on some places only she knew of. It was a look Felicity had often seen growing up, one she had hoped she’d never see again.

She helped her mother walk to the bathroom, holding onto her waist tightly to steady her. She helped her sit down on the closed toilet lid. Then she moved to the shower and turned it on.

“Take off your clothes please,” she asked gently, checking the water’s temperature with her fingers.

Donna didn’t move. She didn’t even blink.

“Mom,” she insisted.

Donna finally turned her head toward her.

“I don’t want to Felicity.”

Her voice was the voice of a little girl, scared and hurt.

“I want to go back to bed.”

Felicity moved away from the shower and kneeled in front of her mother. She cupped her cheeks
between her hands and forced her to look her in the eyes. She had learnt a long time ago that talking to her and eye-contact could help her mother come back to her senses. Because if she couldn’t hear her or see her, then Felicity had to make her.

“I’m sorry mom but I can’t let you go back to bed.”

“But – but…”

“Mom please,” Felicity cut her off. “I just want to help you.”

“Help me?”

“Yes. Remember how I used to take care of you? I’m here to do just that.”

Donna’s eyes fluttered close. Her features were strained and she suddenly looked much, much older. “I just want the pain to go away. Can you make it go Felicity?”

She felt a lump form in her throat but she held back her tears.

“Yes mom, I’ll make it go away, I promise. Now please shower, wash your hair too. I’ll come back when you’re done with new clothes, okay?”

“Okay,” Donna agreed, nodding.

Felicity stood back up. “Come on in the shower,” she repeated, moving toward the door. When she saw her mother start to shed her clothes, she walked out completely.

She ran into Oliver in the hallway. He was holding her mother’s box of the Med.

“How is she doing?” He asked.

Felicity sighed deeply, wiping at the corner of her eyes with her sleeves. “She’s like she used to be when she wasn’t on the Med.”

“Well, she hasn’t stopped taking it,” he said, showing her the content of the box. Much like the contraceptive pill, the Med’s packet had the days of the week written on it to help the people taking it remember whether or not they had taken their daily pill.

Felicity frowned when she saw that her mother hadn’t indeed stopped taking the Med.

“I thought she had told you so on the phone yesterday,” Oliver reminded her.

“She did but… She really is like she used to be.”

Compassion lightened up his eyes. “Felicity… I know this is really hard for you but… don’t let the past cloud your judgement, okay?”

She glared at him. “You don’t know my mother like I do so spare me that kind of bul…” She stopped herself just in time, her fists clenched tightly. She breathed slowly through her nose. She couldn’t let her anger and frustration get the best of her. “If she’s still on the Med, why is she like that?”

“Maybe she’s just nursing a nasty hungover.”

Felicity shook her head, turning to look at the bathroom’s door, which she had left ajar. “No. There’s more to it than just a hungover.” She paused for a second, thinking. “Last night on the phone… She
said she felt something. Maybe what she felt sent her into shock or something.”

“Maybe, we can’t know for sure.”

Felicity closed her eyes, exhaustion suddenly pulling at every part of her. Oliver felt it immediately.

“Hey – hey what’s wrong?” He asked gently, his hand falling on her shoulder.

“Shouldn’t we call for help? She said she is feeling pain and she is on the Med.” She paused and took another deep breath, hoping it would help her get a grip on the swirl of emotions wrecking her insides. She couldn’t even put a name on each of them anymore. She was a mess of conflicted emotions and everything had just mixed up and turned into a solid bundle that was now weighing down on her stomach. “This… This, I’ve never dealt with. I don’t know what to do.”

“Let’s see how she is doing after a shower and breakfast. You know no one can resist my pancakes.”

She smiled in spite of herself. “You forget you’re in the apartment of a Smoak woman meaning her fridge is most likely empty.”

He smiled at her and she felt a bit warmer, a bit better. “I’ll come up with something,” he promised, squeezing her shoulder.

She nodded and walked away. The first thing she did once she was back in her mother’s room was open the window to air the room. Then she quickly gathered the clothes scattered on the floor put them in a basket and set it aside for later. She also took the sheet off the bed and reminded herself she’d have to look for clean ones later. She collected the bottle of wine and brought it back to the kitchen. Oliver hadn’t lost any time in getting the living room and the kitchen cleaned up. He had already put all the take-out containers, pizza boxes and beer cans in a big bag to throw away later and placed all the dirty dishes in the sink. He was collecting all the empty bottles of wine when she walked in. She added the one she was holding to the pile.

“That’s a whole lot of alcohol for one person and remember I used to party with the Tommy Merlyn.”

“My mother has never been much of a drinker. Sure she would occasionally indulge herself in a glass of wine but… Never this,” she pointed at the bottles.

“Well… I can tell from experience that alcohol is a good way to forget all about the things you don’t want to think about.”

“But look at all the bottles Oliver! It’s obvious this has been going on for a while and she didn’t call me. Why didn’t she call me sooner?”

“I don’t know much about your mother but from what you told me, I understand that she already blames herself a lot for relying on you as much as she did when you were a teen. Maybe she just wanted to deal with this on her own.”

“Maybe…” She said, pinching the bridge of her nose.

“Hey,” Oliver said, grabbing her hand. “She called you. Not right away but she did. She reached out and that’s what matters most.”

“Yeah I guess you’re right.”

“I’m going to run to the store. There is one not too far, we passed it on the way.”
“Told you the fridge would be empty!”

“I don’t know how you Smoak ladies can survive on frozen foods only.”

She rolled his eyes at him. “It’s still better than everything we could cook.”

“How are you my soulmate?”

“How are you mine?” She shot back feigning to sound offended – the small smile on her lips probably gave away her amusement.

He shook his head at her and leant down to kiss her cheek. “I won’t be long, okay?”

“How’s your mother?”

“Okay,” she agreed, feeling a pang of emotion as she watched him leave. No matter how much she wanted to be strong for her mother, no matter how much she needed to be, she couldn’t manage that on her own. She was a mess inside and if it wasn’t for Oliver… She probably would have lost it already. He was her strength in these moments of fear and uncertainty. He was keeping her anchored, making her smile when all she wanted to do was curl up into a ball and cry. She was helping her mother and Oliver well… He was helping her.

Her train of thoughts was stopped when she noticed she couldn’t hear the sound of the shower anymore. Shaking her head, she hurried back in her mother’s room, grabbed her clean clothes and made her way back to the bathroom.

“Mom? Mom can I walk in?” She asked.

“Yes.”

She was wrapped up in a towel and sitting on the toilet seat.

“Here, your clothes,” Felicity said. “I picked that pink sweater you love so much,” she told her, trying her best to sound joyous. “Remember how you bought two in that small store in Boston? One for me and one for you.”

“I don’t care about the pink sweater Felicity.”

“O-okay, well, uh…” Felicity nervously put a strand of hair behind her ear. “Uh… Just get dressed I guess. Want me to help you with your hair?”

She shook her head. “No, I’m fine.”

“Alright, I’ll be waiting for you in your bedroom.”

She nodded and Felicity left her alone. She found clean sheets in the last drawer of her dresser, it was where her mother always used to put them, and busied herself with making the bed. She had just finished putting on the last pillowcase when her mother walked in, dressed and her hair done in a braid. She made a beeline for the bed and fell on her side. She reached for a pillow and hugged it to her stomach. Felicity sat down next to her.

“You feeling any better?” She asked, trying to catch her eyes but her mother was staring at the sky outside.

“Well I’m awake now.”

Felicity frowned. “What’s that supposed to mean?”
“That I’d rather be asleep.” She turned on her other side, toward her bedside table. “Where’s the wine?” She asked.

“I took it away,” Felicity explained.

Donna groaned. “I supposed you won’t give it back, no matter how nicely I ask.”

“Exactly. So why don’t you tell me why you need it so badly instead?” She asked, softening her voice a little. Replying to her mother’s aggressiveness with more aggressiveness wouldn’t help.

“My soulmate’s dead, that’s reason enough.”

“You don’t know that,” Felicity tried to argue.

“Yes, I do.”

Felicity let out a shaky breath.

“I’ve been feeling this… This pain in my chest for days. At the beginning it was nothing, just a prickle. But then it became worse and it felt like I was burning on the inside. I tried to be strong Felicity, I really did but… It just hurt too much. And then yesterday… yesterday was the worst. I was lying on the couch when suddenly I couldn’t breathe anymore. And my heart… I’m sure it stopped beating. I felt dead inside.”

“That’s when you called me?”

“That’s when I called you.” She let out a shaky breath and Felicity’s heart clenched in her chest at the pain, raw and burning, she could see in her mother’s eyes. “And now there’s nothing. I don’t feel anything anymore and that’s how I know he’s dead. He’s gone.”

Felicity pinched her lips together. “But… You said earlier you felt pain.”

“Of course I’m in pain! My soulmate’s dead Felicity! Dead!”

Felicity flinched at her loud voice.

“Okay mom, I understand…”

“No, no you don’t,” Donna cut her off, straightening herself. “It feels like someone is tearing my heart out of my chest, piece by piece. I just… I just want to forget and not feel anymore. I want the pain to be gone.”

Felicity felt a lump form in her chest. Never before had her mother sounded so broken and desperate at the same time.

“Drinking won’t make the pain go away mom,” she told her and hating herself when her voice wavered.

Donna closed her eyes and a few tears rolled down her cheeks. Felicity felt a few tears of her own burn at the corner of her eyes. No matter how old she was, she was still her mother’s child and she couldn’t stand to see her cry.

“I just want the pain to stop…”

“I get it mom, I really do but…”
“No you don’t!” Donna said. Felicity, who had brought a hand to cup her cheek and wipe her tears, flinched at her outburst. “Since when are you an expert when it comes to soulmates? If I remember correctly taking the Med was always your solution to everything.”

Felicity’s eyes widened.

“Okay mom, I understand that…”

“Stop saying you understand! You don’t know what it feels like to have you other-half leave you, what it feels like to be left alone in the dark and cold where love and light used to be. You don’t know how it feels to have your heart ripped out of your chest because they’re not here anymore or because they’re hurt so stop saying that you understand because you don’t! You don’t understand the first thing about soulmates!”

Felicity’s cheeks were burning as if her mother had just slapped her. She probably would have hurt her less if she had.

“You’re just like your father anyway. Whenever I see you, I see him. And just like him, you care more about yourself than you care about your soulmate. Did you know he never created a SID’s account for himself? We met by chance in a casino in Vegas. And after that he was stuck with me, poor guy. But you know what they say? Leopards do not change their dots so one day his true nature got the best of him and he left. Just like you left your soulmate, just like you were ready to leave him again and just like you will probably leave him in the end…”

A throat being cleared made her stop her rant. Felicity turned her head toward the door and saw Oliver, his arms crossed over his chest. He had concern written all over his face but his voice was calm and collected when he spoke.

“Felicity, can you give us a moment?”

“Uh…”

“Please,” he added, his eyes intent on her.

I’ve got this, they seemed to be seeing. Or maybe it was just his emotions inside her talking to her.

I’ve got this.

“O-okay,” she nodded, walking out without sparing her mother a glance.

Oliver shut the door behind her and she found herself alone in the empty hallway.

She leant back against the door and stared down at her hands. They were shaking. She clenched her fists and moved to the living-room.

You don’t understand the first thing about soulmates.

You’re just like your father.

You’ll probably leave him in the end.

“She didn’t mean it,” Felicity whispered for herself. “She didn’t mean it. She didn’t mean it. She’s just hurt, she didn’t mean it.”

But her hands kept shaking.
She decided to focus on something else because if she lingered on what had just happened for one more second she would start crying an ocean and she did not want that. She landed in the living-room and decided to pick up the cleaning of the room where Oliver had left it. She neatly folded the blankets on the couch, put the pillows back in place after dusting them a little. Oliver had taken the trash on his way out but had left the dishes on the sink so she started washing them. Her movements were precise almost robotic. She wasn’t thinking them, she was just acting. She didn’t want to think about anything but the task at hand.

There was a door next to the fridge in the kitchen that led to a laundry room with a washing machine. Remembering the basket of clothes she had earlier put together, which she had brought to the living-room, and decided to start a washing. Clothes were drying in the drying area. She folded them all, setting aside those which would need some ironing.

Oliver was standing in the living-room when she walked out of the laundry room. She put the basket now full of clean clothes on the kitchen counter.

“Your mother had a headache so she took an aspirin and she’s resting now,” he told her.

“Good,” Felicity said, nodding. “Very good.”

Except it wasn’t good. Nothing was good and Felicity was a mess, she felt like trash. She knew Oliver could feel it because in a second he had crossed the room and was pulling her in a warm hug. She wrapped her arms around his neck and held on tight but it still felt like it wasn’t enough, like she wasn’t close enough. So she lifted her leg to his hip and he got the hint because right after his hands were under her thighs, lifting her up. She crossed her ankles behind his back and buried her face in his neck. One of his hands remained under one of her thighs for support but he moved the other up to stroke the back of her head gently. She hadn’t realized she had started crying but she had and there was no stopping the flow of tears streaming down her cheeks and falling on Oliver’s skin. He hated it, she could feel it. He hated that she was hurt, he hated that she was crying. But still he didn’t let go of her. If anything he pulled her closer, impossibly closer.

He moved them to the couch, turning around at the last moment to sit down and have her straddle his lap. She rested her cheek on his chest and shuddered when she felt his hands slip under her long-sleeved tee and they started drawing shapes and patterns on her skin. She did the same thing, slipping her hand under his own clothes. She needed to touch, to feel. She needed him. His heart picked up in his chest when she touched him and that made her smile a small smile.

“She didn’t mean any of the things she said, you know that right?” Oliver eventually said.

“It doesn’t mean it doesn’t hurt,” she replied.

“I know.”

He kissed the crown of her hair and she shifted closer in his lap.

“How is she?” Felicity asked. “Besides the headache.”

“I think she’ll be okay and that she won’t stop taking the Med.”

“What did you say to her?”

“Nothing she didn’t already know.”

“And, what else?”
Oliver sighed. “I told her it was okay for her to mourn her loss but that she couldn’t let it stop her from living. I reminded her she had a great life and many opportunities for her future if she would just take them. I tried to make her see she still had things to look forward to and people who loved her, starting with her beautiful daughter. I told her the loss didn’t have to mean that her life was over and she was worth nothing. She can still find happiness, she just needs to be willing to look for it.” He paused for a second. “I know it’s nothing you wouldn’t have told her, had you had the chance.”

“But I didn’t have the chance,” she whispered sadly. “All those things she said to me…”

“They weren’t true,” Oliver cut her off. “And she didn’t mean them. Your mother… She’s hurt Felicity. And she’s angry with your father but he’s not here and she can’t lash out at him.”

“So she lashed out at me because I’m so much like him.”

“Felicity,” Oliver moved his hands from her back and cupped her cheeks to make her look at him. “You’re not your father.”

“Am I not? Because I’ve been thinking, my mother was on the Med and she still felt it when my father passed. I was on the Med and you still felt it when that crazy psycho almost killed me. But when you had your car accident I didn’t feel anything. You almost died and I felt nothing. Not a single thing. I hadn’t been on the Med for more than five minutes that I was already completely disconnected from you. So maybe my mother’s right after all. Maybe I care more about myself than…”

He shut her up with a kiss. A long bruising kiss that ended with him sucking her lower lip in his mouth and left her panting.

“What-“ she cleared her throat, “what was your point?”

“You’re not your father,” he told her, pecking her lips once, twice, three times.

“O-okay, noted,” she said as he kissed down her throat before nuzzling the side of her neck and wrapping his arms around her, hugging her tight. She hugged him back and closed her eyes.

When she opened them again, she was still straddling Oliver’s lap but his arms had fallen from around her and were now lying limply at his sides. Their fingers were tangled together, as if their hands had found each other during their sleep, and her cheek was resting on his shoulder.

She heard some noise in the kitchen and pulled away from him.

“Sorry hon, I didn’t mean to wake you,” her mother said. She was wiping the dishes and putting them back in place.

“Sorry hon, I didn’t mean to wake you,” her mother said. She was wiping the dishes and putting them back in place.

“She’s okay,” Felicity told her. She disentangled herself from Oliver, careful not to wake him. She felt him stir and instantly miss her even in his sleep, courtesy of the thread connecting them. She smiled softly and kissed his forehead, soothing the crease between his eyebrows. She covered him with a blanket before moving to the kitchen. She was feeling a bit cold too now that she was separated from her personal heater so she kneeled down in front of their bags, they were still where Oliver had dropped them earlier and got a jacket out of Oliver’s. She put it on, it was way too big for her but it was warm and more importantly it smelt like him and she needed that. She wanted to be surrounded by him. When she got up again, she saw her mother was watching her intently.

“What? She asked.

Donna just shrugged. “It’s just not something I ever thought I’d see.”
“Why? Because I’m just like my father?”

Donna flinched and put the dish towel she was holding on the kitchen counter.

“I’m sorry for what I said hon, I didn’t mean it. And I shouldn’t have taken my anger out on you, that was unfair and I’m sorry for that too.”

Felicity sighed, jumping on a bar stool. “I know you didn’t mean it mom.”

“Still I’m sorry.” Donna reached out and took Felicity’s hand. She let her. “The truth is hon, you do remind me of your father and I do see a lot of him in you but that’s not a bad thing at all. Your eyes for example… They’re exactly like the eyes I fell in love with but it doesn’t hurt to look at them. Quite the opposite. They remind me of good times, of happy memories. All the things of your father I see in you are things I once loved more than anything and that I’m grateful I didn’t lose when he left.”

“Thanks mom,” Felicity said, looking down. “Do you- do you really think that he’s dead?”

She heard her mother sigh.

“I can’t be a hundred percent sure but…”

“But you think he’s dead.”

“I do.”

Felicity nodded, feeling a lump form in her throat. She brought both her hands to her face, the fabric of Oliver’s jacket soft against her cheek. She inhaled deeply, letting his familiar scent soothe her nerves.

“Are you gonna be okay hon?”

“Are you?” She asked back.

Donna considered the question before replying. Eventually, she said.

“I think that even when I started taking the Med, parts of me were still holding onto the hope that he would come back someday. That he would come and find me and we’d be happy again.”

“I can relate to that,” Felicity admitted.

“Now that hope is gone and yes it hurts like a bitch but… It’ll get better. I’ll get better, with time…”

“And love,” Felicity added, glancing at Oliver, still fast asleep on the couch.

“And love,” Donna agreed, a small smile on her lips. “I’m happy you’ve found him Felicity and that the two of you are together, even if it means my baby girl is growing and that she doesn’t need me anymore.”

“Don’t be silly mom,” Felicity said, jumping down her bar stool. She circled the kitchen counter and hugged her. “I will always need you.”

Oliver woke up shortly after and the three of them ate breakfast together. It was the middle of the afternoon but they didn’t care. They decided on staying for a couple more days with Donna, to make sure she was really okay before going back to Star City. Donna then suggested it might be time for her to consider moving to Star City, just like she had told Felicity and her daughter approved.
wholeheartedly. Oliver cracked a joke about the Smoak women invading his city. Later at night, when they were lying in bed in her mother’s guest-room, he whispered in the shell of her ear that he wouldn’t have it any other way.

Felicity woke up the next morning to the sound of her mother’s and Oliver’s joined laughter. She climbed out of bed, clumsily put her glasses on and rushed inside the living-room. She found Oliver sitting on the couch and Donna on the floor, pictures album in front of her. She was showing him a picture and the story attached to it must have been hilarious because there were tears in his eyes. She groaned at the sight of them, amusement blossoming inside her, courtesy of Oliver’s emotions, in spite of her desire to feel annoyed.

“So… You never told me you were an artist?” Oliver teased her, turning the pic toward her. She was a toddler, around two or three. Her then brown hair was a mess on top of her head. She was covered in paint from head to toe, making it hard to make out the pale pink colour of the body she had been wearing.

“I hate you mom,” she mumbled, shuffling toward the kitchen where freshly brewed coffee was waiting for her.

“Well, I don’t,” Oliver said. “Please tell me you have more pictures like this.”

“I have a whole lot of them. I lived with a camera attached to my hand the first four years of her life,” she explained.

“For my greatest embarrassment.”

“Just drink your coffee,” Oliver told her. “You’re always in a better frame of mind after you had one cup.”

“You noticed that too?”

“This,” Felicity pointed at the two of them, “this isn’t going to end well for me, is it?”

“Well, how did you and my sister ganging up on me end for me?”

Felicity smiled. “Not that well,” she replied, walking back toward them, a mug full of coffee in hand.

“Well, you’ve got your answer Smoak,” he said and she rolled her eyes at him.

She sat down next to him on the couch and let her mother keep showing him pictures of her as a child. They both seemed so happy, Oliver to discover a whole new part of Felicity’s life and Donna to share it, it was worth her feeling embarrassed – some of the pictures were actually pretty cute but Felicity would rather have died than admit it out loud.

At some point Oliver left them to take a shower. Her mother got up to put the albums back in place and it was when Felicity noticed she was dressed to go to work.

“Mom? Are you going to work today?”

“Yeah my boss called, I have to go. He left me a few days off but now I really need to go back.”

Felicity frowned. “Are you sure you’re feeling up to it?”

Donna nodded. “I don’t really know but focusing on work won’t hurt, right?”

“Mom…”
“It’s okay baby, I swear. I’m already feeling better. Your presence and Oliver’s presence… You sweet children have already done me a lot of good.”

Still, Felicity wasn’t convinced. “If you don’t feel okay you’ll come home, right?”

“I will, I promise.”

“When does your shift start?”

“Two hours. I was thinking maybe we could go in early and have brunch together?”

Felicity nodded. “Sure, why not?”

She hopped in the shower right after Oliver and when she was done, they went out to have brunch in a restaurant her mother was fond of and which happened to be located down the street of the casino she worked in.

They had a nice time, the three of them together. Felicity was really happy to see her mother and Oliver, arguably the two most important people in her life, get along well. And she knew they genuinely enjoyed each other’s company because the soulmate connection mostly helped with close relatives and friends not parents (apparently it was because parents were more protective of their children than a brother or a cousin for example, meaning they were suspicious of everyone, especially soulmates. No one could hurt someone as much as their other-half after all). It was very nice to see the different pieces of her life fall into place and fit perfectly together.

She watched her mother quietly during brunch. She knew she had said she was feeling better but Felicity couldn’t help but still worry. Donna had said it herself the previous day, it would take her some time to heal and Felicity would be watching her closely every step of the way. Just in case. She watched her so and noticed how her smiles didn’t quite reach her ears or how there was a shadow lingering in the back of her eyes… But before she could think deeper about this, Oliver’s hand landed on her thigh under the table and she just knew what he was telling her through his touch.

Stop worrying.

Enjoy the moment.

And so she tried for him.

After brunch, Donna left them her car and they promised to come pick her up at the end of her shift. Felicity and Oliver were standing in front of the restaurant, Donna having just left, when the blonde felt her soulmate’s emotions shift and go from happy and relaxed to nervous. She tilted her head and reached for his hand.

“What’s going on?”

He was doing this thing with his fingers he did whenever he wanted to ask her something but wasn’t sure what her reaction would be.

“You said something yesterday that got me thinking,” he started.

“What?”

“You said this-“ he waved at the city, “this never felt like a home to you.”

“Yeah and I meant it.”
“I know you did but… I’d still like to explore it with you. You know Star City well now and I’ve shown you all my favourite spots in the city and you know pretty much everything there is to know about my life before you. You’ve seen everything.”

“Oliver-“

“I just want you to let me in the way I’ve let you in,” he cut her off.

She paused considering his words. “It’s not that I don’t want to let you in it’s just that… Those aren’t memories I want to remember.”

“I understand but… When I choose you, I choose all of you. The good and the bad. The present and the past.”

She looked up and smiled softly. “You always know what to say, don’t you?”

He grinned widely, brightly and it showed his dimples and she felt her heart flutter in her chest. She got the keys from his hand.

“Well, it seems we’ll be taking a trip down memory lane today so I suggest you buckle up Mr. Queen.”

Every apprehension she felt about showing Oliver around melted away pretty quickly. Had it been anyone else with her, she would have hated every minute of it. But it was Oliver with her and Oliver, just like always, knew how to make everything better. He helped her put things in perspective and see them in a different way, a brighter, happier one. And it actually felt good to tell him stories, to share things with him she hadn’t shared with anyone. It made her feel a little bit freer, a little bit lighter. And best part was that there was no judgement, nothing. He just listened, smiled when she said something funny, squeezed her fingers and kissed her temple when things got more emotional.

She started by showing him the building her mother and she had moved in with her grandmother after her father had left them and he even surprised her when he guessed which side of the building her old bedroom’s window used to be.

“I recognized the view,” he told her sheepishly and she remembered how she had seen a lot of Star City through his eyes before actually going there herself.

She took him to her old high-school, showed him the park next to it and the very bench she had sat on with the mediator sent by his parents all those years ago. That moment made him feel a bit uncomfortable so they left pretty quickly, wanting to leave this part of their past where it belonged, in the past. She showed him the dinner she used to work in and the restaurant she and Georgia liked to eat at after their shift’s end.

Then, because she felt ready to open that particular box of memories, she showed him the building of the first, and only, apartment her parents had gotten, the one in which she had learnt to walk and talk – not necessarily in that order, as she told him, making him laugh. Then, they moved to the park, the where she had last seen her father. They sat down on a bench, holding hands.

“I used to beg my mom to take me here every day,” she confessed after a moment of silence.

She didn’t need to say why, he understood.

“Did she?”

She nodded. “Yes she did for the first few days. I think she needed it as much as I did.”
Oliver shifted beside her, turning to look at her.

“I know your mother is our priority here but…” He paused, weighing his next words. “We haven’t talked about you, about how you’re feeling.”

“You know better than anyone else what I’m feeling.”

“Felicity… Your father’s dead. We need to talk about that, not just rely on what we feel.”

“It’s like I told you before we left… I always hoped he’d come back. Now I know he won’t and it hurts.” With everything that had happened in the last forty-eight hours, her old wounds had been reopened, salt had been poured over them. And it hurt. It really, really did. But Felicity had been through this before. She just had to learn how to heal again and she knew exactly how.

“Time will make it better,” she told Oliver, remembering her mother’s words. “Time and you,” she said, bringing his hand up so that she could kiss the back of it.

“I’m not going anywhere,” he promised.

“I know. Me neither,” she replied, resting her head on his shoulder. “Can I ask you something?”

“Sure.”

“Did you hope?”

She didn’t need to say more, he understood what was implied.

Did you hope I’d come back?

He exhaled slowly.

“I did. Even after I’d resolved myself to a life without you, I still hoped.”

She kissed him after that. It was soft and slow but it was true as she could still taste his hope on his lips.

Later, when they walked back to the car, he snatched the keys from her hand. She shot him a probing glance.

“There is one place I’d like to take you to.”

“O-okay,” she said, getting in the passenger’s seat. “It better not be a chapel,” she warned him.

He snorted. “Why not?” He teased her.

“First because I’m too young to become anyone “Mrs.” and second when I marry you Mr. Queen, it won’t be a fast-track Vegas wedding.”

He gulped.

“First you wouldn’t be anyone “Mrs.” you would be my “Mrs.”, Mrs. Queen, and second did I tell you that I really like it when you call me Mr. Queen?”

She smirked. “You might have mentioned it once or twice before,” she said, winking.

A moment later, when he pulled in front of a casino, she frowned in confusion.
“What are we doing here?”

“Don’t you remember this place?”

She shook her head. “Nope.” She stressed the “p”.

“I’m very disappointed in you Ms. Smoak,” he told her shaking his head. “Come on,” he said, tugging at her hand.

“You do know I can’t play right? I’m not even allowed inside and security doesn’t mess with this. God the number of times I got caught and had to explain I had actually come to get my mother…”

He groaned. “I feel old when you say things like that.”

“Well you kind of are,” she teased him and he shot her an annoyed look.

“Please just turn 21 already,” he said linking his fingers with hers.

“Still a couple more weeks to go buddy,” she said, patting his shoulder.

“Lucky for us, we aren’t here to play and we won’t stay long. I just want you to remember this place.”

They walked inside the casino, it was crowded and loud but still Felicity instantly recognized where he had taken her.

“Oh my god! This is the casino where we almost met!”

He nodded. “Tommy, a couple of friends and myself of course came here to celebrate my 21rst birthday.”

“I had come to pick my mother up. Why did you bring me here?”

“Because I want to tell you something about that night. It’s not something I’m proud of and I’m pretty sure you will be mad at me after I tell you but… You need to hear it.”

She frowned. “You’re starting to scare me,” she said.

“Do you know what I did that night?”

“You gambled and drowned the loss of your money in way too much alcohol?”

He chuckled. “I did do that,” he said. “But that’s not the only thing I did.”

“I honestly don’t want to know what else you did that night. Or who else for that matter.”

“You don’t understand.”

“Yeah I don’t understand what your point is with-“ she waved around, “with all of this.”

“Yesterday you said you were afraid to be like your father and to care more about yourself more than you care about me. I said it wasn’t true and I meant it. I mean it. You never cared more about yourself than you did me. You just decided at some point in your life that you didn’t want to have anything to do with me anymore and even though it hurt me, I can’t say I don’t understand why you did it. I truly believe we’ve both had those moments in our lives.” He reached for her hands and held them up. “I spent the night in the arms of another girl right after I almost met you, right after I felt
“This,” he pointed at his chest and his soulmark, “burn for the first time because at the time, I didn’t want to have anything to do with you. But I’m not that person anymore, I’ve changed. I lost you and then I met you and those two major events shaped the person that I am today and I know I will never go back to the person I used to be. And whether you see it or not, the same has happened to you. You’ve changed. The girl who was mad at me, who didn’t want me to be a part of her life anymore, well… I like to think that she’s gone too and that she’ll never come back.”

“She won’t,” Felicity said, her voice soft and low because of the lump of emotions that had formed in her throat.

“Good,” he replied, leaning down to peck her lips. “And just so you know, that was me erasing from your mind all the lingering doubts you had.”

“That was quite a speech Mr. Queen,” she told him as he dragged her toward the casino’s exit.

“Thank you Ms. Smoak… Ouch! What was that for?” He asked, rubbing his arm after she’d slapped it.

“Just because I thought it was a good speech, doesn’t mean I forgot about the whole “I slept with another girl right after almost meeting you”.”

He winced. “Fair enough.”

She opened her mouth to reply to him when she collided with a woman who was walking inside the casino.

“Oh I’m so sorry,” she was quick to apologize.

The woman groaned in annoyance and looked up.

Felicity’s heart stopped in her chest.

“Felicity Smoak?”

“Mandy Miller?”

It was her. Mandy Miller, her high-school’s nemesis. She hadn’t seen her since graduation but she hadn’t changed a bit.

“You’re- you’re blonde,” Mandy said with a frown.

“And you’re… You!” Felicity awkwardly replied, taking her impeccable outfit, designer clothes and jewels in.

Oliver put his hand on her lower back and Mandy’s eyes moved to his. They widened, both when she noticed how close he was standing to Felicity and when she recognized him.

“Oh you’re… You’re Oliver Queen.”

“Yeah… Mandy and I used to go to high-school together,” Felicity explained, hoping he’d understand she was the Mandy she had told him about more than once. “And Oliver is my soulmate,” she added, pressing herself against his side, to Oliver’s greatest amusement.

Mandy smiled but it was just as fake as her eyelashes. “Oh I heard something about that in the news but who would have thought it was true,” she said.
“Well not you,” Felicity replied, a fake polite smile plastered on her face. “If I remember correctly, you used to say my soulmark was a fake tattoo and that I had no soulmate.”

“I said that? Me?” She laughed, shooting Oliver a glance that made Felicity internally cringe. “I was probably joking! But you were always a sensitive one, weren’t you Felicity?”

“Sure, that must have been that…” She noticed an engagement ring and a wedding band on her finger. “Oh, you’re married?” Felicity asked.

“Yes! Remember Chad?” She didn’t wait for Felicity’s nod of approval and just went on. “His father owns several casinos in the city. We got married last summer and let me tell you, it was the Vegas wedding of the year, my parents made sure of it! It was the only thing people talked about for weeks.”

“Well, I missed it. That’s just too bad the news didn’t cross the city’s borders.”

If looks could kill Felicity would probably be dead.

Oliver tightened his grip on her lower back.

She ignored the warning.

“But I don’t remember Chad being your soulmate…” Felicity said, faking casualness.

“Oh, he isn’t but me and my soulmate… We didn’t want the same things out of life. He works for Doctors Without Borders, lives in Africa or something…” She shuddered. “We decided to go on our separate way. We can’t all have Oliver Queen for a soulmate now, can we?”

“No we can’t,” Felicity agreed.

“I’m really sorry but I have to go. It was nice to see you again Felicity and to meet you Mr. Queen.”

“Yes, it was really nice,” Felicity said, grinning widely as she watched her leave. Once she was inside the casino, Felicity burst out laughing.

“What just happened?” Oliver asked.


“Care to explain?”

“Mandy Miller, prom queen, Mandy Miller is married to someone who isn’t her soulmate while I’m with you.” She laughed some more. “Ah… The sweet irony of life,” she sighed.

Oliver gave her a look.

“When I said you were my soulmate I thought her eyes were gonna pop out of their sockets. She was so jealous! “We can’t all have Oliver Queen for a soulmate now, can we?” She said, mimicking Mandy’s tone. “No sorry bitch he’s mine.”

Oliver’s eyes widened.

“What? High-school was hell because of her, excuse me to be happy that things have changed and that she’s jealous.”

Oliver shook his head grinning.
“I’ve never seen you like this before. You’re gloating.”

“You bet I am! “It was the only thing people talked about for weeks” well they didn’t speak loud enough honey because I didn’t hear them talk about “the Vegas wedding of the year”.” She laughed some more.

“Are you done?” Oliver asked her.

“Please next time I complain about the media, remind me that when we are on the front page, Mandy Miller may see it and choke on her envy.”

“If I had known seeing your high-school bully again would make you this happy, I’d have arranged for a meeting earlier.”

“No, it was much better this way.”

“Okay,” he chuckled. “Are you done now?”

“I am,” she nodded.

“Good,” he said, leaning down to kiss her.

“What was that for?” She asked after he pulled away.

“Gloating suits you.”

That made her laugh harder than anything else.

They left in the middle of their fourth day in Vegas. Her mother wasn’t too happy to see them go but they had to. Felicity wasn’t too happy either and she was still a bit worried… She was looking forward to the day her mother would finally move in Star City.

After they arrived, they retrieved Oliver’s car, they had left it at the airport and he drove her back to her apartment.

“So… I’ll see you tomorrow at work,” he said.

She nodded.

“Is it me or does this feel…”

“ Weird?”

“I was gonna say painful.”

“I didn’t want to use that word,” she admitted.

But the truth was, it was the right word.

They had spent the last four days together, they had slept together for the past four nights and she didn’t want to stop. And the prospect of going to bed without his warmth, of waking up without his arms around her… It was the most depressing thing ever.

She felt pain just thinking about him leaving and it was weird because it wasn’t like it was going to be forever. They would see each other in the morning at work.
“We could still…”

“No,” she cut him off abruptly. If she let him finish his offer, she wouldn’t be able to turn it down. She knew it. “We agreed not to get lost in the bubble. So go home to your sister, have a nice evening with her.”

“I miss you already,” he told her.

The worst part was that he wasn’t trying to be cute or cheesy.

He truly meant it.

She briefly kissed him and got out of the car. “See you tomorrow!”

He waved a hand at her before pulling away. She stood outside her building, waving back until she couldn’t see him anymore.

When she finally walked inside her apartment, she was greeted by the sight of Roy sitting on the living-room’s floor and petting the kitten and the smell of Mac and cheese.

“Hey, what are you doing here?” She asked him. “I thought you were with Thea.”

“I was but when you called to let us know when you’d be here, I thought I’d come back a bit early and make us some dinner.”

“That’s—she was at a loss for words. She knew that Roy liked her but he wasn’t really good at expressing his feelings, except when it came to Thea because then he was an open book, so having him here come earlier and make dinner surprised her as much as it made her happy. “That’s really nice thank you.”

“No prob. How’s your dad?”

Felicity sighed. He understood.

“I’m sorry,” he said as she came to sit next to him on the floor. “How’s your mom?”

“Better. She’s going to move in here,” she announced.

“Oh I see.”

“So prepare yourself for another Smoak woman, I hope I’ll remain your favourite,” she added.

He didn’t smile.

“I can’t stay here Felicity, I don’t want to bother you or your mom.”

“You won’t!” She shot back, reaching out to pet Arrow, who was sprawled out between them.

Still he didn’t look convinced. “You only have one spare bedroom,” he pointed out.

“That’s very true. But don’t worry, we’ll find a solution. My couch is a fold-out. And I happen to have a soulmate with a very nice apartment.”

“I highly doubt Oliver is gonna welcome me in his apartment.”

Felicity chuckled. “He isn’t. But me on the other end…” Her voice trailed down.
“This is ridiculous,” Roy said. “We can’t make you leave your own apartment.”

“You won’t make me do anything I don’t want to do,” she assured him.

He remained silent for a second before speaking up.

“I’d go back to my house, you know? If it was safe enough for Thea, I’d go back there.”

“I know,” Felicity said, laughing.

“Why are you laughing?”

“Because there was a time where you actually believed Thea deserved better than you.”

He turned his head away, blushing. “Whatever you say blondie.”

She nudged him. “Wanna kill some aliens while eating dinner?”

“I don’t know… Have you recovered from how bad I kicked your ass last time?”

“Watch it Abercrombie,” she threatened, gently punching his shoulder.

He grinned and she smiled back, feeling contentment settle inside her and slowly setting being apart from Oliver aside.

“What’s with the smile blondie?”

She shook her head. “Nothing. It just feels good to be home.”

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)


Hey guys!!!!
I'm so sorry it's been more than a month since I last updated... But here I'm coming back with a monster chapter! Please don't hate me! I've been crazy busy with uni lately and school is my priority. May will be an hectic month but I'll finally be free on the 22nd meaning I'll have all the time in the world to write.
Thank you guys for leaving comments and kudos and supporting me even when I don't update often... It means a lot to me, more than I can say.
As for this chapter, it's my longest to date, a little bit under 30k words. I haven't done a very good job at rereading it so I'll probably fix that tomorrow or on Wednesday (I know I make mistakes but I'm not a native, remember? It's not an excuse, I know, but indulge me please!). I just wanted to update tonight - and I know it's not Monday anymore in my country but it's still Monday in the UK or in the US so... Let's say I posted on Monday, okay?- I hope you'll enjoy this chapter. Warning for sexual content (don't get your hopes too high, they'll be having sex in the next chapter) and angst (yep it's back)!
Happy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 21:

“In your eyes oh in your eyes
In our hearts yeah in our hearts
Sometimes words just ain’t enough
For this love that’s more than love.”

- The Script, Never Seen Anything Quite Like You

“Give Olicity a break!

1 DAY AGO by Star-City-Lover

Disclaimer: I am super freaking mad! (At a lot of people, including you not-so-innocent readers!)

Buckle up guys this is going to be a long ride!

As you already know it, I tend to leave the gossips to my colleagues at the newspaper. I made an exception to that rule a few weeks ago to talk about all the Queen related drama that was going on in
our favourite city (if you haven’t read the article, go do it now www.star-city-lover.com/article3956-gossips-the-royals-episode-1-and-2) and I’m going to make another exception to that rule by talking about Olicity again in this article (and if you don’t know who Olicity are 1) what planet do you live on? 2) go read my article).

On Sunday, February the 5th, Oliver Queen, 27, and soulmate/girlfriend/work partner Felicity Smoak, 20, were spotted at McCarran International Airport (for those who don’t know, it’s Las Vegas’ airport). They were spotted back at Star City International Airport on Wednesday, February the 8th.

[click here to show picture] Oliver Queen and soulmate/girlfriend/work partner Felicity Smoak arriving at Star City International Airport on February the 8th, 2017.

Now, I know what you’re going to say. Them having a few days of fun in Sin City is no reason for me to get mad and you’re absolutely right. The good thing is: it’s not what’s pissing me off.

What’s pissing me off is the insanely huge amount of articles that flooded both the internet and magazines speculating about a possible elopement and my personal favourite, about whether or not they’re expecting a little prince or a little princess (seriously guys? Can’t two people just get married because they love each other and want to spend the rest of their life together? Also, on a more personal note, it’s the 21rst century people. It’s possible to have a baby and not, you know, get married.)

Now, don’t get me wrong, I’m a huge Olicity fan, I think they’re really cute together and I’m all for them getting married and making gorgeous blonde, blue-eyed babies. What I’m not for is making money off the backs of two young people who have obviously been through a lot. Because yes, this is making money off their backs, this is invading their private life and twisting the truth of it to sell a story and make profits. I’m a journalist, I believe in facts and I will always fight for the truth (call me naïve, an idealist, I don’t care, I know my worth).

So here’s the truth:

Felicity Smoak is from Las Vegas and her mother still lives there. They simply went to visit her. How shocking! I’m aware that sells less than “Olicity’s secret Vegas wedding” but it’s the truth and we must respect it. So I’m sorry to disappoint you guys but they didn’t have a kinky threesome in Sin City (seriously? that’s her mother on those pictures! What’s wrong with you people?) and they didn’t get married because they forgot to use protection. They didn’t get married at all for that matter. And even if they had gotten married, how is it any of your business? Let them live their life in peace! They’ve been caught in a media storm for weeks, with paparazzi and journalists following them everywhere. For those who were wondering why they would choose to elope (before we knew they hadn’t) this is exactly why! Because if tomorrow they decided to get married and started planning it here, their life would become hell on earth. Heck, I’d elope too if I were them.

Let them breathe people, let them be.

Remember dear readers when I said you weren’t so innocent and that I was mad at you? Well, I think you hold a part of responsibility in the Olicity hunt that’s been going on. Because you guys obsess over celebs and so my colleagues are giving what you want. Gossips. Something to talk about when you don’t have anything else to say to your neighbour about the weather. Well here’s the thing. Oliver Queen and Felicity Smoak (and any other celebs, really) aren’t just names, faces you see on pictures. They’re real living and breathing people. They’re human beings and they deserve to be treated as such. You should remember that next time you want to click on the latest Olicity article and maybe go watch a cute cat video on YouTube instead.
Your faithful servant,

Stay-City-Lover

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“Well Star-City-Lover, I still don’t know who you are but I love you,” Felicity said after finishing reading the article out loud to Oliver and Tommy. The three of them were sitting in a restaurant located halfway between Q. Inc and Merlyn Global where they met on a weekly basis, to have lunch together.

“You better watch over your girl man or that anonymous blogger is going to steal her away,” Tommy teased.

“No chance,” Oliver replied, grabbing Felicity’s hand and squeezing her fingers. She smiled at him.

“I’m just happy someone’s finally calling out all the vultures on their bullshit? Do you know how many pictures zooming on this,” she pointed at her stomach, “I’ve seen in the news lately? Way too many. Geez, they know how to give a girl a few complexes,” she added, attacking with a vengeance the chocolate fondant she had ordered. “Maybe I’ve put on some weight but I’ve been under a lot of pressure lately okay and I stress eat. I’m not pregnant. One would actually need to have some sex in order to get pregnant and I’m not having any so…”

Tommy choked on his drink and Oliver tightened his grip on her hand.

“And you so did not need to know that…” She groaned, looking down toward her desert.

“No- you said no-“ Tommy stammered, coughing.

Oliver raised one hand in warning. “Tommy,” he started, his voice strained.

“But… You mean you aren’t bonded yet?” He asked, his widened in surprise.

That earned him Oliver rolling his eyes at him and Felicity’s cheeks burning in embarrassment.

“Do you realize asking us this is the same level of appropriate as asking a girl you just met if she’s still a virgin?” Oliver pointed out.

“I’m sorry but I just… I just can’t believe it. You guys are always so… you.” Felicity felt Oliver’s confusion match her own. “I mean you’re always so in synch, I was sure you had already…” He made a weird face, “You know.”

Felicity reached for Oliver’s glass and gulped his wine down.

“Well we haven’t,” Oliver said in a tone that didn’t call for any reply. “Now could we please talk about something else? I’d like to still have a soulmate by the time this lunch ends.”

Tommy shot Felicity a sheepish look. “I’m sorry,” he told her. “I didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable. I was just surprised. The temperature in the room always climbs up a few degrees whenever you and Oliver are in the room, it has since day 1 and so I was just-“ there was a muffled sound and then he groaned and Felicity smiled knowing Oliver had just kicked him under the table. “Anyway, I’m sorry. Let’s talk about my Bachelor party instead. What do you have in store for me Ollie?” He added, rubbing his hands in excitement.

“God I hate that nickname,” Felicity said.
Both men gave her a look.

She shrugged, looking unapologetic. “It sounds silly. I can’t take a guy who calls himself “Ollie” seriously,” she added, mimicking the quotation marks with her fingers.

They both ignored her but she knew Oliver agreed as he wasn’t too fond of the nickname himself for some reasons he never wanted to linger on.

“I’ve been talking about a few of the guys and we thought a weekend of fun on The Winter Wave could be nice,” Oliver started.


“My family’s boat,” Tommy informed her. “It’s true we haven’t taken her out in a while. Remember the boat parties we used to have? On both The Gambit and her? Because I do. I still remember the one we threw after graduation… Boy was that night epic.”

“I don’t have much memories of that night,” Oliver confessed. “But I remember how your father yelled at us the next morning when he saw how we trashed the place. We were still pretty hungover and he just wouldn’t stop yelling. God that was awful. And didn’t you have to pay for the new carpeting in all the bedrooms?”

“It was worth every. fucking. penny.”

They both laughed and Felicity smiled with them, feeling a pang of nostalgia hit her, courtesy of her connection with Oliver. He usually wasn’t too happy when his past was brought up in front of her but Tommy’s good mood and enthusiasm were infectious. Besides, Felicity had told him not to be ashamed of everything he had done as a teenager / young adult. She didn’t want her relationship with him to cast a shadow on the good memories he had made with his best friend, to forever taint that part of him that had been young and reckless and had enjoyed life and all the things it had to give.

But even if he was happy to remember the good old days with Tommy, she could still feel something was troubling him. He was trying to hide it but it was pointless with her around.

She put a hand on his shoulder, lightly rubbing his back to gain his attention. He turned his head toward her, his blue eyes meeting hers.

“What’s going on?” She whispered.

“You felt that didn’t you?” He asked, dodging her question. His voice was soft, it was the voice she had noticed he kept for her, for when they were alone.

“Of course I did. Tell me what’s wrong,” she coaxed, moving her hand to cup his cheek. He leaned into her touch, kissed the inside of her palm, drawing a small smile on her lips.

“I’m still here,” Tommy reminded them. They both turned their heads toward him. “And you guys wondered why I thought you were already bonded.” He shook his head at them.

“It’s just that… The Bachelor party is supposed to be on the 25th but if we do take the Winter Wave maybe it’ll be better to leave on the 24th, sail to that town we used to go back in the days during the night and come back on the 26th.”

“Oh,” Felicity said, understanding immediately what the problem was.

“Oh what?” Tommy asked, confused. “That sounds like a good plan. I’m going to end my life as a
bachelor with a big bang. I like that!”

“‘It’s Felicity birthday on the 24th.’”

“Oh,” Tommy said, his shoulders slumping. “I see. Well, I guess we’ll leave in the morning on the 25th. We’ll be right on time to hit the clubs.”

Felicity chewed down on her lower lip. She knew that, even though Tommy supported them wholeheartedly, things had been difficult for him. While Oliver was used to share Tommy with his soulmate Laurel, it wasn’t the same for Tommy. He was used to having his best friend only for him, always. Felicity’s arrival had changed that for him and he had had to adjust. She felt guilt gnaw at her when she saw just how disappointed he looked.

“It’s okay,” she told them. “Leave on the 24th.”

Tommy’s eyes lightened up.

“What?” Oliver said.

“There will be plenty of other birthdays to celebrate but there will only be one Bachelor party. So you guys leave on the 24th and have a lot of fun. But nice fun, not the kind of fun that involves strippers and hookers, okay?”

Oliver pinched his lips, a crease forming between his eyebrows. His reluctance was obvious. “But I-I made you a promise.”

She knew exactly what he was referencing too. He was reminding her of the promise he had made her that fateful night when she had broken down and he had seen just how deep her abandonment issues ran.

“We’ll see each other at work all day so don’t worry about that.”

“What don’t you guys take the day off?” Tommy suggested.

Felicity shook her head. “No. We have so much work to do at Q. Inc at the moment, I’m not even sure we can afford weekends.” She chuckled, but it lacked warmth and amusement. They really had a lot to do. “And we’ve already missed a few days because of our Vegas trip…” She sighed and her shoulders fell. They had come back the previous day from Las Vegas and this was their first day back in Star City, back in their normal daily life but she was still haunted by the memories of their trip and what had caused them to leave. They hadn’t been there for long but it had been emotionally exhausting for her. She forced herself to chase those dark thoughts away and gave Oliver and Tommy a smile. “But it’s okay, really. We’ll see each other at work, I’ll let you take me out for a nice lunch date… Everything will be perfect.”

“Are you sure?” Tommy insisted. “I don’t want to ruin your special day.”

She shook her head. “Nonsense.”

“Okay then it’s settled. We’ll leave on the Winter Wave on the 24th and have one last weekend of fun,” Tommy summed up.

Both Oliver and Felicity shot him a look.

“You sound like you’ve been sentenced to death,” Oliver said.
“I’m getting married and having a baby,” Tommy reminded him, as if it explained everything. And it must have made sense to Oliver somehow because he laughed and clapped Tommy’s back, a bright smile on his lips.

“Yes, you are,” he said.

“How’s Laurel by the way?” Felicity asked.

“She’s good. Extremely busy. I keep telling her to slow down but she won’t listen to me. She keeps saying she can handle it all, work, the wedding and the pregnancy…”

“You obviously disagree,” Felicity stated.

He nodded. “She thinks she can do it but…I feel what she feels and I know she’s pushing herself too much, even if she’s just too stubborn to admit it. So I called her mother and she’s coming to help her plan the wedding.”

“Have you told Laurel about that?”

He grimaced. “It might have slipped from my mind. And since it’s highly likely that she’s going to kill me when she realizes I called her mother, maybe you’ll have your soulmate all for yourself for your birthday after all.”

Both Oliver and Felicity snorted. Then the blonde’s eyes fell on her watch.

“Maybe we should go, we don’t want you to be late for your meeting with that doctor from Central City…”

“Everything alright?” Tommy asked, his eyebrows furrowed in concern.

Felicity cringed when she realized how her sentence had sounded to his ear.

“Yes, I’m sorry. Many people are interested in the battery Q. Inc’s has developed. Oliver’s meeting with a doctor who has a few ideas on how to use the battery for medical application.”

“I thought you’d already signed a partnership with Palmer Tech.”

“We did,” Oliver confirmed. “But it wasn’t something exclusive. There are so many possibilities for this battery, Ray Palmer understands that.”

“The partnership we negotiated isn’t limited to the battery anyway,” Felicity added. “Our R&D teams will work together on a few new projects involving the battery.”

“And the more contracts we sign for the battery, the more money we’ll have meaning that we’ll be able to hire more people and fund more projects,” Oliver went on.

“And the company will really become this beacon, this place made for inventing and innovating,” Felicity concluded. “Just like you wanted it to be,” she added, gazing lovingly at Oliver.

“I may have wanted it but I wouldn’t have been able to make it happen without you,” he said, looking right back at her, his blue eyes burning into hers. “I couldn’t do any of this without you,” he insisted and Felicity suddenly found it difficult to breathe. They stared at each other for a second that felt like eternity as their eyes conveyed all the emotions and promises their mouths weren’t voicing. She took in a sharp breath and just let his presence wash over her, fill every inch of her heart, body and mind.
A throat being cleared forced them apart.

“And you guys wondered why I thought you were already bonded…” Tommy repeated. He shook his head, a small smile stretching his lips and pulled his phone from his pocket.

“What are you doing?” Felicity asked, curious.

“Tweeting of course. Lunch with the BFF and his girl… more like being the third wheel,” he said, typing on his phone.

“Ha ha very funny,” Oliver snorted.

“Guys, I don’t want to rush you but if we don’t go now, we’re going to be late,” Felicity insisted.

They left the restaurant and Oliver and Felicity drove back to Q. Inc. The rest of the day passed quickly and the next day even more so. They were flooded with work, they didn’t even take a lunch break. They ate sandwiches at Oliver’s desk while still talking about the company. She offered to take on some of his workload as it was particularly heavy. It wasn’t easy being a CEO, they both knew it and she was really eager to help him. She suggested she handled the fall out of the partnership building with Palmer Tech and supervised herself the work of their teams. Oliver was quick to agree as they were many technical details and specificities that he didn’t really care for. He was a businessman and cared more for the results (not that he didn’t care for how said results were obtained but he trusted Felicity to explain everything to him when the time came).

Friday night came quickly and it was a good thing they didn’t have anything planned for the weekend, as Oliver had to bring some work back home. Felicity was disappointed at first but she quickly realized that maybe it was all for the better as she and Roy had a lot to do. He had agreed to sell his house, not that he would earn much from the sale considering the state it was in and the neighbourhood, and to fully move in Felicity’s apartment (it was Thea who had done the convincing, after Felicity had called her for help and it was already too late when poor Roy realized both women had ganged up on him). His possessions were limited to his clothes, a few album photos and a chest filled with some stuff he was reluctant to tell her about, making her think that whatever was inside had to mean a lot to him. They moved a few things around the living-room, realized there was some space left for a new piece of furniture and so they went to get a chest of drawers Roy had in his house (he would sell the rest of the furniture with the house). They filled it with a few things that belonged to Felicity, they had moved them from the second bedroom to free up some space for Roy’s things. They even had some space left inside the second bedroom for Donna’s clothes and the few possessions she’d bring with her when she’d move in.

They collapsed on the couch after they were done moving things around. Felicity exhaled slowly and wiped the beads of sweat covering her forehead with her hand.

“We need to paint it,” she pointed at the new chest of drawers.

He just blinked.

“Don’t give me that look,” she said. “It’s not the same colour as the rest of the furniture. It’s disturbing.”

Roy chuckled. “Okay, you’re the boss!”

“But not today though, I’m tired.”

He nodded and groaned when Arrow jumped on his stomach. “I thought we’d scared you away,” he said, petting her head until she purred. The cat moved then, from his stomach to Felicity’s. He got on
his feet.

“Do you still need my help?”

“No… Why?” She asked, looking at him suspiciously.

“Thea’s friend from school brought all the things they did this week and I promised I’d make sure she wouldn’t push herself too much.”

Felicity arched an eyebrow. “Is that so?”

“Yeah… If I let her have her way, she’d catch up on everything in one day.” He shook his head. “She’s still supposed to be resting and why are you smiling?”

“It’s nothing,” Felicity said shrugging.

“Please do tell anyway,” Roy insisted, an eyebrow raised questioningly.

“Fine,” Felicity adjusted her position on the couch, much to the kitten on her lap displeasure. “It’s just that not so long ago, Thea didn’t care much about school. I never really knew her like that, but from what I’ve gathered, she used to be quite the little troublemaker…”

“Thea? Troublemaker? Never!” Roy said but his smile told Felicity he knew very well who his soulmate was.

“My point is she didn’t always have the best frequentations and didn’t always care so much about school, mainly because it was her way to give her parents the finger and…” Felicity exhaled slowly, looking for her next words. “I don’t know, I’m just happy that’s changing. Being away from her parents and having you in her life is helping her, in ways Oliver and I could have never helped.”

“Oh. Is this your way of telling me you approve of my presence in her life?”

She rolled her eyes at him. “Roy, I’ve approved of your presence in her life the moment I met you.”

He pointed at her, nodding. “That’s very true. I should get going,” he said, checking his watch. “She can be pretty impatient.”

“Yes! Take good care of her. And don’t kiss her too much in front of Oliver.”

That made him pause. “Would you believe me if I told you we haven’t kissed yet?”

Felicity blinked. “Are you telling me you guys haven’t kissed yet?”

He looked down toward his shoes, his cheeks reddening. “Well yeah.”

“Oh.” Was all Felicity said. “Do you want to tell me why?”

Roy shrugged. “Maybe later. I really need to go.”

And he was gone before she could add anything else. Not that there was anything that she wanted to say. Their relationship and the pace of it was none of her business after all. If either of them wanted to talk to her about it, or needed her opinion or advice, they’d come to her. Not that she’d have much to offer them, as she was still figuring out her relationship with her own soulmate.

Ever since they’d come back from Vegas, things had been different between them. Something in their dynamic had shifted. They had both felt it immediately. Felicity thought that, by opening about
her past, by letting him get to know the girl she had once been, she had let him in even further, strengthening their relationship in the process.

She remembered how leaving him after he had dropped her at her apartment had been difficult. And the fact that it had been as equally difficult for him had made things even harder. The truth was she wanted to be with him all the time. And when she wasn’t with him, she was picturing him with her. She fell asleep thinking about his arms wrapped around her, pulling her against his solid chest. She woke up thinking about how his lazy prickly morning kisses felt. She heard him gently mock her eating habits every time she stepped in the kitchen and memories of them getting lost in each other assaulted her when she was under the hot spray in the shower... She missed him, from the moment she left him at night until the moment she saw him again in the morning. She ached when she wasn’t with him. The pain was dull. Not strong but always there. Gone as soon as she they were together again. She had come to think they were lucky they were working together and seeing each other every day otherwise. She was pretty sure she’d have already lost her mind, had things been different.

She longed for him, she pined for him like a stupid teenager with a crush. And she hated that because it wasn’t her. She wasn’t that person. She wasn’t a teenager with a crush. She was a strong and independent young woman. She wasn’t that person who needed her soulmate with her all the time. And yet... And yet she was. She needed him. She needed her daily fix of him, of his voice, of his eyes, of his warmth. Maybe that was what being in love felt like. She felt more like an addict. She probably was one. And the fact that he was just as addicted to her as she was to him only made things worse. Because as always, his need fuelled hers and her need fuelled his making them both extremely needy for each other.

She wished they were together right this second. She didn’t know what they’d be doing, maybe they’d be doing nothing but still she wished they were doing nothing together. Maybe they’d just be lying on the couch, their limbs tangled up. Maybe they’d just be but she knew just being with him was much better than just being on her own.

She eyed her phone on the coffee-table, her fingers itching to reach for it, to call him... But she didn’t. She refused to call him, to give in. As much as she wanted their relationship to progress, she didn’t want for things to happen too quickly between them. She didn’t want to lose herself in them, didn’t want to maintain her addiction to him. She was his other-half and her own person and she would not let one encroach upon the other. She would not get lost in the bubble. She had spent weekends without seeing Oliver Queen before, she could do it again.

With that in mind, she got on her feet and decided to busy herself with cleaning up her apartment. She had neglected the place lately and when she and Roy had moved things around they had also moved dust meaning her place needed a good scrubbing. And she needed to think about something that wasn’t Oliver so she got to work.

She collapsed on the couch three hours later. She was exhausted but her place didn’t look like a mess anymore. She took a quick shower and was collapsing once again on the couch when Roy came back, a deep frown creasing his forehead. She tilted her head in interrogation.

He opened his mouth to say something but closed it instantly. She waited for him instead of pushing, knowing pushing him to talk wouldn’t accomplish anything.

He opened his mouth again and this time he spoke.

“Felicity you’re a girl, right?”

Okay that wasn’t what she had expected.
“Jeez... I wonder where you got that idea.”

He shook his head. “No, I mean, you’re a girl girl.”

“I’m not sure what you mean by that.”

“I mean you like girly things.”

She frowned. “I guess I do, why?”

“Thea and I are going to have our first date on Tuesday.”

“Tuesday?” Her eyes widened. “Oh! It’s Valentine’s Day, isn’t it?”

He nodded. “It will be our first real date. Our first date. It’s-” he hesitated. “It’s important because if things turn out the way they are supposed to then it will be the first of many, many other dates. And more importantly, it’ll be our last first date.”

“Just like your first kiss will be your last first kiss,” Felicity guessed, understanding washing over her.

“Yeah. I want the both of them to be special. Thea deserves special.”

“She deserves to be treated like a Queen,” she joked and Roy glared at her. She just smiled, shrugging unrepentant. And then she started laughing.

“What?”

“It’s funny because your name looks like the French word for “King”. You are quite literally the king to her queen.”

He snorted. “Happy to hear that.”

“Anyway,” Felicity said, trying to tone down her amusement, “back to what you were saying. I think that as long Thea is with you, everything will be special for her.”

Roy gave her a look. “Is that it? I was expecting more from you Blondie,” he teased.

She rolled her eyes at him. “What do you want me to say? Thea is a romantic. She’ll be as happy with a candlelit dinner as she’ll be with a date at the skating rink. Although considering that she’s had surgery not that long ago the date at the skating rink might not be the best idea ever. What if she fell? That would be awful!”

Roy chuckled. “So candlelit dinner it is. Maybe I could spread rose petals everywhere, light some candles – oh and we could watch a movie, share a blanket! Maybe listen to some Marvin Gaye and dance...”

“TMI, TMI!” Felicity was quick to say. “I’m her brother’s soulmate, remember? There are some things I’m better left not knowing.”

“What?”

She pinched the bridge of her nose. “I don’t have to explain what “let’s get it on” means to you, right?”

Horror filled his eyes. “What? God no, gross!”
“But aside from that, it’s good to see that the prospect of your first date with Thea has awaken the romantic inside of you.”

He crossed his arms over his chest. “I’m not romantic.”

“Yes, yes you are.”

He didn’t say anything for a second but then a sheepish smile stretched his lips. It was small but it was there and it lighted his whole face. He had his “I love Thea Queen” face on and it was the most adorable thing in the world.

But she kept from telling him knowing he wouldn’t like to hear the word “adorable” associated with him. He was a “tough” guy (except where Thea Queen was concerned).

“So…” Felicity said. “Does this mean I’ll have to make myself scarce on Tuesday?”

Roy scratched the back of his head. “Uh… Maybe? I don’t know. Don’t you have plans with Mr. Don’t-You-Dare-Look-At-My-Sister-The-Wrong-Way?”

Felicity snorted. “I- I don’t know. That’s a very good question. Which I’m going to ask him. Right now.” She grabbed her phone and dialled Oliver.

He picked up after the first ring.

Eager much?

“Hi babe.”

That was all it took for some delicious warmth to spread inside her belly and for her insides to melt. His voice was soft and low and all kind of sexy.

God, she loved his voice.

And his choice of words… Perfect, just perfect.

“Hi yourself,” she replied, her own voice immediately softening, matching his.

“You finally caved.”

“Caved?”

“Yeah you finally called after spending so much time missing me.”

She frowned, puzzled. He sounded smug, as if he had won a bet. Against who she had no idea but not her that was for sure.

“If I didn’t have something to ask you, I’d hang up on you just to make a point.”

He chuckled. He had the audacity to chuckle. “Make a point? What point Felicity? It’s okay to miss each other. To want to spend time with each other. I really don’t understand why you’re fighting this so much.”

“It’s just-“ she sighed, frustration bubbling up in her chest. “Listen, I didn’t call you to talk about this.”
“Too bad because I want to talk about it.”

She groaned. Roy got up, Arrow in his arms, sensing something was wrong.

“I’ll just go,” he whispered.

She nodded absent-mindedly.

“Felicity?” Once again he made her name sound like more than just her name. There was so much embedded in it. Frustration. Expectation. Fear.

“I- I guess I’m just scared by how quickly things are changing between us. Yesterday- Yesterday it was just me and myself but now today, I’m all yours and that’s pretty scary.”

“Is – is that not what you want?”

“What? No, no! I want that, I want us, god how can you doubt it?”

“You’re kind of sending mixed signals.”

“I know, I’m sorry I- I want us. I want us to be together but I remember when the doctor told me our connection was close to a 10, I was scared and I wondered what it would entail. I wondered if we’d become super dependent, if we’d crave each other’s presence all the time, if we’d get lost in each other… I’ve got my answers now and it’s a yes to everything!”

“Felicity, you’re still sending mixed signals.”

“Damn it, I suck at this. For the record, I told you I didn’t want to talk about this over the phone.”

She paused, weighing her next words carefully. “I want us. I’m just kind of overwhelmed by how much I need you in my life. Think about it Oliver. My whole life, my happiness, my everything relies on you. Just you. I can’t live, can’t be happy, can’t be anything without you. That’s scary, especially for someone used to be alone.” She pinched the bridge of her nose and exhaled slowly. “I’m not fighting this because I don’t want to be with you, I’m fighting this because I want us to still be able to function without the other.”

He started to protest so she cut him off.

“Okay for example let’s say, ten years from now, you have to go on a business trip and I have to stay at home with our kids. What do we do if we can’t be apart for more than two days?”

“You think we’ll have kids in ten years?” He stressed the –s, making her smile in spite of herself.

“Don’t try to change the subject. What do we do in ten years Oliver?”

“We leave the kids with Thea and you come with me?” He suggested.

“We’d be the worst parents ever,” she pointed out.

He huffed out a shaky breath. “Felicity, I honestly don’t know what we’ll do in ten years and do you want to know why? Because we don’t know what the future will be made of. We live in the now and now, the only thing I know is that I want to spend as much time as possible with you. So can you please stop worrying about our future kids and potential business trip and just enjoy the time we have now. We’ve wasted enough time already.”

“I guess… I guess I can try to do that.”

She smiled. “Okay…”

“Perfect.” He paused for a second before speaking again. “What did you want to tell me?”

She was lost for a second, all thoughts prior to their conversation gone from her mind but she was quick to pull herself together.

“Oh – I was wondering if we had plans for Valentine’s Day. I know we said we wouldn’t be getting each other gifts but we didn’t say anything about having plans. And I swear I’m not only asking because I’m being kicked out of my apartment for that night. Because yes Roy and Thea have plans and we don’t and it sucks. I know everyone says Valentine’s Day is overrated, especially for soulmates because we have Soulmate’s Day in June, or is it in July? I can’t remember! Anyway, I still think it wouldn’t be nice to do a little something. Nothing too fancy of course, just a quiet date. I mean it doesn’t have to be a Valentine’s Day date. It can just be a date that happens to take place on Valentine’s Day, I don’t know. What do you think?”

“I think that we have plans for Valentine’s Day.”

“Oh,” she said, surprised washing over her. “We do?”

“Yes, we do. We’ve had plans for a few days now.”

“Oh,” she repeated, even more surprised. “When were you going to tell me about our plans?”

“On Tuesday?”

She snorted.

“I wanted to surprise you. I thought it’d make you happy, especially after everything that’s happened lately.”

Felicity’s heart clenched in her chest and she felt guilt blossom in her chest. She was fighting their connection while he was planning surprises to cheer her up.

She didn’t deserve him.

She shook her head.

No. She couldn’t think like this.

He had planned a surprise for her? No problem! She’d come up with a surprise of her own.

And she already had a few ideas.

“Tell me Oliver, do our plans involve a sleepover?”

“Well, I don’t want to sound presumptuous so… I’ll let you decide.”

Alright. You better make some room for me in your bed then,” she said.

“Is that so? Don’t you think it’ll be too much too fast?” He teased her.

“I’m trying this new thing my boyfriend suggested, he called it “enjoy the time we have now”.”
“Your boyfriend sounds like a very wise guy.”

“He is. He’s 6’1 of awesome and handsome. But don’t worry, you’re pretty fine too.”

He chuckled and she did too.

“Thanks for calling Felicity,” he eventually said and there was something in his voice, some sort of vulnerability… She had to remember he had insecurities of his own, insecurities that she needed to watch carefully before they festered, fed by her own fears and insecurities. She knew those moments of doubts and both their sides could be noxious for their connection, for their relationship and everything they were trying to build together.

“Always,” she wowed. “See you tomorrow Oliver.”

“Yeah. Have a nice evening.”

She hung up then and let out a long breath. Her entire body relaxed, knots of tension she hadn’t realized had taken over her limbs loosening up. Roy came back in the living-room, still holding the kitten in his arms. He looked unsure.

“Is everything okay with Mr. Don’t-Touch-My-Sister?”

She frowned. “You guys really need to stop with the nicknames. It’s ridiculous.”

“Okay,” he said, coming back to sit down next to her. “Is everything alright with Oliver?”

She nodded. “Yeah… Everything’s fine. We have plans for brunch tomorrow and for Valentine’s Day.”

“Are you sure? You looked pretty tense earlier Blondie.”

“Yeah… It’s just, you know… We’re still figuring out that soulmate thing. It’s really not easy.”

“Oh.” He looked down toward the kitten currently curled up in his lap. “For what it’s worth I think you guys are gonna figure it out.”

She arched a questioning eyebrow, tilting her head slightly. “What makes you say that?”

He shrugged. “I don’t know. He kind of has hearts in his eyes whenever he looks at you. And you’re no better so…”

She smiled softly.

“See! Hearts in your eyes!” Roy said. “You guys love each other so much it’s sickening!”

“It’s not,” she said, slapping his arm.

“Ouch! No need to get violent!”

“Would you believe me if I told you we haven’t said the words yet?”

“Really? Why?”

“I don’t know… I almost said it several times but now… Now I’m just waiting for the right moment. I want it to be special.”
Roy nodded. “Understandable.”

“Our first kiss wasn’t special you know? It was a “kiss under the mistletoe” kiss, one that I’m pretty sure had been entirely orchestrated by our friend. And our second kiss wasn’t much better. It was a “please don’t leave me” kiss. I think tears were involved. And I lied straight to his face right after he pulled away.” She paused, something clenching in her stomach at the memories. “We deserve special. We deserve this moment to be just… Ours.”

“Or you could just blurt it out right after he wakes up from surgery. It worked for me.”

“I know, I was there.”

Roy smiled. “I’m obviously no expert at this love thing but a friend told me that as long as my soulmate is with me, any moment will be special.”

“Wow, your friend’s pretty wise.”

“Yeah, she has her moments,” he teased and Felicity just burst out laughing.

The rest of the weekend passed in a flash and Monday was here way too soon. But then, wasn’t Monday always here too early?

The day passed in a flash too, much like the weekend, but that was to be expected considering the amount of work they had to do. It was nearly six pm when Felicity collapsed on a chair, in Oliver’s office. He was reading something and she didn’t say anything after collapsing in front of him. She just stared unabashedly at him, fascinated with him. He was an attractive man, she knew that. But there was something about him being so focused on his task at hand that made him even more attractive, something Felicity hadn’t believed was possible. So she just stared at him, at his perfect jawline, at his scruff that made her skin tingle whenever he kissed her, at his blue eyes, at his strong forearms – he had rolled up his sleeves some time ago. She just stared at his everything and god it was crazy the things he did to her even when he wasn’t doing anything in particular.

She had just ended a video call with Ray Palmer, to discuss their partnership and some other stuff and was ready to call it a day, but didn’t want to leave before talking to Oliver.

“How did it go with Palmer?” He asked, not looking up from whatever it was that he was reading.

“Hm, great. It went great.”

“Of course it did,” he said. “I wonder why I even asked.”

She frowned. “Are you okay?”

He finally looked up to meet her eyes. “Yeah, I’m fine. Did you want something?”

Her frown grew. There was something odd with him, a darkness in his emotions. She couldn’t explain it, she just felt it. And she didn’t like it, not at all. “What’s wrong?”

Could he have heard about Ray’s job offer? She hadn’t told him about it, and the papers Ray had given her were safely tucked away in her desk’s drawer. She felt terrible for not telling Oliver but she had kind of forgotten in the midst of Thea’s attack and then her mother’s breakdown and now it felt
like it was too late, like she had waited too long and that if she told him about it, it’d create a huge chasm between them. She really wanted to tell him but she was scared what his reaction would be. Even more so because she knew he was kind of jealous of Ray. He had absolutely no reasons to be, she loved him and he had no intention of quitting but jealousy wasn’t a rational feeling. She didn’t want to add fuel to the fire by telling him about the job offer. Who knew how’d react? She didn’t. She knew, deep down, he’d be right to be outraged that Ray had tried to recruit her but the partnership with Palmer Tech was so important, they couldn’t risk losing it...

“Nothing,” he exhaled and his shoulders slumped. “I’m sorry, I just – I just got lost in... All this.” He waved at his desk.

“You sure?”

“Yes, I am. Did you need anything?”

“Kind of. I was talking with Mr. Palmer and Curtis earlier, we were discussing Palmer Tech’s servers and you know ever since we “broke up” with Queen Consolidated, Curtis has been working on our new servers and new system and I was wondering if you’d let me give him a hand.”

He frowned. “I thought you didn’t want to do that kind of job anymore.”

“I just – Our conversation from earlier gave me so many ideas, I just thought maybe I could give it a try. I have a lot of work to do anyway, so it’s not like I can give it my all. But a few ideas, here and there, maybe I can do that? Throw in a few lines of code, take baby steps.”

Oliver sighed. “What do you want me to tell you Felicity? I can’t stop you.”

“You’re my boss so technically you can.”

“I’d never stop you from doing anything you love, you know that right?”

She tilted her head. His words seemed to carry more than just their meaning.

“I want to give it a try,” she told him, trying to shake off the uneasy feeling that was bubbling up in her chest.

It was true that she wanted to give working on the new servers and the new system a try. After what Cooper had done to her, after he had used their common interests to torture her, she hadn’t wanted to hear about computers and hacking (a hobby that she’d never indulged in) anymore. But now… Now, she wanted to try. For Oliver. She wanted to do this, for him, for his company. She had been good, really good, at that before. Now, she just wanted to see if there was any of this goodness left inside of and if there was, she wanted to give it all to Oliver and his company. Because she believed in him, in them and she believed that together they could achieve great things.

“Then give it a try,” he said, but his eyes told her something entirely different. She was close to ask him again if everything was alright with him but she didn’t. Maybe he had been truthful earlier, maybe he was just worried and tired because of all the work they had ahead of us. She’d bring the topic back up later, when he’d be in a better frame of mind.

“Are you leaving soon?” She asked him.

He shook his head. “No I still have a lot to do. Wanna stick around and order some take-out?” He asked.

She shook her head and she saw disappointment filling his eyes. She smiled internally, happy to
finally be able to plant the seeds for the surprise she had spent the entire weekend planning in her mind.

“There is somewhere else I need to be, something I need to buy for tomorrow…” She said mysteriously, playing with a strand of her blonde hair.

Confusion replaced disappointment in his blue orbs.

“I thought we said no gifts,” he reminded her.

She leaned back in her chair, crossing her legs. The hem of her dress rode up her thigh and Oliver’s eyes were immediately drawn to that specific area of her body. Felicity’s heart hammering in her chest at the look on his face and she had to bite back a smug smile.

She cleared her throat and startled, he looked up.

“I know we said no gifts,” she said before leaning down toward him. She congratulated herself for picking a dress with a deep V-neck when his eyes fell from her face to her cleavage. “And don’t worry, I’m not going to buy you anything.”

“Oh?”

“I’m going to buy something for me and, depending on how things go tomorrow, you might enjoy that something too.” She smiled at him, and she knew her eyes were sparkling with excitement.

“Felicity Meghan Smoak,” Oliver started, an incredulous look on his face, “are you teasing me?”

She got on her feet, straightening the fabric of her skirt. “I am Oliver Jonas Queen,” she replied innocently before winking at him. His eyes darkened and she felt a rush of lust pour into her through their connection. “I’m on my way now. See you tomorrow!”

“Wait, wait come back. Give me a goodbye kiss.”

She smiled and shook her head. If she stepped within his reach, he’d capture her in his arms and wouldn’t let go, even after she gave him his goodbye kiss.

“See you tomorrow Mr. Queen,” she told him before walking out.

He groaned, she smiled.

“Roy, have you seen my other…” she rushed out of her bedroom to the living-room, “… shoe?” She asked, dropping the one shoe she had been holding.

When she had come home from work, he had covered her eyes with his hands so that she wouldn’t see how he had prepared her apartment for his Valentine’s date with Thea. She hadn’t minded it much, especially because she had been extremely busy getting herself ready for her date with Oliver. But now she could see and the only thing that came to her mind was that Roy had really outdone himself.

There were candles absolutely everywhere. Every surface available in her apartment was covered with candles and rose petals and never before had her place smell so good. He had even traced the
path from her door to the living-room with rose petals. He had told her he would do it but she hadn’t actually thought that he would do it. She would never underestimate Roy Harper again. He had put on a romantic playlist and Felicity swayed her hips to the sound of Frank Sinatra’s voice as she took in the big pillows and fluffy blankets he had placed on the floor, where they would be watching their movie.

“The florist must really love you right now,” she said. There were a lot of candles. But there were even more roses and rose petals.

He chuckled nervously. “Do you like it? It’s not too much, is it?”

“Roy,” she said, her voice calm. “If I wasn’t already committed to my soulmate, I’d marry you.” She paused. “Don’t repeat that to JJ.”

Roy frowned. “JJ?”

Felicity pointed at a picture of her with the little boy.

“Oh.”

He turned to look at her and his eyes widened when he took her in. She was wearing a short black dress with a front zipper that went up from the top of her thigh to her shoulder. There was a small slit, exposing inches of her white skin. Any other day, she wouldn’t have felt comfortable wearing such a dress but not tonight. Tonight, she didn’t care that the dress was shorter than what she was used to or that it was exposing more skin than her usual dresses. None of this mattered because she felt sexy and confident and she wanted Oliver to see her like that. Confident and sexy.

“Wow Blondie, you look really hot,” Roy said, his eyes widened and his mouth slightly agape.

She gave him a look.


Felicity bent down to pick her shoe. “Thanks. Did you see my other shoe? We moved so much things this weekend, I can’t find it anymore…”

“Maybe it’s still in my room?” He suggested. “Let’s go find it.”

She nodded. They moved things around, looking for the missing shoe. Felicity kept throwing glances at Roy. He was focused on the task at hand but she could see the tautness in his shoulders as he moved, she could feel the tension radiating off him.

“Are you okay Roy?” She asked gently. “You look kinda nervous.”

“I’m fine,” he replied curtly. “Here, found your shoe!” It had fallen behind a shelf. He handed her the shoe.

“Thank you, I’m going to put them on.” She walked toward the room’s door and stopped herself in the door frame. “I know you’re not nervous but just in case, I want to tell you that you poured all your heart into making this night perfect for Thea and she’ll see it and she’ll love you all the more for it.”

Around half an hour later, they heard a knock on the door. Oliver and Thea had arrived. Felicity grabbed her coat and rushed to the door, Roy, who had just walked out of the shower, following her closely. They walked outside of Felicity’s apartment, shutting the door behind them.
“Aren’t you gonna invite us inside?” Thea asked, her head tilted in surprise. She really was rocking the entire black leather doll look.

“In a minute,” Roy said.

“Where’s Oliver?” Felicity asked. She could feel he was close, the buzzing sound of his emotions inside her louder than before.

“Parking the car, I was in a hurry,” Thea explained, leaning into Roy’s side as he wrapped an arm around her waist. He kissed her temple and Felicity had to bite back a smile.

“Thea why didn’t you wait,” Oliver’s voice trailed down when he came in sight and his eyes widened when they fell on Felicity, “for me?”

His eyes moved from her feet to her head, taking in the shape of her, every curve, every line. She had tied the belt of her trench coat and done all the buttons, hiding her short dress from view. For all he knew she could be naked under the dark fabric of her coat, only wearing the very high golden heels that made her bare legs seem to go on for miles. The thought must have crossed his mind because he parted his lips, licking them just as the blue of his eyes was replaced by dark unabashed lust. Felicity shifted her balance on her feet, feeling her cheeks redden as she felt a wave of desire rise in her chest, fuelled by the fire burning in his veins and that she could feel through their soulmate connection.

“Hi Oliver,” she said, smiling shyly, putting a blonde curl back in place behind her ear. He was melting her confidence with the intensity of his eyes on her and all of a sudden, she felt unsteady on her feet, her legs wobbling against her will.

“Hi Felicity,” he replied, his voice laden with pure want.

They had seen each other all day at work but Felicity felt like it had been ages ago and she could tell he felt the same way. He rapidly crossed the distance between them and took her hand, holding onto her fingers tightly.

“You look… Really lovely tonight,” he whispered, making her frown.

Lovely?

He thought she looked lovely? She didn’t want to look lovely. She wasn’t lovely Felicity tonight, at least she didn’t want to be. She wanted to be bold and sexy Felicity, for him. With that in mind, she forced herself to straighten her spine and squared her shoulders. She also held her head higher, engaging in a battle of will against his natural charm and sexiness that always made her putty in his hand.

“You don’t look so bad yourself,” she replied, running her hands over his chest to smooth the fabric of his jacket. He was wearing a grey suit that brought out the crystal blue colour of his eyes. He looked devastatingly handsome so much that she knew she’d have a hard time keeping her hands off him and her heartbeat in check during the night. Her poor heart, it was already hammering in her chest, trying to dig his way out to find Oliver’s. He smirked, that smug soulmate of hers, fully aware of the effect he had on her. But she wouldn’t give in as she was a woman on a mission. Tonight, she would be the one seducing him. She had barely formed her resolve that he was already pulling her flush against him by wrapping an arm around her waist. She went willingly, craving the feel of his body against her much softer one. Her hands fell on his shoulders, in her attempt at steadying herself.

“Oh for God’s sake!” Thea said, rolling her eyes at them. “Just leave already.”
Felicity tore her eyes from Oliver’s face to look at her friend.

“Eager to get rid of us?” She teased, her voice trembling just slightly.

“No but you guys look like you’re about to jump each other and that’s something I’d rather not see so just go get a room somewhere far away from me!”

Felicity looked at Oliver again. He relaxed his hold on her but kept her hand in his. She moved to be at his side.

“Fine we’re leaving,” he said. “You better treat her right,” he told Roy, a hint of a threat in his voice.

“I could say the same to you,” Roy bravely replied. Oliver arched an eyebrow at him and he gulped. “Mr. Queen,” he was quick to add.

Oliver looked between Felicity and Roy and she just shrugged, holding back a grin. In the end, he just shook his head and dragged her away. She looked over her shoulder and winked at Roy, who gave her a sheepish smile.

Oliver let go of her hand to press on the button to call the elevator. Neither said a word and the silence between them was filled with thick tension. Felicity’s skin was tingling and her whole body was buzzing in anticipation.

A loud sound announced the opening of the elevator’s doors. Felicity walked in, quickly followed by Oliver. The doors closed and before she could blink, Oliver had her flat against the wall, his hard body pressing against hers. She gasped when strong hands cupped her cheeks and tilted her head further back, his thumb tenderly caressing her lower lip. She dropped both her clutch and her overnight bag.

“Felicity Meghan Smoak, you are…”

“Lovely?” She cut him off, her tone harsh in spite of him being so close to her and overwhelming her senses with a myriad of feelings.

His eyes darkened at the word and he shook his head vehemently.

“That’s what you said earlier,” she said, lowering her voice as her hands found his sides. He tensed up when she touched him and leaned further into her. She welcomed the weight of him. She wanted to feel him entirely against her.

“I –” he blindly reached for the emergency button and pressed on it, successfully stopping the elevator. “I was trying to keep up appearances, for my sister’s sake,” he told her, bending his head to press soft kisses along her jaw. Her eyes fluttered close at the feather like kisses and she allowed herself to savour the sensation, for just a second. She was still a woman on a mission after all and she wouldn’t be the one begging tonight.

He would.

“You’re not lovely Felicity,” he whispered, kissing down her throat, his stubble rubbing against her tender skin eliciting a deep moan from her. “You are sexy as hell,” he told her, his hands leaving her cheeks, to untie the belt of her coat and undo all the buttons.

“What – what are you doing?” She stammered, her head falling back and hitting the wall with a small bang when he sucked on the skin of her throat, hard enough to leave a mark.
She gripped the short hair at the base of his skull and he pulled away from her.

“You okay?”

She nodded, not feeling even the slight twinge of pain.

He looked down as he pushed the lapels of her coat away, revealing what she was wearing underneath. He sucked in a sharp breath at the sight of her short black dress and his fingers immediately came to toy with the front zipper.

“Felicity Meghan Smoak,” he breathed out, looking up and a lump form in her throat when she noticed his pupils were blown. “Is this,” his fingers followed the line of the zipper across her body, making her shiver, “what you bought last night?”

She shook her head, biting her lower lip. He groaned at the sight of her. She curved her leg and placed it on his hip. His warm hand instantly grabbed her thigh, holding her to him. The hem of her dress rode up, stopping right under the curve of her ass and exposing the skin of her thighs that wasn’t covered by the stockings she was wearing.

“Those devilish shoes then?” He asked, his fingers trailing down her leg, through her calf to her ankle.

She shook her head again, enjoying the tortured look on his face when his eyes travelled back up and noticed her stockings. He groaned, his forehead falling to rest against hers.

“God, you’re killing me,” he let out.

She turned her head a little and found the shell of his ear with her lips. She breathed against his skin and his body trembled against hers. Her hands moved from his hair, following his spine, feeling how taut his muscles were because of his restraint.

“What I bought isn’t something you can see,” she whispered, her lips brushing against his skin with every word she spoke, “yet,” she added.

He sucked in a sharp breath, tightening his hold on her dress’ zipper. Until he suddenly let go, of the zipper, of her leg, of everything. He pulled away from away and stumbled back, putting some distance between them. His breathing was ragged but he was trying his hardest to get it back under his control. Felicity tilted her head in question. He raised up a finger to stop her from saying anything.

“Give me a second,” he said, taking a deep settling breath.

“What’s going on Oliver?” She said, taking a step toward him, deliberately adding a sway to her hips.

“Don’t!” He told her, plastering himself against the wall. She didn’t listen to him. She took another step toward him, a devious smile stretching her lips. “Don’t –” another step “please –” another step. She reached for his tie and tugged, bringing him down to her. She put her free hand on his chest, right above his heart. He gulped and shut his eyes closed.

“Gorgeous soulmate of mine will you please step away?” He asked her, his voice lacking confidence and resolution.

She shook her head, still smiling at him. She arched her back, pressing her body against his. He hissed trying to get a grip on his body’s reaction to hers, currently lying against her stomach. She
grabbed his hands and flattened them on the wall, around his head.

"Open your eyes Oliver," she demanded, surprised by her unwavering voice.

He let out a shaky breath.

"Please step away," he asked again.

"No," she teased, grinning, rubbing her nose against his.

His eyes fluttered open.

"Felicity – we have – our reservation –" he stammered as she started kissing down his jawline using her lips only.

"Screw our reservation," she told him, kissing his chin, gently scraping her teeth against his stubble. He shuddered and her heart bolted in her chest when she felt his unrestrained reaction. He dug his fingers in her hands, looking for an anchor and she tightened her hold on him in retaliation.

"Felicity, my surprise…"

She kissed down his throat and he let his head fall back against the wall, hissing when she sucked on his skin, the same way he had just a few minutes ago. She kissed her way back up his throat, grinding her hips against his in what she hoped was a very sensual way. It must have been because he let out a strangled moan.

"I just want you Oliver," she whispered in the shell of his ear. He was trembling, Oliver Queen was trembling against her. "Let’s go home," she suggested, darting her tongue out to taste his skin there, not bothered at all by the thin sheen of perspiration she found.

"Ho-home?"

She nodded and let go of his hands.

"Unless you don’t want to…" Her voice trailed down as she toyed with the zipper of her dress, teasing. Oliver used one of his hands to stop the movement of her hands and the other to start the elevator again.

"Home," he said, his eyes dark on her before he slanted his mouth over hers, his tongue knotting with hers.

He pulled away before she could really register that he had kissed her. She blinked. And jumped in surprise when she heard the sound of the elevator’s doors opening again. They rushed out and ran to his car, laughing like the two idiots in love they were. Oliver didn’t let go of her hand, even as he drove them back to his apartment.

Felicity spent the entire drive in a state of nervous anticipation. She had wanted to seduce him and she must have succeeded since he had accepted to throw their plan to the wind and roll with her instead. But still. She wanted to seduce him some more. He was obviously far more experienced than her when it came to sex and even if they hadn’t gone further than some extremely heavy make-out sessions and some very intense foreplays, it had always been him who had been in charge, who had seduced her and melted her completely.

Tonight she wanted things to be different.
She wanted to be in charge.

She wanted to seduce him.

She wanted him to melt under her touch and come undone because of her hand.

She wanted him and she’d get him.

Her resolve filled the silence between them with tension. The good kind of tension, the kind that rhymed with anticipation. The kind that made their pulse quicken and their breath come out a little harsher.

She stared at the road her whole body positively buzzing. Her mind brought her back a few moments ago, in the elevator when Oliver had been pressed tightly against her. She remembered the fire in his eyes, the eagerness of his lips as they kissed down her throat or the sound of his voice.

“You’re not lovely Felicity, you’re sexy as hell.”

She clenched her thighs together, warmth pooling low in her belly.

He tightened his hold on her hand where they were currently resting on the driving stick.

Soon enough they reached his apartment’s building. He parked the car, turned the ignition off. They got out of the car, still without saying a work and Felicity felt the tension between them reach its peak. They walked inside his building, inside the elevator (and her legs wobbled just remembering what had happened not so long ago, in another elevator).

Their eyes met from where they were standing, either of them plastered against a wall. His piercing blue eyes, a dark cobalt captured hers and she could see everything she was feeling, everything she wanted, needed reflected in them. He wanted her as much as she wanted him and it made her head spin a little but still she kept her eyes locked on his.

She couldn’t look away. Never from him.

He let her inside his apartment and she dropped her clutch and her overnight bag in a corner. She turned around then to see Oliver watching her intently. He took off his pea coat and she took off her trench-coat, letting the soft fabric slowly slid down her shoulders before it fell at her feet on the floor.

Oliver’s eyes darkened as he looked at her appreciatively from the distance, finally able to measure just how short her dress was or how high her heels truly were. He licked his lips and she choked on her next breath feeling her soulmark burn where it stood on her skin. She didn’t need to see it to know it must have grown, most likely covering up most of her hipbone now.

“We were right to come back here,” he finally said, kicking off his shoes.

She tilted her head in question.

“I don’t want anyone else to see you looking like this.”

She felt herself blush and he smirked. He took a step toward her, she did too and soon enough they were within arm’s reach. He yanked her against him, gathering her in his arms. She wrapped her arms around his neck, pulling him down toward her. His lips crashed against hers. She moaned, pushing on her toes to get closer to him, and it was stupid because she was wearing high-heels that erased most of the distance between them but still there was some left and she couldn’t stand it. She wanted to erase it all, be as close to him as possible. It seemed that he wanted the same thing because
he hiked her in his arms, spinning them around until he could sit her down on the back of his couch. She put her legs around his hips squeezing and he pulled her hair back, deepening the kiss. He was kissing her with a passion, with desperation almost and she was replying in kind, her fingers scratching the back of his head. He was pure intensity and sheer strength, devouring her mouth and pressing his body into hers so much she would have fallen back on the couch, had she not locked her ankles behind his back and had he not tightened the grip of his hand on her waist.

They pulled away though, their breathing ragged.

“Bedroom,” she panted.

He nodded through hooded eyes and banded his arm around her waist, lifting her up easily, his other hand falling under her thigh, not for support but for stability. She should have been used by it now, she knew Oliver was strong, and yet she was still impressed by his incredible display of strength. She secretly wished that she’d never cease to be impressed by him, by how amazing he was. She sealed her wish with a kiss, her tongue delving in his mouth hungrily.

They reached his bedroom in record time and he dropped her on the mattress, making her yelp. He chuckled and she meant to kick him with her foot but he caught her ankle before she could. His fingers softly caressed her skin through the thin fabric of her stockings, following the path of her shoe’s straps and she felt goose bumps break all over her skin. He stared at her foot in his hand, at her toes that she had painted a dark red colour, at her shoe, at the shape of her leg with the shoe on and she could see hesitance form in his heart.

“Take them off,” she whispered, knowing that, if things went her way (and they would) she’d feel more comfortable with them off.

“But,” he started to protest.

“I’ll put them back on later,” she hurriedly cut him off. “Now take them off, both of them,” she added, moving so that she’d be sitting on the edge of the bed, right in front of him.

He kneeled on the floor and deftly undid the straps of her shoes before taking them off. She watched him as he carefully set her shoe aside and held her feet in his hands, tenderly rubbing the sole of them. Her eyes drifted close and she allowed herself a second to savour the sensation. When she opened her eyes again, he was staring at her intently and she smiled at him, her hands coming up to push his suit jacket off his shoulders. He let go of her feet to take it off completely and he threw it aside, not caring at all where it fell. His hands immediately came back to her legs and his fingers lightly followed the line of her calf, up and down, up and down. He looked up, a question in his eyes.

“You can take these off too,” she said, catching the soft fabric of her stockings between two fingers.

He swallowed, hard. “Are those part of your surprise?”

She smiled and his eyes darkened even more, she didn’t even know it was possible.

“Then I think I’ll take that dress off first.”

“Correct answer,” she replied yanking on his tie to pull him to her. He went willingly and soon enough, they were both lying on his bed, her on her back and him on top of her, kissing as if they hadn’t kissed in years.

His hands dropped to her hips and kneaded her lush thighs, hard enough to leave the imprints of his fingers and she whined against his mouth as he scratched his fingers against her sensitive skin. Even
through the fabric of her stockings she could feel his hands as if they were touching her bare skin directly and it made a rush of warmth pooled between her thighs. He kissed her harder and she kissed him back, fighting him to take control of the kiss. Her hands undid the knot of his tie and she rid him of it before she started unbuttoning his shirt. He indulged her, his hands finding their way under her dress and finding that patch of skin her stockings didn’t cover. His fingers were about to move higher, move she was already soaking wet for him, when she forced his hands away so that she could take his shirt off him. He knelt back, taking it off himself and throwing it away before grabbing the hem of the tee he had been wearing underneath and yanking it over his head. She watched him with fascination, enjoying the play of his muscles as he undressed for her. She felt her heart skip a beat in her chest at the sight of his soulmark covering his heart. She reached out, brushing her fingers over it. His eyes fluttered close as she felt his pleasure course through her veins, fuelling her own. He caught her wrist and gently pushed her hand away. She let him, for now.

His strong thighs were bracketing her own. His eager fingers returned to her, aiming for the zipper of her dress and she bit on her lower lip, holding back a smile. He wanted his surprise and she knew he’d be surprised alright the moment he’d start tugging on the zipper. He started lowering the zipper of her dress and she watched his smile falter and confusion fill his eyes as he revealed more and more dark fabric instead of white creamy skin.

“Felicity…” He started and she laughed at the discomfited look on his face. He frowned and she felt annoyance bubble up in his chest. That only made her laugh harder.

“Fe-li-ci-ty,” he said sounding very much like a petulant child, poking her sides.

“Oh Oliver,” she said, cupping his cheek, tears in her eyes.

“This is not funny,” he pointed out, crossing his arms over his chest. He looked about to pout.

No scratch that. He was *pouting*.

She grinned.

“Oliver,” she said, trying to calm herself down and get back in the seduction game – which was harder than it seemed, especially when he was looking at her like a five-year-old who had been denied ice-cream. “The real zipper is in the back,” she told him and she waited and waited until her words hit him and his pout turned into a devilish grin.

“Oh is that so?” He said.

And she nodded, grinning.

Felicity may have been less experienced than him when it came to sex but it didn’t mean she didn’t know him or how to bring him to his knees. She had noticed his fondness for her backside, she had felt how his eyes lingered on her ass whenever she was wearing a particularly tight dress or how his hand would always fall low on her back, always at the limit of what was appropriate in public. Oliver Queen, whether he knew it or not, was an ass man. At least, he was when it came to her and that was why she had picked that particular dress for their date.

“Felicity Smoak,” Oliver said, his hands trailing down her sides. “You are a devil.”

“You love it,” she shot back. He didn’t reply, just leant down to capture her lips for a slow, languid kiss that ended with him sucking on her lower lip, hard enough to make her moan.
“Oliver,” she gasped.

“Turn around,” he whispered in the shell of her ear.

She rolled on her stomach, shivering in anticipation. He resumed his sitting position on her thighs, careful not to put too much of his weight on her. He took his sweet time reaching the zipper at the base of her neck, teasing the skin of her arms, caressing the slope of her neck. He ignored the fire that was burning in his veins, the urgency that made her whole body thrum in impatience and just allowed himself a moment, to explore her, to savour her. Slowly, he lowered the zipper of her dress and he let out a small relieved breath when it didn’t reveal dark fabric but inches and inches of dark creamy skin. That made her laugh and he shushed her by scratching his nails down the line of her spine, turning her laughter into a purr. Streaks of pleasure shot through her at the slow and sensual touch and he chuckled. He softly caressed the lace of her bra when he encountered it and she knew he wondered how the dark red piece of lace looked like on her. He resumed his journey down her spine, and the zipper ended right above the curve of her ass. He parted the fabric of her dress and sprawled his hands over her back, massaging her flesh softly and she moaned at the sensation of his warm hand on her skin.

“God you have the most perfect back,” he breathed out.

“Just the back?” She teased when his hand landed on her ass, kneading one globe eagerly.

“Not just the back,” he granted her, teasing back.

She pushed on her arms and raised herself up. He caught her waist guiding her so that her naked back would press against his naked chest. The both of them shivered at the skin-to-skin contact. He kissed down her throat and her arm shot up, pressing his head more firmly against her. She could feel his arousal against her back and she, very experimentally, rubbed herself against him making him moan against her skin. She did it again.

“Felicity,” he breathed out, his voice rough and laden with lust. His hands slid up her back to her shoulders and tugged to free her of the confinement of her dress. The soft fabric slowly trailed down her arms and when her arms were free she used them to push the dress down completely. In a second Oliver had her on her back again and was finishing to take the dress off her.

She lied there in his bed, her golden locks spread on his pillow, only wearing a dark red lacy bra, the matching thong she had bought the previous day and black stockings.

And Oliver obviously loved the sight of her because he clenched his fists and breathed in through his nose, as if he was trying to get himself under control.

“Felicity,” her name fell from his lips and just like always he had embedded a whole conversation in it.

“You’re so beautiful,” it said.

“I want you,” it promised.

His hands slid down her ribcage, treating the marred flesh on her left side as if it was another patch of smooth creamy skin, and landed on her soulmark. He brushed it with his fingers, much like she had earlier and electricity shot through. She arched into his touch, a gasp that sounded like his name falling from her lips. The next thing she knew, he was peeling her stockings off her legs, slowly, as if he had all the time in the world. And she guessed he had. He was slow, almost methodical, caressing her skin as he went down, setting every never endings he awoke with his calloused knuckles on fire.
She writhed against him, desperate for more, for a firmer touch but he didn’t indulge her. He went with his slow torturing, light touches. Caught in a midst of sensations, she found herself grateful that it was mid-February and that the weather was still cold enough to allow her to wear stockings.

When he was done, she pulled him to her by his belt and he landed in the cradle of her thighs, the hard bulge in his pants pressing firmly against her belly. His mouth slanted over hers and for a while it was all there was, two mouths kissing, two sets of hands touching, exploring. They pulled away, out of breath and Oliver started kissing down her throat, he really enjoyed doing that, and she moaned when he sucked on her skin again, probably leaving another mark.

“O-Oliver,” she stammered, running her fingers through his hair.

“Hm?” He hummed against her skin.

“I want to – I want to be on top,” she told him and he stilled against herself. He looked up and said nothing. She stilled too, fearing that he would deny her.

“Oliver,” she called. “Put me on top,” she demanded, her tone unwavering.

A lazy smile stretched his lips as if he understood what it truly was that she was telling him and he quickly rolled them over. She ended on top of him, straddling his waist. She quickly took her jewels off and when she reached behind her neck to take her necklace off too he stopped her.

“No, leave it on,” he told her.

She smiled at him and let the heart pendant dangle between her breasts.

Then she leaned down and pressed her lips against his soulmark.

Their mark.

He hissed and the sparks of pleasure that shot through him had something inside her clench desperately. A surge of desire rose inside her at the thought of touching him. She wanted to touch every inch of his skin, she wanted all of him and she could see in his eyes that he wanted her to have all of him. A strangled moan escaped her when the realization dawned upon her. She took her time exploring his chest, mapping every line and every ridge with both her mouth and his hands. She kissed and caressed, hoping that her touch conveyed how much she loved him, how much she loved his body. She was gentle and loving at first and when she felt him writhed beneath her, she gave him more. Her hands became firmer on him, she added her tongue to the mix, licking a path down his abs. He tensed up, a moan falling from his lips as his hands fist the comforter. His skin was scorching under her eager fingers and she realized that, for some stupid reasons, he was still half-clothed. Her hands fumbled with his belt and then his zipper. His came to help her and together they quickly rid him of his pants until he was left only in his underwear, just like her. She palmed him through the fabric of his boxers and his eyes rolled in their sockets.

“Felicity,” he panted when she hooked her fingers in the hem of his boxers.

“Oliver,” she panted back, her heart beating wildly in her chest.

When he didn’t say anything, she pushed his boxers down, letting his thick erection pop free. She wrapped her fingers around him and his hands shot up, catching her waist and gripping onto her, hard. Tentatively, almost hesitantly, she moved up and down, gauging his reaction. He thrust into her hand and she splayed her hand across his abs to keep him in place, making him groan.

“Tell me Oliver,” she whispered. “Tell me what you like.”
His eyes were on her, the blue she loved so much completely gone, and his mouth was half-open.

“Harder,” he breathed out and she nodded, frowning in concentration. She tightened her grip on him and resumed the movement of her hand, up and down, but harder. He swayed in time with her and she watched with fascination the rhythm of his hips, wondering how it’d feel when they would be driving, not in her hand, but in her. The thought had more warmth flood her thong. She felt him grow bigger in her hand and so she moved a bit faster, squeezing him at the base.

“Fuck,” he choked out, tightening his grip on her waist, so much that it was almost painful. Almost.

She swiped her thumb over the head, spreading the precum that had leaked there and he groaned.

“Fuck, Felicity – I need to – I need…” He panted frantically.

“What do you need?” She asked, never stopping the movement of her hand.

He didn’t reply, instead deciding to show her. He let go of her waist and cupped her cheeks. He sat down and kissed her viciously. She moaned, opening her mouth for him and he took advantage of it, delving his tongue inside. He kissed her so deeply, for a second she entirely forgot about what it was she was doing until she felt his cock twitch where it was pressed between them. She gripped it again then, resuming her pace. He tore his mouth away from hers, resting his forehead against hers. She breathed the same air as him, drawing frantic moans from him. She kissed along the line of his jaw, her hand still moving, her rhythm never faltering and when she bit on his pulse his hips thrust into her warm grip. She licked the salt of his skin and kissed his chest, his heart jumping where it was trapped in his ribcage when she kissed his soulmark once again. Streaks of pleasure shot though him and she felt them resonate inside her and she squirmed against his strong thighs, trying to alleviate the ache she was starting to feel in her core.

She kissed her way back up, her lips finding his again while his hands moved and grazed over her erect nipples through the fabric of her bra. The touch was light but it had her roll her eyes.

“Felicity,” he moaned against her mouth. “I need – I need…” She swallowed the rest of his words, kissing him hungrily.

“What do you need Oliver?” She asked, peppering kisses all over his face.

“More – I – Fuck,” he groaned when she flickered her thumb over the head of his shaft again. “I need more – please Felicity.”

She let out a gasp at his request, at the desperation she could hear in his voice and she took her entire fist up and over the end of his cock. She squeezed him tightly, harder just like he had told her. He swelled against her so she did it again. And again. But still she could feel it wasn’t enough.

“Oliver,” she breathed. “Oliver help me – show me.”

His eyes flew to hers, his lower lip trembling. She nodded and then one of his hands joined her, making her move her fist faster over him. He made her squeeze him tighter and tighter and the faster their joined hands moved over him, the faster his hips moved against them. His jaw fell in a silent cry of pleasure as his face fell against her shoulder, his stubble rubbing against her sensitive skin in the most delicious way.

She slid her free hand between them, grazing his erect nipples and he kneaded the flesh of one of her breasts in retaliation. She arched into his touch, gasping. Their hands didn’t stop moving, they kept on and on and on. Her name was a muffled litany on his lips.
“Felicity, Felicity, Felicity…” He kept saying.

Their hands moved over him, once more, twice, three, four times and then…

“Felicity!” He shouted, coming all over their joined hands. She closed her eyes, feeling his orgasm through their connection, not caring about the warm liquid that landed on her hand, her belly, her thighs, only caring about him, about his pleasure… The tension in his muscles relaxed immediately and they tumbled in bed, her on her back and him crushing her under his weight. She wrapped her arms around his neck, holding him to her. He was shaking against her and she held on until she felt him settle down after a while.

He didn’t look up from where his face was buried against her neck but she knew he had come back from the heights he had reached moments ago. He moved his head a little kissing her throat just like he loved to do. She moaned when he bit her pulse and arched her body into his. Slowly, very slowly, he kissed his way down her body, not caring that he had come all over her and that there were traces of it everywhere on the skin of her belly. His hands hooked into her thong and she stiffened in spite of herself.

He felt it and looked up to catch her eyes. She felt her cheeks redden and she watched as he watched her blush spread from her cheeks down to her chest. He licked his lips, obviously pleased with what he was seeing.

“What’s wrong?” He asked her.

She bit on her lower lip. “How – how far do you want to take this?”

He grinned. “Far enough for you to scream my name.”

She gave him a look.

“Not too far,” he promised her, squeezing her hip.

“Are you sure?” She asked, feeling worry fill her heart.

His eyes softened on her.

“No, but you are and you are the one setting the pace of this,” he gestured between them and she felt her whole body relax. It may not be super obvious because Oliver was very often the one taking things in charge but she was the one in control there.

He slid her panties down her legs and she shivered in anticipation, goose bumps breaking all over skin. Without preamble, his tongue licked a long hard trail across her wet folds to her clit making her yelp in a very embarrassing way, not that she really cared because he had his tongue on her and she was already extremely sensitive because of his orgasm, that she had felt echo inside her. She knew he’d have her screaming his name in record time. His lips closed over her clit and he sucked on it, making her body shoot from the bed. He nailed her back on the mattress with one hand and lapped at her juices making her whimper.

“Oh god – fuck,” she shouted when he licked another trail across her folds.

He was nothing like he had been the last time he had gone down on her. He wasn’t delicate of reverent. He wasn’t slow and exploratory. No he was relentless and rough and voracious as he consumed her completely. His lips closed over her clit, sucking hard on it while he teased her with hard flicks of his tongue. He built her up quickly, an incoherent stream of words falling from her lips.
“Oh god, oh god please don’t stop, Oliver, please, don’t stop, fuck –” He flattened his tongue against her clît, licking it in long and hard strokes that made her toes curl. She gripped his hair, hard enough to make him groan, and she didn’t know if she wanted to push him away or closer. He went with closer and buried his head further against her and she whimpered at the feel of his stubble pressed against her sensitive skin.

“Fuck Oliver – you – god please,” she cried out, feeling her pleasure peak.

He sucked on her clît again, harder than before humming against her folds. She felt the fire in her veins burn brighter and her body tensed. So he did it again and again until she finally came with a shouted of his name. Light exploded behind her eyelids as waves and waves of pleasure crash through her. He helped her ride them, licking her lazily until it was too much at once and she pushed him away.

“Oliver,” she whispered, opening her arms, blindly reaching for him. She felt him move next to her and without really knowing why, she soon found herself curled up against him, beneath the sheets.

“Hm feels good,” she mumbled, pressing herself further into his warmth.

“Shh,” he whispered in the shell of her ear.

Before she knew it, she had fallen asleep in his arms.

She woke up some time later to the feeling of his fingers drawing meaningless patterns on her belly. She smiled, keeping her eyes closed, wanting to savour this moment of peace and quiet.

“I know you’re awake,” he whispered against the shell of her ear and she was about to tell him no when her stomach rumbled, loudly, startling them both. “Hungry much?”

“Well I didn’t have any dinner,” she pointed out.

“I did,” he whispered in her ear and she didn’t need to see his face to picture his wicked grin.

Her stomach rumbled again, louder.

“Okay,” he laughed, sitting down and putting his boxers back on. “I better find something to feed you. Pizza sound okay?” He asked her over his shoulder.

She rolled on her back and watched him as he got up and headed for the door.

“It sounds perfect to me. I want the one with the chicken and the pineapples,” she told him.

He made a face. “That’s not a pizza, that’s heresy.”

She rolled her eyes at him. “I don’t think this relationship of ours is going to work out,” she told him, making him chuckle.

“Oh is that so?”

“Yep, irreconcilable differences.”

He walked back to her and crawled up the bed.

“Bet I can change your mind,” he told her, teasing and there was such a bright light in his eyes, a happy light, it made her heart swoon in her chest.
She tried not to show it, even if she knew he could feel her emotions. She arched a questioning eyebrow. He leaned down and kissed her lips softly. She kissed him back just as softly and slowly, taking her time. When they pulled back, he brushed their foreheads together, rubbing his nose against hers in a sweet Eskimo kiss.

“I still want my pineapples on my pizza,” she told him, making him chuckle.

“Alright then, pineapples you shall have.”

She beamed at him. He kissed her forehead and walked outside the bedroom. She sat down and stretched herself, the sheet covering her naked body falling in her lap. She got chills when the cold air of the room touched her skin and she blindly reached for Oliver’s shirt, putting it on without thinking. She let his familiar scent engulf her completely and she buried her nose in the collar, sighing softly. She felt content, happy, she felt good. All because of him.

She padded to the bathroom and used a wet washcloth to quickly clean herself up. When she walked back inside the bedroom, she saw that Oliver had taken the comforter off the bed and put a thick fluffy blanket instead. He opened his arms for her and she didn’t hesitate for a second before sliding in his embrace. He kissed the top of her head and she sighed.

“Pizzas should be here in forty,” he told her.

“Perfect,” she replied, closing her eyes again, her head resting against his torso. “Tell me Oliver,” she said after a moment of silence.

“About what?” He asked, his fingers as always unable to stay still and caressing her shoulder through the fabric of his shirt.

“About our plans for Valentine’s Day.”

“You mean the plans you so rudely sent to hell?”

She snorted. “I don’t remember you complaining.”

“Touché.” He heaved a sigh, but it wasn’t one of annoyance, it was one of contentment. A happy little sigh. “Well, I wanted to take you out of Star City, to a small coastal town I know. Tommy and I used to go there when we wanted to get away from everything. It was a place where we could just be you know? There was no parents there, no expectations. No media too.”

Felicity frowned. “Oh. Is that the same town where you’re going for his Bachelor Party?”

He shook his head. “No, that one is too far. We used to sail there, remember?”

“Privileged life much?” She teased him and he poked her side in retaliation.

“Be nice,” he warned her.

“What would we have done in that town you used to visit with Tommy to just be?”

“Well, we would have enjoyed our first outdoor date in a small restaurant by the ocean and then maybe, we would have taken a walk down the beach. There would have been no media there, and no one to recognize us. Or if anyone did recognize us, they wouldn’t have said anything. It would have been just us.”

Felicity pushed up on her arms and looked up to meet his eyes.
“I wanted to give you that,” he said, brushing back a few strands of her hair. “A moment where we could just be. But I guess your way works too,” he added, gesturing between the two of them.

“I’d like to take a raincheck on that date. If that’s alright with you.”

He hummed in approval.

“Maybe we could do that the day before your birthday?” He suggested. “Dinner then we come back here to sleep and you get to start your birthday in my arms.”

“That would be the best present ever,” she told him, her heart skipping a beat in her chest at the prospect.

“Oh really? Then I can forget about all my other ideas for your present?” He leaned down and pressed his lips against the column of her throat, kissing her softly.

“Oliver,” she laughed when he rubbed his cheek against her skin. He pulled away from her, his blue eyes locking on hers. “I really mean it you know,” she said, her tone suddenly extremely serious because she really wanted him to understand where she was at.

“What?”

“What I said, I really meant it.” She paused for a second, her hand cupping his cheek, her heart revelling when he leaned into her touch immediately. “It took me a while but I know now with absolute certainty that you are the best present life has ever given me. And after everything we’ve been through, I know that just being with you on my birthday, or any day really, is enough to make me happy.”

She felt how her words pulled at his heart and she saw the moisture in his eyes he was quick to blink away. He mouthed the words “thank you” to her and she leaned down to catch them with her lips. Their kiss was soft, filled with that almost tangible love that was blossoming inside their hearts.

Later, Oliver got out of bed to go get their pizza and Felicity stayed alone in his bedroom. Her eyes fell on their clothes, carelessly scattered on the floor and a blush crept on her cheeks when she thought back to how exactly they had ended up there. She saw her heels and a grin stretched her lips when she thought back to what she had promised Oliver. Without thinking, she got out of bed and put her shoes back on. She heard Oliver call her name and her grin still very much in place, she walked out of his bedroom to meet him in the kitchen.

He was placing their pizzas on his kitchen island when he heard the sound of her heels on the tiled floor. He turned his head toward her and his jaw dropped when he saw her wearing nothing but his shirt and her heels.

“F – Felicity?” He stammered, his eyes wide open.

“Floor is cold,” she said nonchalantly, gesturing down toward her shoes. She inhaled deeply. “God, the pizzas smell so good,” she said, making her way to the kitchen island. Oliver caught her by the waist before she made it there and pulled her against him. She yelped before placing her hands on his shoulders to steady herself.

“Don’t act like you don’t know what you’re doing,” he whispered, nuzzling her ear.

“And what am I doing exactly?” She asked, tightening her hold on him.

“You know exactly what you’re doing!” He growled in her ear.
She squealed in delight as he spun her around and kissed her soundly on the lips.

Dinner it seemed would have to wait a little longer.

The following Saturday, Felicity found herself making her way to Sara’s coffee shop, to get a cup of coffee and maybe catch her friend. They hadn’t seen each other in a while, because of the craziness that had been Felicity’s life lately and she really wanted to change that. She really missed her friends, all of them. It felt like ages since she had last gone shopping with Thea or babysat JJ. It felt like ages since she had had normal and she wanted normal, especially after the week she had just lived.

She was reaching to pull the door open when she heard a familiar voice call her name. She looked up and saw Tommy walk toward her. She waved at him, happy to see him.

“Tommy hey!” She greeted him.

“Felicity,” he said, opening his arms. She didn’t hesitate and let him engulf her in a tight hug.

“It’s so good to see you!”

“It’s so good to see you too,” he approved.

They walked inside the coffee shop together.

“What brings you here today?” She asked him.

“My pregnant fiancée,” he told her, chuckling. “The baby is apparently craving chocolate cake.”

“You don’t sound particularly convinced,” Felicity pointed out.

He smiled. “I’m not. I think she wants the cake because the case she’s currently working on is frustrating as hell and she could use the comfort. For some reasons she thinks she has to put this on the baby… As if I’d ever judge her.”

“You might not, but maybe she’s trying to ease her conscience. She still has a wedding dress to put on, remember?”

Tommy stared at her for a whole second before saying.

“You know what, maybe you’re right.”

She smiled. “Of course I am.”

He smiled back at her before frowning. “Where’s your other half? It’s not easy to catch one without the other lately.”

Felicity heaved a sigh.

“Uh, uh,” Tommy said, sounding more alarmed. “Trouble in paradise?”

She shrugged. “You could say so.”

The truth was Felicity was a bit lost. She had thought after Valentine’s Day, after how close she and
Oliver had been that night, that it was time for them to maybe consider taking their relationship to the next level. But the moment they had reached Q. Inc the next day, he had withdrawn in his office and had acted just like he had on Monday when she had met him in his office. Distant, passive aggressive, angry. And everything had gone back to normal once they had left work. It felt like she was with two different persons and she didn’t know how to get through to him at work because it seemed that his anger was somehow aimed at her. And she didn’t understand why because she had done nothing but being supportive and helpful.

“Wanna talk about it?” Tommy asked, nudging her. “I have some time for a cup of coffee with my favourite bespectacled blonde.”

“I – I don’t know, won’t it be weird?”

He arched a surprised eyebrow. “For us to have coffee?”

She shook her head. “No. To talk about me and Oliver. I don’t want to put you in an uncomfortable situation. He’s your best friend.”

“And you’re my friend too,” he told her. “You can talk to me about anything, at anytime.”

“Are you sure?” She asked nibbling on her lower lip worriedly.

“Of course,” he assured, smiling at her warmly. “So coffee?”

“Coffee,” she nodded.

Turned out Sara had taken her weekend off, meaning neither she nor Tommy saw her. They sat down at a small table in the back of the coffee shop where Felicity proceeded to tell him what was going on with her and Oliver. He listened to her carefully and he remained silent for a long time after she was done.

Eventually, he heaved out a sigh.

“Boy, you two are a piece of work.”

She gave him a look.

“Felicity I think… This thing with you and Palmer, it’s messing with his head.”

She blinked.

Then laughed.

“You can’t possibly be serious,” she said, holding her ribs.

“I am.”

“But – but there’s no me and Palmer. He’s just a work partner! An engaged and soon-to-be father work partner. Oliver has nothing to be jealous of. If anything Ray should be jealous, have you seen Oliver’s abs?”

Tommy’s eyes widened. “Sadly yes. Not a day goes by without me regretting not having the same.”

Felicity chuckled. “See! Oliver really has nothing to be jealous of.”

“I know but… Try to put yourself in his shoes for a second. What would you do if Oliver got to
spend a lot of time with a young and attractive woman he had always admired?”

“I understand where you’re going with this Tommy but…”

“But nothing, Felicity… Jealousy is not a rational emotion. Yes, Palmer is engaged to his pregnant soulmate but Oliver… His insecurities ran deep, I warned you it would be difficult.”

Felicity leant back in her chair, feeling defeated.

“You think I caused this? By taking the Med for too long?”

He ran a hand through his hair. “I honestly don’t know. Maybe. Or…”

“Or?”

Tommy scratched the back of his head.

“I – I remember when Laurel and I stopped taking the Med… You know we take our time before bonding. We let our connection grow and in spite of having been friends for years, we learnt each other all over again. And when the time was right, we finally bonded.”

“That’s wonderful but how is that helping me?”

“The more we grew closer, the more I felt… Protective of Laurel.”

Felicity frowned. “You mean the more you were jealous?”

He shrugged. “Same thing. Things went back to normal after we bonded.”

“You make it sound like bonding equals marking your territory.”

“Well nothing screams more “you’re mine for eternity” than a bonding session.”

Felicity shook her head. “I don’t understand… I’m not jealous.”

Tommy huffed back a laugh. “Last week during lunch, every time that cute waitress was near our vicinity, your hands were all over Oliver.”

Felicity felt her cheeks burn with mortification. “They were not,” she started to protest.

“Yes, they were.”

Felicity remembered the “cute waitress” perfectly. She had been the clingiest waitress ever, always finding a reason to come back to their table and always shooting an extra smile in Oliver’s direction right in front of her.

“Okay, maybe they were,” she admitted, horror dawning upon her as she realized that she had reacted to that girl’s behaviour with the attitude of a territorial girlfriend. She was not a territorial girlfriend. She was not. Except she had totally been, right in front of her friend no less, who had noticed everything.

Felicity’s shoulders slumped. “So you’re telling me we should just bond?”

Tommy let out a shaky laugh. “I’m not telling you anything! I’m guessing you and Ollie have your reasons for waiting and I don’t want to rush you into doing something you’re not ready for.”
“But?” Felicity asked, having sensed it coming.

“You know me too well,” Tommy said, smiling. “But maybe you guys are feeling the way you do because there aren’t that many reasons for you to wait after all.”

“Maybe,” Felicity said thoughtfully. “I honestly don’t know. I know it doesn’t seem like it but it’s barely been more than a month and a half since we jumped on a plane heading to Russia to stop him from marrying Isabel.”

Tommy’s eyes widened. “No?”

She nodded. “Yes.”

“It really doesn’t seem like it.”

“I know it doesn’t. If you had told me that day that today, Oliver and I would be in such a good place I wouldn’t have believed it. But still it hasn’t been that long, we’re just starting to figure out that relationship thingy…”

“Let me stop you right here,” Tommy cut her off. “You and Ollie were a thing before you were an actual thing. You guys are figuring out the “relationship thingy” so quickly because you’ve been rehearsing for months!”

“Tommy…”

“What? I wasn’t being a weirdo when I said I wanted you to be together. I was just… Seeing things the way they were. And you were both completely oblivious to it but I guess it was easier to see from my place. Hey don’t you think that would make a good intro for my best man’s speech at your wedding?”

Felicity snorted.

“Tommy Merlyn, the first and fiercest Olicity shipper,” she raised her cup of coffee and he clinked his with hers.

“That would make a good twitter bio,” he said and she laughed some more. “Tommy Merlyn, billionaire, former professional partier, now first and fiercest Olicity shipper.”

Her laughter suddenly stopped. Former professional partier. She suddenly remembered Tommy and Oliver would be away for the weekend, having fun between “guys”.

“What’s wrong?”

She groaned.

“Felicity?”

“God, I just realized I’m a jealous girlfriend and I’m this close to grabbing my phone and call Oliver to have him cancel your little weekend of fun.”

Tommy laughed at that. He stopped when he noticed that she looked deadly serious.

“Come on Felicity, what were you saying earlier about Oliver? Oh right, “he has nothing to be jealous of”. Same thing applies here.”

“What were you saying earlier? Oh right “jealousy is not a rational emotion”. Same thing applies
He gave her a look.

“Fine I won’t cancel. But will you please put your hands all over him for me?”

“As amazing as his abs are, I think I’ll keep watching them from a distance.”

His phone rung.

“Oh Laurel must be wondering where I am,” he said, taking his phone out of his pocket. “Bingo,” he showed her his phone’s screen and she saw Laurel’s smiling face.

He took the call, reassured his soulmate that he wouldn’t be long and hung up.

“I’m so sorry Felicity but I have to go.”

“It’s okay. I should be going home too.”

They walked out of the coffee shop and hugged before parting ways.

“Thanks for the coffee and the talk.”

“You’re very welcome,” he told her. “I just… I just want you to know that I wasn’t advising you to do something you’re not ready for, okay?”

She nodded. “I know, thank you for that.”

“Do you think we could do lunch on Friday? I know you and Ollie are super busy at Q. Inc but I want to wish you a happy birthday in person. I’ll buy of course!”

“Well if it’s you buying then I’m sure something can be arranged.”

“Perfect. I’ll see if Laurel can join us. You don’t mind right?”

She shook her head. “Not at all. The more, the merrier.”

“Perfect then. See you on Friday! And call me if you need any more advise, I heard mine are excellent.”

She laughed. “They definitely are.”

They hugged again before parting ways, for good.

“Honey, do you want me to help you?”

Felicity froze where she was getting ready for a pre-birthday dinner date with Oliver, in front of her bathroom’s mirror, her curling iron in hand. She turned her head and saw her mother standing in the doorway, wearing the brightest pink sweatpants she had ever seen. Donna had arrived at the beginning of the week and had quite easily found her place. She had taken an instant liking to Roy, and to Felicity’s greatest pleasure, he seemed to have taken an instant liking to her mother as well. But then again, it was easy to like her mother when she was being her bright and joyous self. Just
like she had promised during Felicity and Oliver’s visit, Donna had decided not to let the loss of her soulmate consume her. She was trying her best to go on with her life. Still, Felicity was no fool. She could see the pain hidden behind the apparent happiness in her eyes and every time she noticed it, she’d reach out and take her mother’s hand, reminding her that she was there for her, for whatever she might need.

“Roy should be leaving in an hour or so,” Donna added. “He and Thea are going to the movies tonight.”

“Yeah I remember! He told us last night during dinner.”

Donna nodded. “He’s a good kid. Oliver’s sister is lucky to have him.”

Felicity smiled. “You might want to tell him that. He has a hard time believing it but maybe, if we all tell him, it’ll help.”

Donna chuckled, shaking her head. “It won’t work. It’s something he needs to realize on his own, trust me.”

“Oh alright…”

“So… Do you want my help?”

“Sure, why not!” Felicity handed her the curling iron. Donna took it and soon enough, she was working on Felicity’s blonde locks.

“What’s with the smile?” She asked her mother, meeting her eyes in the mirror.

Donna shrugged. “Nothing.”

“Come on mom! I haven’t seen you with that kind of excited smile in a while. What’s going on?”

“I’m just happy honey,” she said delicately curling her daughter’s hair. “I’m happy to be here with you, I’m happy that I get to live that kind of special moments with you.”

“Special?” Felicity arched an eyebrow.

“Yeah! My baby girl is going out on a date with her soulmate and I’m here to help her get ready, it’s something I always wanted to do.”

She rested her chin on top of Felicity’s head and they both smiled at each other in the mirror.

“Now, am I sad that we’re breaking our tradition and I won’t be here to make you waffles for breakfast? Sure, maybe a little.” She paused for a second. ‘I’m not trying to guilt trip you baby, I know this is on me, I just have to get used to sharing you with Oliver.”

“Mom you were the one who created my SID’s account,” Felicity pointed out.

“Yeah I know, but just because I wanted you to find your soulmate, doesn’t mean I was ready to let you go.”

“Oh mom,” Felicity said, reaching out to take her hand. “You know I’ll never truly go, right? I’ll always be here for you.”

“That’s what I, your mother, am supposed to say.”
“Then say it.”

“I’ll always be here for you baby,” Donna whispered, kissing her daughter’s hands before releasing it and going back to curling her hair. “Now I can’t really blame you for preferring sweet birthday sex in the morning to breakfast with your mother!”

Felicity’s eyes widened and she choked on her next breath, and coughed loudly.

“Mom!”

“Oh Felicity please, don’t give me that look! I’m your mother, we can talk about these things.”

Felicity made a face. “No! That’s gross!”

Donna frowned. “Oh my god! You guys haven’t done it yet.”

“That’s none of your business,” Felicity was quick to say, feeling a blush crept up her cheeks.

“What are you waiting for? Have you seen him? He’s so… Well, you know, handsome! And he cooks. Trust me, there aren’t that many guys that hot who cook.”

“So these are the two requirements to have sex with someone?”

“No but if that someone is, on top of all that, your soulmate then go for it,” Donna teased her. “What’s wrong honey?” She asked, frowning in concern when her daughter didn’t even smile. “Did something happen with Oliver?”

“No, no, everything’s fine,” Felicity said, ignoring the gnawing feeling that was stirring her insides.

“Then what is it? You’re not having doubts are you?”

“No, no,” Felicity shook her head vehemently. “God no! Oliver, he’s… He’s my everything.”

Donna put the curling iron down on the sink and cupped Felicity’s shoulders. “And you’re his. He loves you so much. Nobody has ever looked at me the way he looks at you, not even your father.”

Felicity nodded. “I know.”

“Then what’s holding you back?” Donna asked, tilting her body so that she could look in Felicity’s eyes.

Felicity sighed. “It always comes down to the same thing,” she said. “I’m- I’m afraid of bonding. To lose myself in our relationship and to just exist for him.”

“Oh baby you’ve got it all so wrong… You won’t just exist for him. Bonding is the most beautiful thing in the world, the most wonderful feeling. You’ll get lost in him but he’ll get lost in you too. It scares you, I can see it in your eyes but it shouldn’t.”

“Why?”

“Because sometimes we get lost just so that we can be found. You and Oliver hon, the moment you lose yourself in each other will be the moment you find yourself, in each other.”

Felicity felt a lump form in her throat and she looked down toward her hands on her lap where they were twisting the soft fabric of her dress. One of her mother’s hands fell on them and slowly, she disentangled Felicity’s fingers from the fabric. With her other hand she made Felicity lift her chin up
so that she’d look in her eyes.

“Stop overthinking everything Felicity. Just live things, enjoy them. These moments are the best of your life. They’re precious, small treasures that need to be protected.”

Felicity nodded. “Thank you mom.”

Donna smiled and leant down to kiss her forehead. “Anytime.”

“He’s here,” Felicity whispered as she felt a wave of excitement wash over her. She barely contained a shiver that threatened to run down the length of her spine.

“Oliver?” Donna asked, her head tilted.

“Who else?”

There was a knock on the door.

“I’ll get it,” Roy yelled across the apartment. “Oliver, hi!” They heard him say.

“Apparently you were right,” Donna said, turning the curling iron off. “Thankfully you’re ready.” She ran her hands in Felicity’s freshly curled hair and only stopped when she was satisfied with how her daughter looked. “There, you look perfect.”

Felicity smiled at her. “Would you mind telling Oliver I’m coming? I need to get my stuff in my room.”

“Sure.”

Felicity walked to her room, put on some jewels and her jacket, grabbed her clutch and when she was finally ready, she made her way to the door. Oliver stood in the doorway, 6’1 of glorious perfection. He was wearing a dark suit with a blue shirt that brought out the colour of his eyes, making them look like two sapphires. He wasn’t wearing a tie and the top buttons of his shirt were undone. His hair was a perfect combination of done and ruffled and her fingers itched to just mess with it. Touch. She wanted to touch him and if the look on his face was any indication, he wanted to touch her too.

He met her halfway, forgetting about his conversation with Roy and her mother. He put his hands low on her waist and she clasped his forearms.

“Hey,” she whispered, her eyes finding his.

“Hey again,” he whispered back.

“You look amazing,” she told him, her hands not content to stand still and coming up to caress his chest.

“You too,” he said and she grinned at him.

He leaned down for a kiss and she let him peck her lips before pulling away, both from his eager lips and his warm embrace.

“Where are you going?”

“We have a reservation,” she reminded him, knowing full well if she let him kiss her properly, one she’d never want to stop and two she’d never live it down because her mother and Roy were still
“So now you care about our reservation?” He teased her.

“I always do,” she told him innocently.

Roy cleared his throat rather loudly. They turned to look at him.

“We’re still in the room,” he reminded them.

Felicity rolled her eyes at him and glanced at Oliver. He looked very pleased with himself and amused. He caught up with her and grabbed her hand, intertwining his fingers with hers.

“Well have fun you two,” Donna said, a bright smile on her lips.

“We will,” Oliver assured her.

“Gross,” Roy uttered.

“Thanks mom! Roy, grow up.”

“I’m older than you,” he reminded her.

“Are you now?” She teased, an eyebrow arched.

“Children stop,” Donna interrupted. “And you,” she added for Oliver, “take her away because when these two get started, it’s almost impossible to stop them.”

“I know. And it’s worse when they’re with my sister. Speaking of my sister, be nice to her tonight.”

“When am I not?” Roy replied, rolling his eyes at him.

That made Donna laugh and they left with the sound of her laughter echoing against the walls.

The town were they were going to have dinner was an hour away from Star City. Oliver drove them there and they arrived a little bit after eight, right on time for their reservation. Oliver knew the restaurant’s boss, since he and Tommy always went there whenever they were in town and he had saved them his best table, the one by the window with an amazing view on the ocean.

“What should we toast to?” Felicity asked after the waiter brought them their cocktails.

“Your birthday,” Oliver immediately said.

“Or our first official outdoor date,” she said.

“Yeah…” He agreed, a small happy smile stretching his lips. “Or us.”

“Us,” Felicity said, savouring how the word sounded on her tongue. “To us.” She clinked her glass against his.

They had a wonderful time. The restaurant was amazing and the food excellent. And everything was made better by the fact they knew this moment they were living was out in the open and yet truly intimate in its own way. It was really simple, just dinner in a restaurant, but it was special because it was theirs and only theirs. There would be no pictures of them flooding the internet the next day. They would not see their faces or read their names in the gossip columns of the newspaper and that was everything.
They took a walk down the beach after dinner and Felicity listened quietly as Oliver told her stories of him and Tommy. She smiled softly picturing a younger Oliver and a younger Tommy in her head, messing with each other as they walked down that same beach.

It was past midnight when they finally made it back to Star City and Oliver’s building. The sound of the car’s engine had lulled Felicity to sleep and she had unconsciously turned her whole body toward Oliver’s, even when she slept she was seeking him, and she had ended up with her head resting on his shoulder and her arms holding onto his own holding the driving stick as he drove them back home. She started to wake when he got out of the car and she found herself instantly missing his warmth. He walked to her door, opened it and gathered her in his arms. She snuggled up against him, her face finding its place in the crook of her neck and he tightened his hold on her.

“You there with me sleepyhead?” He asked and she hummed in response, not opening her eyes.

“This feels nice,” she mumbled, her lips brushing against his skin. “You should carry me more often.”

He chuckled and it made his chest vibrate against her. He walked them to his apartment and the next thing she knew he was lowering her down on his bed. He caressed her cheeks, pushing back a few strands of hair while he was at it and she forced herself to open her eyes. He hadn’t bother to turn on the light meaning the only thing bringing light to the room was the silver light of the moon. He looked beautiful in the semi-darkness and she felt her heart soar in her chest.

“Hey,” he whispered.

“Hey,” she whispered back.

“Happy birthday,” he said.

She smiled drowsily and he captured her smile with his lips, kissing her slowly and tenderly, making her toes curl. He pulled back, his nose rubbing against hers in a sweet Eskimo kiss that made her smile widen before it turned into a yawn that made Oliver laugh.

“Sorry…” She sighed. “Can we keep the kissing for later and just cuddle for now?” She asked, running her hands up and down his arms.

“Sure.” He pecked her lips once more before helping her out of her shoes. In the meantime, she pushed his suit jacket off his shoulders and started fumbling with the buttons of his shirt.

“I thought we said kissing later?”

“I’m not kissing you, I want your shirt,” she whined because she was sleepy and there were so many buttons to undo.

“Okay let me help then.”

He deftly undid the buttons of his shirt before handing it to her. She got out of her dress, put his shirt on and then finally got rid of her bra. He took off the rest of his clothes while she did that before joining her on the bed. Together they slipped under the covers and soon enough Felicity was in his arms, her head resting on his chest and her legs tangled with his.

“Thank you for tonight,” she told him as she was falling asleep again.

“You’re very welcome. Goodnight Felicity,” he said, kissing the top of her head.
Felicity woke up to the delicious smell of food cooking and freshly brewed coffee. She turned around and sighed when her arm met only cold sheet on Oliver’s side of the bed. He was gone. She opened her eyes, frowning and sat down, using one of her arms to keep herself upright. She rubbed her eyes with her free hand and looked around her. The first thing she noticed was her and Oliver’s clothes from the night before, neatly folded on a chair beside his bed. She smiled at that, it was just an Oliver thing to do, not to let anything lie around. The door opened and Oliver walked in, carrying a tray.

“Breakfast in bed yes!” Felicity squealed in delight.

Oliver smiled at her enthusiasm and carefully placed the tray on the bed. There was a pink daisy tuck between their two cups of coffee and Felicity immediately reached for it.

“You’re the best,” she said, immediately bringing the flower to her nose.

“I know,” he told her, playfully winking at her. “Good-morning by the way,” he greeted her, kissing her on the lips.

“It is indeed a very good morning,” she told him, looking down at the tray again. “Oh! You made me waffles.” She looked up and saw that he was grinning.

“Your mom told me it was a tradition of some sorts so I thought I’d make sure to carry it on.”

She cupped his cheek with one of her hands. “You’re the best,” she told him, her heart beating so hard in her chest she was pretty sure he could hear it.

“So I’ve been told,” he replied. “So how does it feel to be twenty-one?” He asked her as they started eating.

“Good, very good. I was thinking we should go back to Vegas. I could make us extremely rich in record time.”

That made Oliver laugh. “As tempting as it sounds I’d like to keep you in front of bars with me and not see you behind them.”

“Yeah you’re right. You would miss me too much.”

“You would miss too much. I’m the best, remember?”

“And I’m not?”

“Jury’s still out on that one.” She pouted. “Don’t give me that look! You were the one who just suggested she could make money by gambling and cheating.”

“Well it’s not like you could do it Mr. I-got-a-D-in-tenth-grade-algebra.”

He frowned. “How do you know that?”

“If it’s online I can find it,” she told him with a wink.
“You know sometimes I don’t know if I admire you or if you scare me.”

“Probably a bit of both.”

“Yeah probably.”

They kept talking and teasing each other until they were done eating the breakfast Oliver had prepared for them. He had barely had the time to put the tray away that Felicity already launching herself at him. He fell down on his back and she peppered his face with kisses, feeling lighter and happier than she had in a while.

“Hey what’s gotten into you?” He asked, his hands falling on her hips to steady her on top of him.

She shrugged. “I’m just happy,” she told him.

He put a curl behind her ear. “Yeah?”

“Yeah,” she nodded, biting on her lower lip to keep from squealing or giggling or maybe both.

“Want to open your birthday gift before we have to get up and face the real world?”

She nodded happily. “Yes, gimme!”

“Alright but first…”

He rolled them over and she ended up flat on her back with him on top of her. She gasped and he swallowed the sound of it, his lips capturing hers for a heated kiss involving tongues and teeth and roaming hands. They were both out of breath by the time he pulled away.

“What – what was that for?” She asked.

“Do I need a reason other than wanting to kiss you?”

“No that works for me.”

“Good,” he smiled, leaning down for another, slower kiss.

“Oliver,” she said as he rested his forehead against hers.

“Mh- what?”

“I really want to see my birthday gift.”

He chuckled. “Just because of that, I should make you wait a few more days for it.”

“That wouldn’t be nice of you,” she pointed out

“No, it wouldn’t be,” he conceded. “And since we already agreed that I was the best, I need to live up to my reputation…”

He got up from the bed and walked to his closet.

“Come here,” he said, crooking a finger toward her.

She jumped out of bed and joined him in front of his closet.

“Open this,” he pointed out at a drawer.
She nodded, not knowing what to expect. The drawer was empty except for a small velvety black box… Felicity yelped when she saw it and slammed the drawer shut with so much force it made a loud banging sound and Oliver jumped in surprise.

“What’s going on?”

“What’s going on?” She repeated, her heart speeding up in her chest and the skin of her cheeks starting to burn. “Do you not know what’s inside that drawer?” She cringed when she thought back to small square box.

Oh. My. God.

“Of course I do and apparently it has you freaked out. Why?”


“Why? Why? Are you seriously asking me why?”

“Yeah.”

“Listen to me Oliver Jonas Queen,” she said as she slowly opened the drawer again, checking to see if the small box was still there and yes sure, it was still there. “They better not be a ring inside that box otherwise you and I are going to have a problem.”

“What? Wait a minute.” It was his turn to close the drawer. “There is no ring inside that box. But if there had been one, why would it have been a problem?”

“You’re kidding right?”

He shook his head and crossed his arms over his chest, obviously waiting for an explanation.

“Because I’ve already told you when we were in Vegas, I’m not ready to get married. I just turned twenty-one for god’s sake.”

“And I will turn twenty-eight later this year. I’m getting closer and closer to thirty and I’d like to be married before I pass this milestone. To you preferably.”

“Preferably? What is that supposed to mean? If I turn you down you’ll find someone else to marry just so that you can be thirty and married?” She said, feeling anger simmer beneath the surface.

He pinched the bridge of his nose “No, I’m sorry it’s not what I meant. What I meant is that someday I want to marry you and I thought it was what you wanted too. But obviously I was wrong. Would you really turn me down if I asked you to marry me?”

“If you asked me right now, yes,” she replied and he flinched, obviously hurt by her words.

“But why? We could get engaged and then take a year or two to get ready to get married.”

“No way!”

“Why?”

“Do I need another reason than not wanting to?”

“Yes! I’m your soulmate Felicity, why wouldn’t you want to marry me? Or at the very least get engaged?”
“Because I don’t believe in getting engaged for the sake of it. You get engaged when you’re ready to tie the knot not years before. Why is this so important to you anyway? What difference does it make whether we get engaged now or in six months or in a year? The result will be the same, we’ll get married.”

“Well, I could ask you the same question,” he shot back and she could tell he was just as angry as she was

“I asked first,” she said dryly.

“It’s important because it speaks volumes about our commitment to each other. And obviously one of us is more committed than the other.”

She took a step back, feeling like she had been slapped.

“That’s not fair.”

“No, what’s not fair is that if I asked my soulmate, supposedly the most important person to me and the love of my life, to marry me, she would say no.”

“Wanna know what I think? An engagement ring is a token of love, not a leash. And if you need a ring to measure my level of commitment to you then you have more trust issues than we both thought.”

“Oh really and whose fault is that?”

She blinked. His eyes widened the moment he realized what he had said.

“Alright, fair enough,” she said, feeling like her blood had been drained from her head.

“Felicity I –“ Oliver started taking a step toward her.

She escaped his opened arms and grabbed her stuff on the chair, throwing them haphazardly in her overnight bag. She reached for her purse, fighting back her tears.

“What are you doing?” Oliver asked.

“Isn’t that obvious? I’m leaving.”

“No please wait,” he said urgently, placing himself between her and the door. “Felicity let’s talk about this.”

“Oliver, it’s best if I go now because if I stay, things are going to get worse than they are so I suggest you let me go,” she said and something in her tone and stance must have told him how serious she was because he stepped aside and let her out. She slammed the door to his apartment shut behind her and rushed to the elevator before he changed his mind and decided to follow her.

She put her dress from the night before back on in the elevator – after she furiously ripped Oliver’s shirt off her shoulders. Once she was outside, she hailed a cab and gave Q. Inc’s address to the driver. She got ready in the bathroom, she had to redo her make-up twice because of her shaking hands, and when she was finally done she settled to work. She didn’t really want to see Oliver, not after what had happened between the two of them, and there was no way she was spending the day at her desk with him so close and within sight so she decided to work in one of the lab downstairs for the day. All she needed to do her work after all was a computer and the documents and files she was currently working on so she brought everything downstairs where there were computers she could
She cancelled her lunch plans, sending Tommy a message informing him that she had a migraine and wished to stay alone and surrounded by silence for the duration of the day.

He was knocking on the lab’s door a little bit after noon, after everyone working in the lab had left to go lunch.

“What are you doing here?”

“Someone is a little grumpy today,” he said, sitting down on a stool.

“Someone wants to be alone today,” she shot back, focusing back on her computer’s screen.

“Jeez, I know Oliver and I are both handsome, insanely rich and charming but I’m not him okay? So keep your claws in and leave my jugular alone.”

“Fine,” she said, typing a little harder on her computer’s keyboard.

“Wanna tell me what happened?”

“Nope,” she replied and even though she wasn’t looking at him, she could see he was rolling his eyes at her. Hard.

“Listen Felicity, I already have enough on my plate with a pregnant and hormonal fiancée at home so if you and Oliver could make my life a little easier by not being stupid anymore I would really appreciate it.”

“Well I don’t remember asking you to get involved in this.”

“What did I say about leaving my jugular alone?”

She sighed heavily. “Honestly Tommy I’m really not in the best set of mind right now and I don’t want to say something that will hurt you and that I’ll regret so you should probably go.”

“Okay so it’s that bad…” He got up from the stool he had sat on. “Listen I don’t know how you’re planning to handle this but please make sure whatever happened is fixed before we leave tonight because I don’t want another of your lover’s quarrels to ruin my Bachelor Party, got it?”

“You speak as if we spent our days fighting and ruining things.”

“Well, I do spend a lot of time playing the soulmate counsellor to you and Oliver, don’t I?”

She didn’t reply to this.

“Fix things,” he repeated.

“He was the one being irrational,” she threw as he reached the door. “He’s letting his insecurities blind him, has been for days now I told you that.”

Tommy sighed. “I told you this would happen. And I told you what to do if it did. I told you to hold his hand, to reassure him, to be with him. You’re not with him right now.”

“Quit the judgmental act please. He’s not with me either so for someone who’s so afraid of losing me he’s not doing a great job at trying to keep me.”
“You’re the one who’s not at her desk,” Tommy pointed out.

She rubbed her temples with her fingers, hoping to ease the ache caused by her blood pounding furiously in her veins.

“Okay I get it. Everything’s my fault because I should have known, after all I’m Felicity Smoak the worst soulmate in the history of soulmates and Oliver Queen’s personal torturer. Thank you for nothing Tommy, I hope you’ll have a blast this weekend, I wouldn’t want one of my umpteenth lover’s quarrels to ruin your fun.”

“Felicity…”

“You know the way out so please go.”

He left without adding anything else. Felicity clenched her fists tightly together, fighting back the urge to just send everything flying, her files, her computer, her tablet… Everything that was on her desk. She was so angry, her whole body was shaking. She closed her eyes and inhaled deeply forcing the tension out of her body as she exhaled. She thrust her face up in her hands and shuddered. She reached for her phone and sent a text to her mom asking her to cancel her birthday dinner.

Five seconds later, her phone rang.

“Felicity Meghan Smoak you have exactly two minutes to explain yourself so I recommend you use them wisely.”

“There’s nothing to explain, I just don’t feel like celebrating tonight.”

“What’s going on hon? Did something happen?”

“No,” she lied, “nothing happened. I just don’t feel like celebrating.”

“Felicity Meghan Smoak, you were never able to lie to me when you were a child and it didn’t improve even when you turned twenty-one so tell me what happened so that I can help you fix it.”

“It’s – It’s Oliver. We had a fight and that’s pretty much it.”

“A fight? The two of you are always so in synch, I – Sorry missing the point. You two had a fight. About what?”

“About me not wanting to get engaged.”

There was a screeching sound on the other side of the line and Felicity winced, pulling the phone away from her ear.

“Oh my god, did he propose to you?”

“No, no, he didn’t.”

“Then what happened, I don’t understand.”

Felicity took a deep breath before telling her everything that had happened between her and Oliver that morning. Everything had gone so fast, she hadn’t exactly realized they were fighting until he had said the most stinging words to her.

“Whose fault is that?”
The tears she hadn’t let fall down her cheeks earlier were back instantly, burning the corner of her eyes the same way lava would.

“And Tommy… Tommy he says I have to be with him and shut his insecurities down but I don’t know how to do that mom, I don’t know what to do. I’m not leaving, Star City is my home. He knows that, I told him so a million times. I’m making a life for myself here, a life for us and I work with him and I spent most of my free time with him. I love him he knows that better than anyone, myself included, and yet he still believes that I’m going to leave him and I don’t know what else to do to convince him otherwise.” She paused for a second. “I love him mom but… I can’t convince someone who doesn’t want to be convinced.”

“Did you tell him that?”

“What?”

“That you love him. Did you tell him? You said he knew but does he know because you told him or because you think he felt it through your connection?”

“Well, I – uh, I… I didn’t put it in those precise words exactly but – he – I, uh… He knows mom. The same way I know he loves me.”

“And are you okay with that? With just knowing? Don’t you want to hear him say it? Whisper it as you’re falling asleep in his arms? Shouted it from the rooftops? Sing it from the top of his lungs? Don’t you want him to say it between two kisses or out of the blue just because he can?”

“Now that you’re mentioning it that would be nice.”

“Tell him Felicity. Tell him you love him. Those three little words are the most powerful in the world. They can save a person, change another. They can fix a heart and bring so much hope and joy. So tell him baby, tell him you love him.”

Felicity swallowed down the lump of emotions that had formed in her throat.

“I will. Thanks mom.”

“You’re welcome baby.”

Felicity hung up and rushed outside. She pressed the elevator’s button, once, twice, three times. It seemed to take forever to come. When she finally reached their floor she all but run to Oliver’s office. It was empty, he had probably left for lunch. Maybe Tommy had come see him after she had rudely sent him away, she’d have to apologize for that later. That was when she noticed Oliver’s computer wasn’t on sleep mode. It was off. His briefcase wasn’t here and all the things that usually covered his desk, files, documents, folders had been put away.

She frowned.

His office looked exactly like it did when they left for the weekend.

The realization washed over her like a bucket of ice water.

He. Had. Left.

Maybe he hadn’t even bother coming.

But then she saw the pink post-it note she had used to inform him that she’d be working in the lab for
the day crumpled in the bin under his desk.

So he had been here.

And he had left.

She reached for her phone and dialled his number.

He didn’t pick up.

His phone rang and rang and rang until she heard his voice telling her to leave a message.

And so she did.

“So apparently you’re perfectly fine leaving for the weekend without talking to me and sorting things out. That doesn’t hurt at all. And I know what you’re thinking, I was the one who left so I have no one else but myself to blame for this. Fair enough. But when I see you on Monday, remember that you’re the one who left before giving me a chance to come back to you. Maybe you assumed I wouldn’t, in that case thanks for the vote of confidence. Maybe you didn’t care and that hurts, a lot, but then I’m not telling you anything you’re not already feeling, right?” She sighed. “Every time you doubt me or doubt my commitment to us, like you did this morning, I feel like I’m the villain in this relationship, like I’m the mean girl who wrecked her soulmate by taking the Med for so long.

Anyway… Thanks for ruining what was supposed to be a beautiful day. Have fun with Tommy, maybe have sex with some random girl while you’re at it. It would feel just like old times – oh but wait… You don’t do that anymore. You’ve changed, I know that, I see that. It would be nice if you could do the same for me and finally realize that I’ve changed too and that I’m not going anywhere.”

She hung up the phone and then sent a group message to all her friends, cancelling her birthday party. She sent the same message to her mother, asking to be left alone and after that, she turned her phone off. She got back to work, working on both her stuff and Oliver’s – since he had decided to leave early even though they were swamped up with things to do. She knew she was using her work as an excuse not to think about what had happened with Oliver, she knew she used it as a way to forget – the more she focused on Q. Inc business, the easier it was to shut down Oliver’s emotions and right this moment she didn’t want to feel anything coming from him, she didn’t want to think about him at all – but there was no denying the efficiency and the positive results of her method. She was more productive than ever, especially because she was dedicating every bits of her intelligence to her work. She stayed late studying some reports and typing emails. She stayed until everyone had left the building, until darkness had fallen upon the city matching the darkness that had taken over her heart that morning.

When she was too tired to understand the words and numbers she was reading, she decided to call it a day. She left Q. Inc and used a cab to get back to her place. She didn’t stay there though. She picked up her car and left without a second thought, craving silence and solitude, craving a place that wasn’t filled with memories of her and Oliver.

She drove around for a while with no destination in mind. The truth was there wasn’t a place in Star City that didn’t remind her of Oliver somehow. He was everywhere, in every street and every building. She usually loved it but now in this moment, when all she wanted was avoid him, it made her feel trapped.

Just like she had felt that morning when she had seen the small square box in the drawer.

There had been no ring inside but the outcome wouldn’t have been any different if there had been one. They would have fought and she would have left without looking back. Because no matter how
harsh she had sounded, Felicity stood by what she had told Oliver. She wasn’t ready to get married and she didn’t want to get engaged just for the sake of it. What was the point of getting engaged if it was to tell people “yes we’re engaged, but sorry we’re not getting married anytime soon because we need a couple more years to get ready”? There was no point. Felicity wanted to get engaged when she was ready to get married, when she was ready to think about venues and dresses and cakes. She wasn’t ready for any of this right now, Oliver himself wasn’t ready either but still he wouldn’t mind asking her to marry him. Because, and that was what hurt her the most, he thought that by putting a ring on her finger, it would somehow insure that she wouldn’t leave.

Except she wasn’t going anywhere and as long as he didn’t get that through that thick skull of his, their relationship wasn’t going to work.

She was so lost in her thoughts, she didn’t notice she had driven to the beach. Her heart skipped a beat, her mind taking her back to another night and another beach. It seemed like the previous night where everything had been perfect, where they had been so happy, happened a lifetime ago. She sighed and parked her car. She got out, shivering when she felt the chilly air of the night hit her skin. She was starving, having skipped lunch, so she walked to one of the restaurants, remembering perfectly when Oliver had taken her there for the first time. It had been months ago, a few weeks after they had met. They had argued about something and the idiot had shown up at her apartment in the middle of the night with flowers and ice-cream as peace offerings. They had fallen asleep on her couch and in the morning he had taken her out for breakfast. The memory left a bitter taste in her mouth, especially considering their current situation.

The waiter placed Felicity at a table in the back of the restaurant and by the window. She was staring at the waves of the ocean, waiting for her order when she heard the sound of a chair being pulled back. She looked up and her eyes widened when she saw Thea and Roy staring at her.

“Hi!” Thea said, sitting down.

“What are you doing here? How did you find me?”

“Twitter,” Thea replied dryly and Roy, who had sat down next to her, grabbed her hand. She turned her head to look at him and he just smiled at her but that smile was worth a thousand words to her because she suddenly relaxed. “Someone tweeted about you being here, it’s honestly the best thing that came out of your newfound celebrity.”

“Sounds a lot like stalking to me…” Felicity mumbled.

“That’s what you get for cancelling your birthday party through a text and then turning your phone off.”

“And it didn’t occur to you that I did all that because I wanted to be alone?”

“It did and your mom tried to stop me from finding you but nobody stops Thea Queen from doing what she wants.”

“And what do you want?”

“Kick your ass to begin with.”

“Thea,” Roy warned her.

“She deserves that,” she said, glancing at him briefly before focusing back on Felicity. “Iris told me JJ was extremely disappointed when you cancelled everything. That kid loves you, for some reasons, and you let him down to what? Sit alone at a restaurant and wallow in self-pity?”
“I’m not wallowing in self-pity, I’m thinking.”

Thea rolled her eyes at her. “Same difference. Listen, I don’t care about what happened between you and my brother. Your business is your business but what you did tonight, bailing out on all of us just because the two of you had a fight wasn’t nice at all.”

“Wait until you and Roy have a big fight and then maybe you’ll understand why I bailed out on you.”

“I don’t think so. Seeking isolation instead of comfort is more your style than mine.”

“That’s because you haven’t fought with your soulmate. But since you insist on being a judgmental pain in the ass, allow me to give you an insight of how I’m feeling right now.” Thea opened her mouth to say something but Felicity didn’t let her and just went on. “I feel dead inside, and I’m not exaggerating. Fighting with your soulmate – and I mean really fighting not some harmless bickering – is draining, emotionally, physically draining, because it’s like fighting against yourself. I’m exhausted Thea, truly and utterly exhausted. My emotions are jagged and cutting my heart in little pieces and the only person who could make it all better is the same one who made me feel like that in the first place. So I’m really sorry that I didn’t feel like celebrating tonight but this is the way things are and if you –” she gasped when she felt a sharp pang of pain in her body the rest of her sentence getting lost. Her hands immediately came up to hold her ribs as pain pulsed like a live wire inside her.

“Felicity? Are you alright?” Thea asked.

She slowly breathed through her nose and tried to speak.

“Yeah I – ah!” Her vision turned white and for the longest seconds in her life, all she felt was pain. Acute. Burning. Raw.

_Pain._

She had never felt anything like that before.

It was devastating and all-consuming, worming itself inside her body before tightening its claws around her insides making her lose all her bearings.

When the pain started receding, she realized she had fallen from her chair. Thea and Roy were at her sides and two waiters were standing in front of her, looking extremely concerned. One was holding his cell, probably to call 911. Everyone in the restaurant was staring at her but she paid them no mind. She couldn’t see them, couldn’t see much really. She couldn’t hear much either aside from the shrieking beeping sound that was ringing in her ears.

_“Felicity.”_  

Thea’s voice snapped her out of the zone she had lost herself into.

“Are you okay miss?” One of the waiters asked her.

“I’m – I’m,” she gulped and gripped Thea’s arms tightly. “Oliver! It’s not me, it’s him. Something’s wrong with him, I don’t know what but he’s in pain – I…” Her eyes fluttered close as she felt another wave of pain wash over her and she instinctively tightened her hold on Thea’s arm.

“Oliver what?” Thea’s panicked voice asked.
“Something happened,” Felicity said, her hands shaking. “Something bad.” Her throat was dry while her hands were damp with sweat.

“What? What happened?”

“I – I don’t know,” Felicity stammered, her voice trailing down.

“Then focus Felicity!” Thea pushed her, her worry and the tension inhabiting her palpable. “He’s your soulmate, use your connection!”

“How?”

“I don’t know, just do something, anything!”

“Thea stop,” Roy warned, grabbing her hand and squeezing her fingers tightly.

“She’s right though,” the waiter cut in. “If your soulmate is in trouble, you can use your connection to know what happened. Touch your soulmark.”

Felicity knew exactly what he was suggesting. If she touched her soulmark, she would see things through Oliver’s eyes. She hadn’t done that in a while, not since she had stopped taking the Med, mostly because she hadn’t needed to. They spent most of their time together already, there was no need for them to check on the other that way.

“Yeah do it Felicity,” Thea urged her and the blonde could see the distress she felt deep in her bones reflected in her friend’s eyes.

She nodded, breathing heavily through her noise, desperately trying to get a grip on her emotions. The pain had turned from sharp and stinging to something dull and constant, it was less intense but it didn’t make her feel any better. On the contrary, it made her feel just as sick and nauseous, the thought of Oliver hurting in any way unbearable.

She slipped her hand below the hem of her skirt, her fingers immediately finding the mark branding her skin. Electricity made her fingers tingle and she shut her eyes, focusing solely on the connection she shared with Oliver, letting it trump everything else.

She saw nothing but darkness.

Her mark started to burn and she cried out, wrenching her hand away from her skin.

“What? What did you see?” Thea hastily asked.

She shook her head.

“Nothing. There was nothing but darkness.”

“Oh my god no…” Thea said, her lower lip trembling. Roy moved from Felicity’s side to pull his soulmate in his embrace, holding onto her tightly.

Felicity paid them no mind and pushed on her hands to get up. Her head was spinning and she almost lost her balance. One of the waiters helped stabilize her. She barely uttered a thank you, her mind solely focused on Oliver.

“What are you doing blondie?” Roy asked.

“I – I have to go,” she said, her eyes fixed on the restaurant’s door. “I need to find him – I need to
find Oliver. I can’t stay here, I have to find him.”

“Felicity wait!” Roy called as she moved away from them and toward the door. She didn’t reply to him. She didn’t look back, she just left.

She knew her soulmate was hurt, he could be in danger, she needed to find him. She needed to find him, now. She pushed the door of the restaurant open and walked out. Her legs were shaking, just like every part of her body and so she stopped for a second to take her heels off. Barefoot, she started walking to her car.

“Felicity!Felici

wait!”

She didn’t stop until she felt a hand grab her wrist and spin her around. She met Roy’s scowl and Thea’s lost eyes. Her soulmate was holding her hand and Felicity guessed he had probably dragged her with him.

“I need to find Oliver,” Felicity said, trying to free herself from his hold. He didn’t let go.

“And how do you plan on doing that? It’s not like you can swim to the boat.”

“I will if I have to,” she desperately shouted, tears forming in her eyes.

“Felicity please calm down and let’s think this through.”

“I can’t think right now!” She yelled sounding just as hysterical as she was feeling inside. Oliver was hurt. They had to go find him and here was Roy, making her waste her time.

He opened his mouth to say something when Thea’s phone started ringing. Thea pulled it out of her pocket and said, her voice trembling.

“It’s Laurel.”

Felicity and Roy exchanged a worried look.

“Laurel! […] Yes we found her. […] A seaside restaurant. […] Oh my god… yes, yes, she felt it too. […] She says Oliver’s hurt. […] Yes she tried but she didn’t see anything. Did you? […] You didn’t either? Damn it! What? […] Laurel slow down, you’re not making any sense. […] Your father says what? The coast guards called him? […] What? How did that happen? […] Damn it! […] I know. Okay, alright, I get it. […] Fine. […] No don’t bother, we’re coming. […] Yes, it’s fine I swear. Roy’s with us. […] Yes, I’ll tell her that. […] See you in a bit.”

“What did she say?” Felicity desperately asked.

“The coast guards received a distress signal from the Winter Wave earlier in the evening. They called Laurel’s father immediately because they know Tommy’s his son-in-law. Apparently, they’re sending a team to retrieve them and we’ll receive a call when they’re brought to the hospital.”

“That doesn’t make sense,” Roy said, frowning. “If they sent a distress signal earlier in the evening then how come Felicity only felt something now?”

Thea shrugged. “Listen, I don’t know, I wasn’t with them on the boat. All I know is what Laurel told me.”

“Are they alright?” Felicity asked, her voice trembling.

“They were when they sent the signal. Apparently there was something wrong with the boat’s
engine… They were planning on waiting for the rescue team on the safety boat.”

“Something must have gone wrong… Oliver’s hurt, I can feel it.”

“Laurel says the same thing about Tommy but unfortunately, we don’t know anything else.” Felicity looked down, her whole body shaking. Oliver and Tommy were hurt. Something had happened, something bad and the last conversations she’d had with the both of them had been arguments.

“Felicity are you still there?” Roy asked, looking concerned.

She fought back the urge to shake her head no. The truth was her mind was lost somewhere between here and where her soulmate was, hurt and cut off from her.

“I told Laurel we’d wait with her until we receive the call from the hospital,” Thea said. “Where’s your car Felicity? We took a cab to come here.”

She led them to her car and Roy drove them to Laurel and Tommy’s house as neither Felicity nor Thea felt like driving. Felicity wanted to point out that maybe it would be best if they all waited at the hospital, but she held herself back. Hospital’s chairs weren’t the most comfortable in the world and maybe they’d all feel better if they were waiting in a relatively familiar environment.

After they arrived at Laurel’s, they sat down in the living-room, Thea in Roy’s arms, and she told them exactly what she had told Thea over the phone.

“Now we just have to wait. We’ll know more when they’re here.”

Felicity hadn’t spent that much time with Laurel, she was much closer to her younger sister Sara, but she had spent enough time with her to know she was a mess. She always looked so calm and collected, with her hair perfectly done, her make-up impeccable and her outfit carefully chosen. But in this moment… In this moment she was nothing like that. Her hair was a mess of curls, she wasn’t wearing any make-up and her eyes were red and puffy because she had cried. She was wearing dark jeans and an oversized shirt, an outfit Felicity herself could have worn but not perfect lawyer Laurel.

“I hate waiting,” Felicity sighed. “I need to do something.”

She hadn’t stopped fidgeting in her seat since the moment they had arrived. She felt like a lion in cage, she was going crazy sitting there with them. Her body was screaming at her to get up and do something, anything as long as it brought her closer to Oliver or alleviated his pain.

“How about I make some coffee? This is going to be a long night.”

Thea and Roy both nodded their approval.

“Felicity will you help me?” She asked, getting up.

“Sure,” the blonde nodded reluctantly.

Tommy and Oliver were in danger and Laurel wanted to make coffee.

Laurel closed the door to the kitchen once they were inside.

“Listen Felicity I understand how you’re feeling better than anyone but you need to calm down.”

“Calm down? And how am I supposed to do that exactly?”

“Well you could start focusing on what matters most: yes they’re injured but their lives aren’t in
danger, we’d know if it was the case. A rescue team is on its way meaning that in no time they’ll be in the hospital where a team of excellent doctors will tend to them. Things are bad and I’d be lying if I told you every second I spend apart from Tommy isn’t killing me but things will be alright.”

Felicity shook her head. “You don’t know that.”

“Yes I do, and you do too.”

“I had an argument with Oliver today and then later with Tommy… What if that bitchy and bitter voicemail I left him is the last thing I ever tell him?”

“It won’t be,” Laurel assured her, grabbing her hand.

“I just need to see him…” Felicity whispered, feeling tears coming up.

“I know I do too. And we will, soon. But in the meantime, you need to get a hold over yourself. And if you don’t do it for you, do it for Thea. You’re her only connection to her brother. The more you worry, the more she worries. So breathe, okay?”

Felicity nodded, inhaling deeply.

“I bet this is not how you envisioned the day going,” Laurel told her, making her snort.

“Not really no.”

“Well, if you think about it, it will be difficult for your next birthday to be worse than that.”

Felicity chuckled dryly. “Don’t say that, you’ll jinx it!”

Laurel nodded and the two of them prepared some coffee and tea. They went back to the living-room when they were done. Thea and Roy were still holding onto each other on the couch.

Felicity couldn’t tell for how long they waited for the hospital’s call but when they got it, the four of them rushed to the door and then to their cars to get there. She was a mess of emotions during the whole drive to the hospital, cursing every time they had to stop at a red light.

When they arrived, Laurel was immediately taken to Tommy while Felicity, Thea and Roy were told to wait for a moment longer because Oliver had been taken for an X-ray. They hadn’t been waiting for long when they heard the sound of heels clacking on the floor. They looked up and saw none other than Moira Queen. Felicity tensed up immediately at the sight of her. She wasn’t the only one.

“What are you doing here?” Thea spat out angrily.

“Good evening to you dear, it’s been a while since I last saw you.”

“And you have no one else but yourself to blame for that. Now answer my question,” she added getting up to stand toe to toe with her mother. Roy followed her immediately, supporting her with a hand on her lower back.

“Well, I’m still Oliver’s mother.”

“Is that so? I thought he had fired you the same way I did.”

“Well, apparently not. I’m still his emergency contact. Your father would have joined me of course but sadly he’s currently out of the country.”
“Out of the country? For a conjugal visit to his soulmate perhaps?”

“Thea,” Felicity warned her, placing a hand on her arm. “Let’s not cause a scene here, okay?”

“You should listen to Ms. Smoak right here dear. She doesn’t seem like it but she is pretty smart.”

Felicity glared at her.

“Do not cause a scene either,” she told her dryly.

“She will cause one,” Thea said, shaking her head. “She brings trouble wherever she goes.”

“Careful young lady,” Moira threatened, her voice low. “If you can’t behave, you’ll have to leave.”

“Okay, okay,” Felicity intervened, realizing the situation was about to get out of control. Thea was extremely angry with her mother. Her worry for Oliver added to that didn’t make a nice combination at all. And no matter how she enjoyed watching Thea put Moira back in her place, Felicity also didn’t want them to fight in the hospital’s waiting room. “Roy, Thea why don’t you go check on Tommy? The nurse did say we’d have to wait a while for Oliver.”

Roy jumped on the opportunity she had just provided them to leave immediately.

“She’s right. There’s no point in staying here.”

“I –“ Thea started to protest.

“Let’s go see Tommy,” Roy insisted. “Felicity will warn us when we can see him.”

“I will I promise. The moment I see the doctor, you’ll know.”

Roy nodded, Thea too, reluctantly, but in the end she let her soulmate drag her away. Felicity sat back down, glaring at Moira. The woman sat across her and Felicity looked away, her arms crossed over her chest.

“Thank you Ms. Smoak for getting us out of this complicated situation.”

Felicity rolled her eyes. Was she serious?

“I didn’t do it for you. And if anything, you should have been the one leaving. It’s not like Oliver wants to see you anyway.”

“That’s a sharp tongue that you have here Ms. Smoak. I have to say I’m quite surprised with how much you’ve changed since I first met you.”

“Whatever…”

“The only thing that hasn’t changed though is that you still don’t understand me.”

“To be honest, I don’t really want to.”

“Either way, you should know that as long as my son is in the hospital, I’m not going anywhere.”

Felicity didn’t reply to that, and just stubbornly faced away. The hospital’s hallways were pretty calms, except for the constant back and forth of doctors and nurses. She felt calmer now that she was close to Oliver again. She was still in pain, because he was still in pain, but the proximity felt like a balm on her raw nerve endings. They would see each other soon and that thought was enough to
help her be in control of herself again.

She turned her head when she heard footsteps. Moira did the same. They saw a doctor coming in their direction. They both got up at the same time.

“Another thing,” Moira said, grabbing Felicity’s elbow. “My daughter knows me better than most and she was right when she said I bring trouble wherever I go, especially to the people who’ve crossed me in the past.”

“Family of Oliver Queen?” The doctor asked. He was a man, in his late fifties.

“I’m his mother, Moira Queen and she,” she pointed at Felicity, “is nothing.”

Felicity’s eyes widened. “Excuse-me? I’m his soulmate.”

“Really? Do you have a certificate provided by the SID to support your claim?”

“A what now?”

“A Soulmate Certificate. The SID provides them after a match has been confirmed. Institutions such as hospitals demand them to make sure they’re not disclosing confidential information to complete strangers. Isn’t that right doctor?”

“Yes, of course it’s right. But it’s alright if you don’t have the Certificate with you Ms. Smoak, if you’re listed as Mr. Queen’s emergency contact there’s no problem with you being here and listening to what I have to say…”

Felicity’s eyes fluttered close and she sighed in frustration. “We didn’t make the changes, we forgot… We’ve been so busy lately and we didn’t expect him to end up in the hospital.” She felt tears prick at the corner of her eyes. “Oh my god, I can’t believe this is happening…”

The doctor shot her a sympathetic look and she couldn’t see that he didn’t want her to go but in the meantime, Moira had put him in an impossible situation by bringing up the rules of the hospital.

“Well off you go then Ms. Smoak,” Moira said, a condescending look on her face.

“Are you serious? My face has been plastered on every newspaper’s front page for weeks now. The doctors knows I’m Oliver’s soulmate.”

“When my husband and I make a donation to Starling General we donate to the most professional team and that means people who don’t forget about the rules for no reasons.”

“I’m afraid she’s right Ms. Smoak… Procedure is procedure, whether we like or not.”

“I can’t believe we’re wasting time having this conversation…” Felicity rubbed her face with her hands. “You want a proof that I’m Oliver’s soulmate? How about I strip down in this hallway and show you my fucking soulmark? Would that be proof enough or against your stupid procedure?”

“Ms. Smoak I have to ask you to keep your voice down, we’re in a hospital. Please calm down.”

“Don’t tell me to calm down!” Felicity shouted. She could feel panic grip her insides and her ribcage seemed to constrict her heart all of a sudden. “My soulmate’s hurt, I’ve been waiting for hours to see him and I won’t let some evil blonde mother-in-law from hell and a spineless doctor stop me from being with him!”

“What’s going on here?” A familiar voice asked from behind.
Everyone turned around and Felicity’s jaw drop when she recognized Doctor Lazarev, the soulmate specialist she had consulted soon after she had learnt Oliver was her soulmate.

“I was on my way to the ICU when I heard what seemed to be an argument. Is everything alright Ms. Smoak? Bill?” He added for the doctor.

“No, not really,” Felicity replied. “That woman,” she pointed at Moira, “is manipulating this doctor right here,” she pointed at the doctor whose name was apparently Bill, “to prevent me from seeing my soulmate because she hates my guts and wants to be a pain in my ass.”

“Mrs. Queen is not manipulating me. You’re the one who doesn’t have a Soulmate Certificate.”

Doctor Lazarev frowned. “Wait a second… Your soulmate’s in the hospital? Oliver Queen is in the hospital?”

“Yes! And I need to see him!” Felicity said, sounding as desperate as she felt. “Help me please, do something.”

“Don’t worry Ms. Smoak. My colleague will take you to your soulmate.”

“But,” the doctor started to protest.

“I take full responsibility on this. Considering the high-level of Mr. Queen and Ms. Smoak’s soulmate connection, any attempt at keeping her away from him would be vain anyway.”

“That’s not procedural,” Moira pointed out, a flash of anger lightening her cold blue eyes.

“Maybe but trying to keep your son away from his soulmate, especially when he’s hurt, could be considered a failure to assist someone in danger. So if I were you, I’d get rid of that attitude and go wait somewhere else until I can see my son. Not that he’d want to see you after you tried to pull such a stunt but that’s beside the point.”

Felicity had never seen Moira Queen look so livid before. She stood, stiff as a stick, her fists clenched tightly by her sides and said.

“You’ll hear from me.”

“I can’t wait,” Doctor Lazarev replied, not losing his calm.

She left angrily, the sounds of her heels against the walls. Felicity’s shoulders fell as she sighed in relief.

“Now Bill take that young lady to her soulmate,” Doctor Lazarev ordered.

“Thank you, thank you so much,” Felicity said, shaking his hands.

“You’re very welcome, I’m glad I was here at the right time.”

She nodded, her ponytail bouncing on her shoulders.

“Me too.”

He left then.

“It’s right this way Ms. Smoak,” Bill, doctor Lempton she read on his blouse, indicated. “Mr. Queen has a gash on his arm that required stitches and he also has a couple of cracked ribs.” Okay, that
explained why most of the pain she had felt had been located on her side. “We’re keeping him in for
the night because he also suffered a concussion that made him lost consciousness.”

“That would explain the darkness…” She whispered under her breath.

“What darkness?”

“I couldn’t connect with him earlier.”

“Oh you mean you couldn’t establish a soulmate connection? It’s true that a loss of consciousness
could have resulted in this. Don’t worry Ms. Smoak, Mr. Queen should be fully recovered in a few
weeks.”

“Do we know what happened?”

“According to the coast guards, there was an explosion and that’s how he and Mr. Merlyn got hurt.”

“What about the other passengers?”

“Apparently they were already on the life boat when the explosion occurred.”

“Oh my god that’s awful…” She sighed, her mind going crazy at the mere thought of what could
have happened, of what had almost happened.

She could have lost him.

Her thoughts must have been written on her face because Doctor Lempton gave her a sympathetic
smile.

“Everything’s alright now Ms. Smoak and the only permanent damages are strictly material.”

She nodded.

“I also wanted to apologize for what happened earlier with Mrs. Queen.”

Felicity stiffened and saw that his cheeks had reddened and that he looked pretty embarrassed. “Let’s
not talk about that,” she said, her voice trailing down.

“Alright,” he stopped in front of a door. “This…”

Felicity’s heart leapt inside her chest and she was already pushing the door open before he could
finish his sentence.

Oliver turned his head immediately in her direction. He was lying on a hospital bed, he had a bump
on his head, a bandage on his right arm and looked utterly exhausted. Relief overwhelmed her
because even though he looked like crap, he was alive and he was okay and he would be okay and
everything would be okay too.

“Oliver,” she breathed out, her heart beating so hard in her chest it felt like it was trying to dig its
way out, to find its way to Oliver.

She was moving before he could say anything. She strode to him and captured him in a fierce hug.
He groaned in pain and she felt a twitch in her own side, although nothing bad compared to what she
had been feeling earlier and she guessed it was because he had been given pain meds. She hugged
him tightly, burying her face in the warm crook of his neck. Tentatively, he wrapped an arm around
her shaking body, trying to hug her back as best as he could.
“Oh my god, I was so scared,” she said, her voice muffled against his skin.

“It’s alright,” he whispered, his cheek brushing against her hair. “I’m okay, it’s alright.”

“I thought I was going to lose you,” she confessed, her voice breaking as the tears she had carefully kept at bay all day long finally fell from her eyes.

“But you didn’t,” he told her, his voice soft and comforting. “I’m right here with you and I’m okay. Everything’s fine.”

She reluctantly pulled away from him so that she could take a better look at him.

“I was so scared,” she said again, her voice distorted by her tears. “Don’t you dare ever doing that to me again!”

“I’m sorry, I’m so sorry,” he told her, his thumbs coming up to wipe her cheeks.

“No, I’m sorry. I was so angry earlier and I left and then you left and then this happened and I could have lost you and our last conversation could have been a stupid argument... I love you so much Oliver. If I had lost you...”

“But you didn’t. You didn’t lose me, I’m right here, breathing and all.”

She nodded and sniffled, trying to stop the flow of tears running down her cheeks.

“I’m not letting you out of my sight ever again,” she decided and that made him laugh.

“Okay, I can deal with that,” he said, his blue eyes shining a little because of his own tears.

She cupped his cheeks and delicately swiped her thumb under his eyes.

“I’m so glad you’re okay,” she whispered.

“Me too,” he whispered back, tenderly caressing her cheek. “For a moment there, I thought I’d never see your face again,” he confessed making her heart ache in her chest.

Later she decided, she’d ask him questions about what had happened. They would have time later, to talk about the accident and everything else. But for now the only thing that mattered was that she loved him with everything she had and that he had come back to her, alive.

They both leaned in at the same time, sealing their reunion with a kiss.

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)
Hey guys!!

First, I want to apologize for the false hope that a new chapter is up. I know some of you we’ll be happy to get a notification that I have updated and then very disappointed to see that, in fact, I haven’t! I really am sorry but I just thought this would be the easiest way for me to tell you where I’m at! Not everyone has a Twitter or a Tumblr account hence why I’m posting on AO3 directly.

Second, I want to apologize to you for the lack of update and I also want to reassure all of you right away and tell you I haven’t forgotten or abandoned any of my fics. I’ve experienced moments of doubts (especially for my soulmate AU) that partially explain why I haven’t posted a chapter in so long but in no way am I giving up on writing and finishing this story (or my actor AU for that matter).

The thing is, I’m just crazy busy with stuff. I’m working on my master degree and I have a 80-to-100-pages dissertation to write in spring so research has been taking most of my time as well as usual work and research for my other classes. All in all, I haven’t had much time to write anything (the reason I’ve still been able to update my actor AU is because I already had a few chapters written, but I don’t anymore). Of course, I have some free time (I’m not spending all my time studying otherwise I’d be dead already) but I won’t write a chapter and publish it for the sake of writing and publishing only. I’d rather wait longer and give my writing all I have than writing something that will be less good. The stories and you all deserve better than a half-assed job. And to be completely honest with you, I’m not always in the right frame of mind to write fanfics. Someone very close to me is going through some stuff health-wise and it’s taken my mind away from fanfics and will continue to do so for a little while.

Now, I swear I haven’t forgotten or abandoned any of my fics but I won’t be updating any of my stories or reply to any comments until winter break. I have a long winter break and while I’ll be busy with my family and studying, I will have a lot more time and hopefully, I’ll find the right balance between real life and writing. So really what I want to say is don’t give up on my guys because I haven’t!

Thank you, I love you all!

Charlie-Leau aka J
Hey guys!!

Long time no see, I know! Please don't be mad at me... I've been extremely busy with real life. As I told you in my message about me, I was going through a lot at the end of 2017. My mom had to have surgery and I was worrying a lot about her and I also had to work on my first master dissertation. Thankfully, everything went well for both my mother and my dissertation: she made a full recovery and I passed with honors. I had my last oral presentation of the year last Thursday meaning I'm officially on vacation for the whole summer.

I wanted to thank you all of your for your kind messages of support. I received many, here or on twitter and tumblr and it made me truly happy, and kept me going when I was having a hard time so thank you for that.

That being said, I'm back to writing for the summer! My main goal is to finish this fic. It shouldn't be too difficult as I'm planning to write a total of 26 chapters + an epilogue (if things go according to my plan and they should). So not counting this new chapter, it means there should be 5 more updates for this story (I can't believe I'm this close to finishing it).

With no further delay, the latest update of Our Love! Spoiler alert: the ending is very NSFW! (Also, please don't be mad)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 22:

“We're burning out, we're burning down
We're the ashes on the ground
We're burning out, we're burning down
We've fallen underground

The light has fallen from the stars
Now we are sinking through the night
Out of sight we've fallen underground
Pick up the pieces left of us”

- Greta Svabo Bech, Ludovico Einaudi, Circles
Felicity broke her promise to never let Oliver out of her sight again when Thea and Roy came back from visiting Tommy. She slipped out of the room to give them some alone time with him and decided to go see Tommy. She heard Laurel’s voice from the hallway. She was giving her soulmate a talking-to that spoke of the deep fear that had inhabited her during the last few hours. Her reaction was pretty similar to Felicity except for the fact that, Laurel being Laurel, she sounded much more threatening and dangerous than Felicity had herself.

“I swear to God, Tommy Merlyn, if you ever do this to me again, I will bring you back from the dead to kill you myself!” Her tone was hard but there was no mistaking the quiver that indicated deeper emotions, emotions she barely kept contained.

“I’m sorry babe! I promise I won’t almost die ever again.” A chuckle. “Boats suck anyway!”

They were hugging when Felicity reached the door. She took a step back, allowing them some privacy. She used the time to check on Oliver through their connection. He was alright albeit exhausted but she knew he wouldn’t rest until she returned. Which she would do really soon. Being away from him was proving much more difficult than she had expected. All she wanted was to be back with him and crawl in his arms.

“I’m going to call Sara,” she heard Laurel say at last. “Let her know you’re okay. I’ll be right back.”

The sound of a kiss, footsteps.

Laurel smiled at Felicity when she saw her, her phone already pressed to her ear. Felicity smiled back at her before knocking on the door.

“Hey,” she said, her smile still on.

He smiled at her, his eyes soft. “Hey!”

“Can I come in?” She asked, suddenly sounding unsure. They hadn’t parted in good terms and she didn’t know where they stood exactly. It scared her a little because in the time since she’d known him, she’d grown extremely fond of Tommy, and even more, she had started to rely on him. For most people, it didn’t sound like it was a big deal but it was to her. Before coming to Starling, she’d only had one friend, Georgia. Now, she had many and Tommy probably was the most important of them all. If she lost him now, she didn’t know what she’d do. It was pretty scary for someone who’d only ever counted on herself.

“Of course, please do!” He said and relief flooded her veins.

Both his arms were bandaged and one of his legs was propped up on a pillow. He had a huge bump on his head too.

“So…” She stretched the word, making it sound like a question.

“Cuts that needed stitches on both my arms, a sprained ankle, and a bump on my head.”

“But no loss of consciousness.” Unlike Oliver. She’d never forget the terror she’d felt when all she’d been able to see through their connection was darkness.

He smiled. “Apparently, I’m too hard-headed.”

She snorted. “Tell me something I don’t know.”
“How’s Oliver?”

“Good. Tired. They’re keeping him in for the night because he has a concussion.”

“Yeah they’re keeping me too. I’ll probably be discharged tomorrow.”

“Hopefully, Oliver will be too. And I’m sorry for your boat,” she quickly added.

“It’s okay. Boat sucks anyway.”

She smiled but it quickly faded away. She shifted her balance on her feet, something she did when she was feeling uncomfortable. Which she did.

“Listen, I…”

“Tommy, I’m…”

They both spoke at the same moment. She pinched her lips together.

“You go first,” he told her, encouraging her with a smile.

“I’m sorry I was a bitch earlier, I…”

He raised a hand to stop her. “Don’t be. I was an ass. You warned me off but I refused to listen. I should know better than push a woman who’s already pissed by now.” A beat. “I’m sorry, Felicity. I shouldn’t have talked to you like that and I shouldn’t have made things all about me. I know it’s not much of an excuse but I’ve been under a lot of pressure lately, with the baby and the wedding…”

“I understand,” she cut him off. “You have a lot on your plate already, you don’t need any more drama.”

“Yeah. But still, that’s no excuse. I was an ass, even more so because I left without setting you straight.”

She tilted her head in question.

“You’re not the worst soulmate in the history of soulmates.”

She bowed her head, remembering the things she’d said in anger. But just because she’d been angry, it didn’t mean parts of her hadn’t believed what she’d been saying.

“Thank you, Tommy.” His words meant a lot to her but she wasn’t the one she needed to hear them from.

“Are we good now?” He asked tentatively and she realized he had been feeling as unsure as she had, he’d just hidden it better.

“Of course we are!” She said and when he opened his arms for her, she didn’t hesitate and hugged him close, but not tight, mindful of his injuries. He rubbed up and down her back and the comforting gesture brought tears to her eyes.

She pulled back and quickly dried her eyes with her sleeves. It was when Laurel decided to come back.

“I’ll leave the two of you be,” she said.
“Tell Oliver we said hi,” Laurel told her.

“I will, I promise! Get some rest, Tommy!” She added, the look on her face hard but her tone playful.

He brought his hand to his forehead and waved it in a military salute. “Yes, ma’am!”

She waved them goodbye and left. She hurried back to Oliver’s room, the short separation having taken its toll on her. She was feeling anguish and she knew only one thing would soothe her. Touch. She needed to touch her soulmate, hold him, feel that he was really here and safe.

When she came back, Thea was sitting on Oliver’s bed and Roy was standing with a hand on her shoulder, a solid presence at her back. A rock to keep her anchored. It made Felicity smile. Having sensed her, Oliver looked up to meet her eyes. She gave him a small reassuring smile and he relaxed immediately. Thea and Roy turned in her direction in perfect synchronicity.

“Time for you to rest, Ollie,” Thea said. She leaned down and kissed her brother’s cheek. “We’ll be back tomorrow…” she paused for a second, “I mean, we’ll be back later today since it’s well past midnight.”

She got up and walked out, Roy close behind her. She motioned for Felicity to come with them.

“So…” Thea sighed, walking a few steps away from Oliver’s room. “Today was one of these days.” Felicity nodded. She’d never forget her twenty-first birthday. Ever.

“I’m just glad it’s finally over,” she said, smoothing the fabric of her skirt. She was still wearing the clothes she had worn at work and her feet were screaming in pain, begging her to take off her heels.

“You’re staying for the night?”

She nodded. “Yes, I cleared everything with his doctor and the nurses. Although, there wasn’t anything to discuss, really… not even the devil could keep me away from Oliver.”

Thea smiled. “Take care of him. We’ll grab a cab back to the apartment.”

“Can you call my mom? Let her know, everything is fine? I texted her earlier but I know she’ll stay up all night, waiting to hear from us.”

“Sure,” Roy said, punctuating the word with a nod.

“We’ll be back tomorrow with a change of clothes for the both of you.”

Felicity’s eyes widened in happiness at her words. “That would be perfect, thank you!”

Thea stepped toward her and gave her a tight hug. Felicity’s anger was long gone, their argument from before completely forgotten. In the light of what had happened, nothing really mattered anymore.

“See you later, Felicity!” She told her, pulling away.

“Yeah see you later, Blondie!” Roy added and even though he wasn’t the most expressive person in the world, he still hugged her quickly.

Felicity waited until they were out of sight before walking back inside Oliver’s room, for good this time. For a second, she stood on the threshold and just looked at him, comforted by the familiar
buzzing of his emotions inside her.

“Do you need anything?” She asked, taking a step toward him.

“Just you,” he replied and her heart soared in her chest at the sound of his husky voice. She quickly erased the distance between them and climbed on his bed. She got rid of her heels and settled beside him, mindful of his injuries. He let out a content sigh and whispered, as if he was confiding a secret. “Don’t tell Doctor Lempton, but you’re the best medication ever.”

She chuckled. “Is that so?” She replied, playfully.

“Yeah,” he breathed out, warming her inside.

But even though she loved hearing him telling her the sweetest things ever, his well-being remained her priority and he needed to rest. “Stop trying to charm me, Mr. Queen and go to sleep.”

“I can’t sleep,” he admitted.

She raised herself on her elbow, her eyebrows frowned in concern. “Why not? I’m here, I’m not going anywhere,” she added, gently brushing his cheek with the back of her hand.

“My parents were all kind of shitty but they taught me never to go to bed angry.”

“I’m not angry,” Felicity told him in earnest.

“I know but you were and so was I. I just want to clear the air.”

“Oliver…” She started to protest. “You have a concussion and you’re exhausted. You’re not in shape for a big conversation.”

“But you are. And you make me stronger.” A beat. “Felicity, please. I need this. We need this.”

Felicity nodded. He was right, they needed to talk. She sat more comfortably so that she could see his eyes as they spoke. “Where should we start?” There was so much that needed to be said, she didn’t know where to start. And then she remembered one particular thing… “Did you get my message?”

He frowned. “What message?”

She let out a small relieved breath. “I tried to call you earlier and… I was pretty pissed that you’d gone with Tommy without talking to me first and… I left you a voicemail, and you know what they say? Don’t leave voicemails when you’re drunk or angry or both – not that I was drunk because I wasn’t – and…” Her voice trailed down. “You didn’t get it?”

He shook his head. “And my phone’s dead so… I’ll probably never hear it.”

“I’m really happy about that. I meant some of the things I said but… it wasn’t the right way to say them.”

He nodded. “I understand. Do you want to say them now?”

“Let’s see where this conversation goes first,” she said.

He reached for her hand, which was currently twisting the fabric of her skirt, and rubbed gentle circles on her palm. “Listen, about this morning…’
“I’m sorry I freaked out. Looking back at things, I realize I kind of went crazy on you.”

“You kind of did,” he agreed, letting out a shaky breath. “But you were scared. For no reason, because like I said, there was no ring inside that box, but still. Let’s talk about that.”

“I didn’t want to have to say no.” She paused for a second. “And I would have said no, because I’m not ready to get married.” She sighed. “Growing up, I never really thought about getting married but when I did, I always knew I wanted to enjoy my twenties before settling down in my thirties. And I know some couples get engaged sometimes and wait a few years before they get married but I always thought it was stupid. You get engaged because you’re ready to get married. You don’t get engaged and then wait until you’re ready. That’s what dating’s for.”

“So you want to date for a while then get engaged and then get married?”

“Pretty much, yeah,” she said, pushing a strand of her hair back behind her ear. “I don’t want us to get married because we’re soulmates and we’re going to spend the rest of our lives together anyway. I want us to get married because we’re ready to start that new journey together.”

“I don’t want to wait until you’re thirty, Felicity… By then I’ll be thirty-seven and…”

“I know,” she interrupted him. “Our age difference means you’ll always be waiting for me to catch up on you. That’s not fair to you, especially if we have kids. I understand you wanting to have some when you’re still in your prime.”

“Hey, watch it!” He said, pointing a threatening finger at her. “I’ll still be in my prime at forty.”

She rolled her eyes at him. “You know what I meant. Anyway, my point is, I can’t change my age, you can’t change yours, but we can adapt. So if you’re willing to wait a little, I’m willing to meet you in the middle.”

He tilted his head.

“We can talk about all this again when I’m twenty-five.”

“Just talk?”

She shook her head. “And maybe ask, who knows? It’s four years from now and plenty of time for us to sort things out, enjoy life as a couple, conquer the cooperate world…” She added teasingly. “And more importantly, you’ll be thirty-two so still very much in your prime.”

He squeezed her hand. “Watch out!” Then he smiled at her. “Why didn’t we have that conversation this morning?”

“Because you were a dick?”

“Excuse-me?”

She scratched the back of her head. “You kind of were. Throwing me running away in my face, doubting my commitment to this relationship, to you… It wasn’t fair. And it hurt.”

His emotions shifted, his happy contentment was replaced with something somber. “Did you say that in your message?”

“Yeah, among other things.”

“I’m sorry.” A beat. “I know it’s not much of an excuse but I was angry and… it’s just like you said.
People shouldn’t speak when they’re angry.” Another beat. “I know you’ve changed. I told you so in Vegas, remember? Sometimes I just—” his voice trailed down. “It’s hard to be rational where you’re concerned. Again, it’s not an excuse but... It’s true. I’m sorry I hurt you.”

She could feel he really meant it so she accepted his apology. It would take time for her to forget but she had faith in Oliver and more importantly, in herself. She knew they’d make it and that someday they’d both look back on those days with a smile on their face.

“But you know, since we’re talking about commitment, perhaps we should take a small step forward.”

“What? Do you want to change status on Facebook?”

“Well, first I’m impressed you even know what Facebook is, and second I updated all our social media weeks ago.”

“Then what are you talking about?”

“I’m talking about getting a Soulmate Certificate from the SID. To make things completely official.”

“Things?”

“Us,” she corrected. “To make us official.”

“But aren’t we already?”

“Technically yes, but earlier your mother almost stopped me from seeing you because I didn’t have a certificate and I wasn’t listed as your emergency contact…”

“Oh my god… I completely forgot to make the changes and – wait my mother was here?”

“Yeah. I guess they called her because you forgot to update your emergency contact list… but it doesn’t matter now. What’s done, is done.”

“We’ll get that certificate first thing in the morning tomorrow.”

“Maybe not first thing in the morning,” Felicity laughed, amused by the look of sheer determination on his face. “But I’ll look into it. I wonder what it entails exactly.”

“What do you mean?”

“I wonder what kind of rights and legitimacy it gives us. Let’s say, tomorrow I end up in the hospital. Who makes decisions? You or my mother?”

“Let’s not talk about any of us ending in the hospital, okay? I think we’ve had our fair share of hospitals for the next couple of years.”

“Yeah, you’re right. Sorry.” She leaned down and kissed his cheek. “Go to sleep now?” She asked.

“Just one more thing,” he told her.

“What?”

“My jacket,” he pointed at a chair where someone had put his personal belongings.

“What about it?”
“Your present is inside.”

A delighted smile stretched her lips. She got up and went to retrieve the small square box. She opened it and got out a key with a nerd emoji keychain. “What does it open?”

“My apartment. And before you freak out again, no, I’m not asking you to move in with me. This is… this is another step forward.” Felicity smiled. “The empty drawer in which you found the box was part of the gift. I cleared it so that you could put some of your stuff in it. For when you stay over,” he quickly added.

“You’re assuming I’ll be staying over…” He gave her a look and she couldn’t help but kiss him briefly on the lips. “I’m just messing with you.”

“I’ve been thinking about everything you said about the bubble and not getting lost in each other and honestly, I think it’s a pile of crap-” she opened her mouth to protest but he was faster than her, “just hear me out, okay? The truth is, it’s already too late. You’re all I can think about, even when we’re apart. I’m not saying we have to spend every moment together, I’m just saying it’s stupid to try and regulate the time we spend together. Because quite frankly, even when you’re not with me physically, you are with me. You’re in my every thought. You’re in my soul, mate…”

She laughed. “Oh my god, that was terrible! Especially your British accent.” She paused for a second. “But your speech was pretty great. And you’re right. It’s stupid to try and regulate something that wasn’t meant to be. Let’s just live.”

Oliver smiled. “Now, we can sleep,” he told her, motioning for her to lie back down beside him.

She did and closed her eyes, letting the exhaustion of the day wash over her.

“Felicity?”

“Hm?” She replied sleepily.

“I’m sorry you didn’t have the birthday of your dreams.”

“It’s okay,” she sighed, settling more heavily against him, letting his warmth surround her. “There’ll be other birthdays but there’s only one you. I take you well and healthy over the birthday of my dreams every day.”

She felt him smile and it was the last thing she remembered before darkness took over and she fell asleep.

The next morning as filled with doctors and nurses’ visits and paperwork. Roy and Thea came back before midday with fresh clothes for both Oliver and Felicity. Finally, Oliver was discharged from the hospital with orders from the doctor to stay at home and rest for at least two weeks.

“Two weeks?” He repeated as they made their way out of the hospital. “What about Q. Inc?”

“You can work from home if you don’t push yourself,” his sister reminded him as Felicity pushed his wheelchair.

“And I’ll handle things at Q. Inc,” she added. “Don’t worry about the company, just focus on getting better.”

He adjusted his position in the chair. “I can walk just fine,” he sighed.
“Hospital’s rules,” Felicity reminded him, exchanging a look with Thea.

“Ollie’s terrible at being sick,” the brunette whispered in her ear. “Good luck dealing with him.”

Felicity just smiled at her in reply. They stopped by her apartment before going to Oliver’s. Felicity packed a few things, she would be staying at Oliver’s until he had fully recovered. She was going to spend most of her evenings there anyway, to check on him and tell him about her day at Q. Inc, so it made sense for her to spend the nights there as well. She wasn’t worried at all about leaving her mother and Roy alone. They went along pretty well and they were extremely good for each other. For a long time, Roy had been alone and deprived of affection and Donna was such a joyous and generous woman, she was flooding him with motherly love and care – which he accepted As for Roy, he provided Donna with a good distraction. She had been through a lot and it was good for her to have someone to take care of and just go mother hen on.

Her mother wasn’t home but it was just as well. Felicity and Thea had to be quick, with Oliver and Roy waiting in the car.

“We should take Arrow with us,” Thea said from where she was petting the cat on Felicity’s bed. “To keep Oliver company during the day.”

Felicity chuckled but didn’t follow through on Thea’s suggestion. Arrow loved Roy and he loved her too, although he’d never admitted as much out loud. It was in the little things, how he let the little ball of fur sleep with him, how he always scratched behind her ears when she was in his lap.

Less than twenty minutes later, they were back in the car and driving to Oliver’s place. He looked tired but alert. The painkillers had dulled the pain in his ribs a little but he still hurt and Felicity still felt the echo of that pain. Not that she minded it. Oddly enough, the pain reassured her and it gave her another way to check on Oliver, make sure he was alright. He could lie to people about how he felt, but not to her.

“How are you feeling?” Thea asked her brother in the elevator.

“A bit tired,” he admitted and Felicity rubbed his back to comfort him. If she had her way, and she would, he was going to spend the next couple of weeks in bed, resting.

The elevator’s doors opened and they walked out. Thea and Roy went ahead and opened the door to Oliver’s apartment. Oliver and Felicity followed behind them and her heart jumped out of her chest when she heard people scream:

“SURPRISE!”

She swayed on her feet and only Oliver’s arm wrapped around her waist to stabilize her. They were all there, their friends: Tommy and Laurel, Diggle, his wife and their son, Sara, her mother, Barry, Iris and…

“F’licity!” JJ bumped into her legs and wrapped his arms around her calves. He looked up to her, his dark brown eyes sparkling with delight.

“Heya JJ!” She replied before looking up in confusion. “What’s all this?”

“It’s a “we’re-glad-you’re-not-dead party”,’ Iris explained, “as well as a birthday party!” She was holding a holding cake with candles, all twenty-one of them from the look of it.

“Now we know Oliver and Tommy need some rest,” Sara added, “so we won’t stay long but…”
“We really wanted to celebrate,” Donna concluded.

Oliver and Felicity exchanged a look. Then, she leaned down and lifted JJ in her arms. “Alright then,” she said. “That’s a lot of candles for one person. Wanna help me blow them?”

“Can I make a wish too?” He asked.

“Of course you can!” Felicity agreed, kissing his forehead. He giggled in delight, making her smile. It didn’t seem like it, but it was the perfect time for a party, however short it may be. After what had happened the previous day, she really needed the love and support of her friends.

Just like Sara had said, they didn’t drag out the party. But they did spend two solid hours together, eating cake, opening presents and just talking. It felt really good, like a sunny morning after a stormy night. After everyone was gone, Thea and Donna started cleaning things up while Felicity helped Oliver getting in bed. He was fast asleep before she had even closed the door to his bedroom. She moved back to the living-room and found Roy gathering her presents while Thea loaded the dishwasher. When she saw her, Donna walked to her with a smile on her face.

“Hey, honey,” she said.

“Mom,” she replied, opening her arms for a hug.

“How are you feeling?” Donna asked, squeezing her.

“I’m fine,” she said, pulling away. “Thank you for today.”

“It was nothing,” Donna assured her. “I just – I just wish your grandmother had been here today. She’d have been so proud of you, baby girl.”

Felicity’s heart clenched as she thought of her bubbe. She had been a sweet but strong woman and most importantly, she had been there for her throughout her childhood, loving her when her mother couldn’t.

“She would have been proud of you too,” Felicity told her mother, swallowing back a lump of emotions.

Donna nodded and delicately swiped her tears away with her thumbs. “So,” she cleared her throat. “Thea told me you saw Mrs. Queen yesterday at the hospital?”

Felicity nodded, her anger at what Moira had tried to do coming back in full-force. “Yeah, I had that pleasure…” she sighed and told her mother everything. “I don’t understand why she did it,” she concluded. “It’s not like she gained everything from it. She just… humiliated herself.”

Donna sighed heavily. “I think she’s desperate.”

Felicity tilted her head. “Desperate?”

Donna nodded. “From what you’ve told me, it seems like she’s built her life on lies and lies are shaky foundations. Everything has started to crumble around her. She’s lost her children, Felicity… And maybe she wasn’t a good mother to them but it doesn’t mean some part of her didn’t love them. In my opinion, what she did was the desperate attempt of a mother trying to regain some sort of control over a situation that has completely escaped her. And maybe, just maybe, she’s realized her children meant more to her than her money and reputation.”

Felicity pondered over her words for a second just as her eyes fell on Thea, who was hugging Roy
from behind. “She’s too late.” She eventually said. “And even if she wasn’t, pulling stunts like she did last night won’t help her situation.”

“You’re right. But mothers are rarely rational where their children are concerned.”

“I never thought I’d hear you defend Moira Queen.”

Donna chuckled. “I’m not defending her. I hate her for how she treated you. Nobody is allowed to treat my baby girl like she did,” she said fiercely, cupping Felicity’s cheeks. “I’m just trying to understand her.”

“Why?”

“So that Oliver and Thea can understand her too.” She paused for a second. “They act as if they’re okay but… she’s their mother. Of course, they miss her.”

Felicity nodded.

“Now, can you remind me where the bathroom is?”

“Third door to your left.”

“Thank you honey!”

Donna left then and Felicity noticed Thea had gone too.

“She got a phone call from a school friend,” Roy told her. “They’re working on a project together apparently.”

“Oh I see.”

“Are you alright, blondie?” He asked while taking a step in her direction.


Roy arched an eyebrow. “What?”

“I told Oliver I loved him yesterday at the hospital,” she whispered, to make sure nobody would hear her confession.

Roy’s eyes widened. “You did? What happened?”

“I don’t think he heard me.”

“What? No way! The guy notices everything about you. Actually, it would be kinda creepy if he weren’t your soulmate.”

“He didn’t say it back,” Felicity nervously said.

“Okay, so perhaps he didn’t hear you after all. I mean, everything was crazy last night. Your big declaration must have been lost in the confusion.”

“Yeah, I guess so,” Felicity agreed while she nervously played with the ring she was wearing. “I’m kinda relieved he didn’t hear me though, you know? Now, I’ve got another chance to tell him properly and not blurt it out like I did last night.”
“A word of advice? Don’t overthink it, blondie. If you blurt it out again, it’s fine. Look how well it worked out for me!”

“What are you kids talking about?” Donna asked from the hallway.

“Nothing,” Felicity replied. “Just silly stuff.”

The next two weeks went by in a blur of activity for Felicity. She spent her days working at Q. Inc and her nights with Oliver, filling him in about what had happened at work and discussing business related stuff with him. Obviously, they did other things aside from talking about work, but Felicity still felt as if her life revolved entirely around Q. Inc. She didn’t mind it much, she had never been one to refuse a challenge, but she missed Oliver’s presence at work. They were partners, in the true sense of the word, and she was looking forward to him coming back to work at the beginning of the following week.

They had also started the administrative procedure to get a soulmate certificate from the SID. It didn’t work like a marriage certificate at all but for example, if Felicity was injured and Oliver disagreed with Donna about the treatment, the certificate granted him enough legitimacy for the case to be brought up before a judge, who would decide in his favor or Donna’s.

On Friday morning, she came to work with her mind entirely focused on the weekend. Sunday would be the anniversary of the day she had first taken the Med on. It would also be the anniversary of Oliver’s accident. That day would always be a particularly emotionally charged day for them. But they wanted to turn those negative emotions into something happier. They’d never forget the bad memories but with time they hoped the happy memories would outweigh them and turn this fateful day of March into a bright one.

She was getting ready for a conference call at eleven and a half when the delivery man came in, later than usual.

“Good morning, Ms. Smoak,” he greeted her with a gentle smile on his face.

“Good morning, Peter. I thought I’d never see you today.”

“I’m sorry, Ms. Smoak, the traffic is crazy today because of the rally.”

“The rally? Oh yeah, Mr. Rollins is making a speech in Starling City today,” she remembered. Andrew Rollins was the head of a pro-soulmate lobby that fought for the regulation of the Med.

“It’s all crap if you want my opinion Ms. Smoak,” Peter told her. “How is forcing people to be with their soulmate any different from forcing people not to be with them like they did in the Middle Ages?” He shook his head while Felicity nodded. “We should let people be with who they want to be.” She agreed with him entirely. She didn’t believe in regulating the Med. Stopping soulmates from being together had been a mistake in the past, but forcing them to be together now would be one as well. “Hey, do you have any family left in Nevada?” Peter asked her, tearing her away from her thoughts.

“Not anymore, why?”

“Because you got a package from Nevada.” He put a box on her desk, along with a bunch of letters. Intrigued, Felicity lifted the box and shook it, trying to guess its content. It was surprisingly light for something so big.

“Well thank you, Peter. I’ll open it right away. Have a good day!”
“You too, Ms. Smoak.”

She waited until Peter was out of sight to open the box. Q. Inc’s address had been printed meaning she couldn’t even recognize the handwriting of the sender. She looked for their address, whoever they were, but there was none. Odd. She grabbed a utility knife and quickly opened the box. She frowned at the sight of brown washed-out fur. She looked up and met two button-eyes she had looked at a lot during her childhood. She took a couple steps back, her breathing erratic. Pausing for a second, she forced herself to inhale deeply. When she was a bit calmer, she took a few steps forward, her heart in her throat. It was still there, her childhood’s teddy, with a beige silk ribbon tied around its neck and a black thread triangle in lieu of a nose. With shaking hands, she reached for the toy and lifted it, slowly and carefully, as if it might break, or worse, disappear again, if she was too abrupt.

She lifted one of the bear’s paws and when she saw the seam of black thread, she was brought back to a sunny day of summer in Vegas where she had torn her teddy bear while playing outside in a park. Her bubbe, who had been watching her, had immediately offered to fix the toy and because Felicity had been extremely worried, she had used her doctor’s kit to get the bear to sleep before its surgery. They had even put a band-aid with dog prints on it over the injury afterward. Her bubbe’s neat work was still holding, even after all these years and she was staring right at it. It really was her teddy. Clutching the bear to her chest, she leaned above the box again and noticed a flash drive. She grabbed it and plugged it in her computer. Her brain was on autopilot. She wasn’t thinking about what she was doing, she was just doing it, like a robot.

There was an encrypted file on the flash drive and a video. Her hands were shaking so badly, she had to try three times before she could open it. A small choked sound escaped her when she saw a man with light grey hair and piercing blue eyes so much like her own appear on screen. “Felicity.” She pressed the space bar so hard she thought for a second she had broken it. But it worked and the video paused. Breathing through her nose, she braced herself for what was to come.

“Felicity, it’s me, Noah. Your father. If you’re watching this video, it means I’m dead. I’ve arranged for this package to be sent to you if anything were to happen to me… I guess something must have happened if you’re watching this… I’m sorry, I’m repeating myself, I’m kind of improvising here.” Her father cleared his throat. “If you haven’t already stopped this video and smashed the flash drive then you must wonder why I’m sending you this after all this time, especially if I’m no longer part of this world. Well, the truth is I feel like I owe you, and your mother, an explanation. I don’t expect anything from either of you, especially if I’m dead. I just—I just want you to know the truth about me.” He paused for a second that felt so long, Felicity had the time to consider stopping the video and actually smash the flash drive. The only thing that stopped her was the little girl who had always longed for her father’s love and approval tugging at her heart.

“I’m not a good man, Felicity, but then you’ve probably figured that one out already, haven’t you? I’m not a good man and very often I associated myself with people I would not recommend. Your mother believed I was working at a tech store but I wasn’t. I won’t dive into the details because I’m not here to confess my sins, I’m here to tell you who I was and I was a criminal. I angered some people and when I realized they might go after you and your mother, I decided to leave in order to protect you. I can already see you roll your eyes at me and think I’m making this up but I swear I’m not. I started taking the Med, went off the radar and for a long time, I managed to escape from my past by pretending I was dead. I betrayed myself over a year and a half ago when I tracked down the man who went by the name Cooper Seldon.” Felicity’s mouth opened in surprise.

“Yes, it was me who tracked down Cooper and yes, I was the one who sent the anonymous tip the FBI received. I don’t know what to say, Felicity… I left to protect you and you ended up in the arms
of a monster anyway...” He looked down for a second, his sorrow betrayed by the tremors in his voice. “You probably don’t want to hear it but I’m sorry. I’m sorry you had to go through so much, I’m sorry I wasn’t there to protect you, I’m sorry I couldn’t be the father you needed me to be.” His voice shook and he waited a second before he spoke again.

“I’m sure you don’t give a shit about me and my feelings right now but perhaps, with time, you’ll hate me less than you do right now and you’ll want to hear what your father thinks so let me tell you this: I couldn’t be prouder of you. In spite of everything, you grew up into this smart and successful young woman who graduated from MIT with two master degrees, outsmarting your old man in the process. I know it wasn’t easy for you to graduate after what happened with Cooper and I also know you haven’t exactly put your degrees to use since you started working at Q. Inc but here’s the thing… You’ve loved computers since you were old enough to go to kindergarten. Instead of playing with dolls, you played with hard drives, keyboards and computer screens. Tech is part of who you are and that monster… He’s just a malware. A horrible malware, but just malware. He can’t take away your tech, your firewalls are just too strong to let him.” He shook his head. “I realize I sound super lame but what can I say? I’m a dad. A terrible one, but still. And what I’m trying to say is, don’t let this guy ruin the one things that has always made you happy. Don’t let him win, kiddo.” Felicity was startled when she felt something wet fall on her hand. She was crying.

“I’ve left a letter for your mother in the package. Please, give it to her. As for the encrypted file on the flash drive… It’s the information to my bank account in the Caymans. I was a lucrative criminal you see? You can share the money with your mother. I know it won’t make up for years of absence but it’ll help the two of you spend the rest of your lives without having to worry about money ever again. That’s the least I can do after everything I’ve put you through. Now, it’s time for me to tell you goodbye, kiddo. I wish for you to have the most amazing career ever but more importantly, I wish for you to live a long and happy life with your soulmate, filled with laughter and children. And please know that whatever you do, you’ll always make me proud and I will always love you.”

For the longest time after the video ended, Felicity remained perfectly still, her tears silently rolling down her cheeks. She wasn’t seeing and hearing anything around her. The world could have been ending and she would have been none the wiser. It occurred to her she might be in shock. Still, she didn’t move, didn’t do anything. She was caught in a moment of absolute numbness and didn’t know how to get herself out of her stupor.

In the end, it was the shrilling sound of her phone ringing that forced her to move.

“Hello,” she said, not bothering to hide her tear laced voice.

“Felicity?”

Her heart kicked in her chest at the sound of his voice. The numbness left her body and suddenly, she was overwhelmed with feelings.


They all exploded inside her, leaving her an incoherent breathless mess.

“What’s going on? Talk to me, Felicity!”

“Oh, Oliver–” She choked on the rest of her sentence.

“What is it?”

“It’s– it’s about my father. He–” She covered her mouth to muffle a sob.
“He what?”

“I can’t talk about this over the phone,” she cried out. “I’ll come over,” she told him, about to hang up.

“Felicity wait!”

His anguish was so raw, it pierced through the turmoil of her emotions. He had her immediate attention in a second. “What?”

“Don’t drive,” he said at last. “You’re upset.” Understatement of the century. “Please don’t drive, take a cab.” There was a tremor in his voice that betrayed something extremely vulnerable in him and she knew she couldn’t refuse him.

“Okay,” she agreed. “I’ll take a cab.”

She hung up then and gathered her purse, the teddy bear and the flash drive. She left her desk without ever looking back.

The ride to Oliver’s place passed in a blur. She was lost in her thoughts, her father’s words playing on a loop in her mind.

“I’m here to tell you who I was and I was a criminal.”

“I’m sorry I couldn’t be the father you needed me to be.”

“Please know that whatever you do, you’ll always make me proud and I will always love you.”

Oliver was waiting for her with his door opened when she arrived. His eyes immediately fell on the teddy bear in her arms and they widened as understanding dawned upon him.

“Is that what I think it is?”

She had eventually told him the story of the day her father had left so of course he would recognize the childhood friend she had lost along him.

“It is,” she confirmed.

She sounded calmer than she had over the phone, she had stopped crying some time during the ride over.

“Tell me what happened.” Oliver sat on the couch and tugged on her hand so that she’d sit next to him. He didn’t let go of her hand as she started talking and told him everything about the package and the message on the flash drive.

“Do you want to listen to it again together?” He asked when she was done.

She nodded and they played the video again on his laptop.

When it was over, Oliver let out the breath he’d been holding.

“I’m sorry, Felicity, I’m so sorry.” Were his first words. He brought her hand to his lips instead and kissed her knuckles.

She snorted as more tears welled up in her eyes. “Me too.”
She looked away from him and he let her, giving her the time and space she needed to organize her thoughts.

But she couldn’t.

She didn’t know what to think, even less what she was feeling.

“I’m so confused,” she eventually said. “He’s been gone for over fifteen years and now he’s sending me a three-minute video telling me he was never really gone and suddenly I’m supposed to be okay? How can a three-minute video make up for fifteen years of absence?”

“It doesn’t,” Oliver was quick to tell her. “And I don’t think that’s what he wanted.”

“Good! Because it doesn’t make things better. If anything, it makes them worse! Knowing he was so close, knowing he kept tabs on me while I couldn’t do the same for him…” She buried her face in her hands and Oliver rubbed her back as she cried all the tears she had in her body. Shortly after her father left, she’d stopped crying, not wanting to shed a tear on a man who could so easily turn his back on his family. But they were all coming out now and there was no stopping them.

She slid off the couch and Oliver went with her, holding her close to him as she soaked the fabric of his shirt. He held her tight, keeping her together as she broke apart in his arms.

“I hate him so much!” She sobbed and Oliver let her even though they both knew it wasn’t true.

Her emotions went as deep as the ocean and she probably would have drowned in her anger and grief if Oliver hadn’t been there with her, keeping her solidly anchored to the ground. His love, so strong and beautiful, was the lighthouse keeping her sane even as the most violent storm raged inside her. With gentle touches, soft kisses and comforting words, he helped calm her, until they were both sitting on the floor, their backs to the couch, and tightly clinging to the other.

“I hate him so much,” she repeated, but her words had lost their venom.

Slowly, Oliver untangled himself from her and grabbed a box of tissues on his coffee table. He remained silent as she dried her cheeks and blew her nose.

“How can he still affect me this much after all this time?”

“He’s your father,” Oliver reminded her. “He’ll always affect you, just like my parents will always affect me.” He took both her hands in his and squeezed her fingers. “May I?” He asked and the seriousness she could feel in him told her he had something important to say.

“Your father and I have both failed you, Felicity.” She opened her mouth to protest but he stopped her. “Please, let me finish.” She nodded, not liking where he was going but respecting him enough to let him say the words. “We’ve both failed you. We made you feel unloved and unwanted. Him, when he left you, and me, when I was sleeping my way through my teen years. The mistakes we made… they made you withdraw into yourself and prevented you from trusting people and opening up to them.” Again, she opened her mouth but he didn’t let her speak. “I know. It wasn’t just us. But still, we are both partly to blame for your trust issues.” He paused for a second, carefully picking his next words. “I don’t think your father made this video to make up for his absence. He made it so that you would know why he did what he did. He made it to give you closure. Now, you don’t have to understand his reasons. It’s actually okay if you don’t accept them and if you’re mad at him. I’m pretty sure he didn’t expect you to forgive him. As he said, he just wanted you to know the truth so that you would stop wondering, so that you would stop blaming yourself.”

“I wasn’t–”
“And yet you were!” He cut her off. “Remember when you told me you thought he had left because you’d messed up with his computer? Some parts of you thought you had caused him to leave. Just like some parts of you thought you weren’t good enough for me.”

She looked down, her heart clenching painfully in her chest.

“But now… now you know it wasn’t something you did that caused him to leave. You wanted closure and you have it. It will take you some time to process everything you’ve learnt and if you want to be angry, it’s completely okay. You may never be able to forgive him but you can start forgiving yourself. You can start healing.”

She looked up again and met his eyes. Her heart swelled in her chest with pride and love as she stared at this amazing man, wondering what she’d done to deserve him.

She had been confused and unable to decipher her thoughts and emotions but he had, and he had found the right words. He’d said what she needed to hear and she had never been more grateful for him than she was in this moment.

“I love you,” she said, unable to hold back the words for another second. “I love you so much, Oliver,” she said again, as the look on his face morphed to a look of sheer happiness. “Thank you for being my soulmate.”

He didn’t say anything, just crashed his lips against hers in a searing kiss.

He tugged on her hands to bring her closer to him and she let him, as eager to feel him against her as he was. She ended up straddling his lap, her fingers madly running through his hair while he kissed her deeper than he ever had before.

When her lungs started to burn from the lack of air, they pulled apart. She threw her head back and let out a deep sigh of pleasure. Oliver, who couldn’t seem to be able to let go of her, nudged the collar of her blouse open before trailing open-mouthed kisses down the column of her throat and to her collarbone. She gasped when he sucked on her collarbone, marking her. She dug her nails in his neck, leaving a mark of her own on his skin.

He found her mouth again and started kissing her with renewed passion. He moved one of his hands to the back of her head and angled it so that he could kiss her just how he wanted to. He took possession of her mouth with his lips and tongue and she let him, surrendering to all the things he was making her feel.

For a moment, they were just doing that, kissing the other as if there was no tomorrow. They kissed and nipped and sucked and loved each other with their lips and tongues until they could no longer think and just feel. Felicity’s heart was so overwhelmed, with everything she was feeling – love, passion, desire – and everything he was feeling – love, passion, desire – she thought it was going to burst where it was pounding in her chest.

Once again, they parted to get some air. This time, it was Felicity’s turn to explore him and she did it, eagerly kissing down the line of his jaw. His scruff rasped against her softer one in the most delicious way. She felt him shiver against her when she pressed kisses down his throat and she felt a thrill run through her as she realized the power she had over him. It was only fair since he held so much over her as well.

He didn’t stay still as she kissed him. His hands moved to the front of her blouse and deftly unbuttoned it. He then pushed it open, his fingers caressing her skin as he revealed it to his hungry eyes. She gasped when his thumbs brushed her hard nipples through the lace of her bra. She pulled
away from him and met his eyes. His pupils were entirely dilated, the blue lost in a sea of black.

“Oliver,” she breathed out.

“Felicity,” he all but growled.

A heartbeat passed before they were kissing again. They parted so that Oliver could get rid of his Henley and the tee he was wearing under it. Meanwhile, Felicity threw her blouse away carelessly. She swallowed when she saw Oliver shirtless again. It didn’t matter that she had seen him without a shirt on countless times before, he was so beautiful he still took her breath away.

Her eyes caught the bruise on his ribs, where he had been hurt two weeks ago. She could have lost him then, just like she could have lost him in the car accident that had scarred his back.

“I’m alright,” he assured her, having followed her thoughts.

She smiled, but she still needed to touch him, needed to feel his life beneath her palm. She dragged her nails down one pec and his abs flexed. She grinned but he was quick to kiss her triumph off her. She bit his lower lip in reply. His groan of approval made her positively thrum. His hands moved to her back, where they unclasped her bra. Her insides tightened in anticipation. Heat pooled low in her belly as he hooked his thumbs in the straps and dragged them down her arms.

He leaned down and placed a kiss on her chest, right where her heart was beating like crazy against her ribs. Then he swiftly rolled them over, until she was lying on the floor with him on top of her. She kicked off her heels as he slowly started kissing down her body. And where he didn’t kiss her skin, he caressed her with both hunger and reverence. When his lips found her soulmark, she arched her back as sparks of pleasure jolted through her. She could almost see the thread connecting them when she closed her eyes, fed as it was by the intensity of what they were both feeling. It was strong and vibrant and so beautiful.

He kissed her soulmark again and she rubbed her thighs together, anything to relieve the ache she was feeling. Oliver looked up, grinning and he looked so incredibly young with his cheeky smile and messed up hair, she willed herself to commit this moment to memory. She wanted to remember him looking this happy and this carefree.

“I’ll take care of it,” he told her, nudging her thighs open.

She felt herself blush, but she didn’t know if it was because of his words or because of how quickly she spread her legs for him. He was quick to rid her of her tights and skirt. She was soon naked, except for the thong she had worn to work, and writhing beneath him, but he seemed to be in no hurry to touch her where she wanted, no scratch that, where she needed him the most.

He kissed his way back up and captured her lips for another passionate kiss that stole what little breath she had left.

“Oliver,” she whimpered, tugging at his hair, when he moved from her lips to her cheeks, her nose, her jaw, everywhere but down where she wanted him.

Finally, he slipped his hand in her underwear and found her clit. She moaned loudly when he lazily circled it with his thumb. With his free hand, he caressed her breasts, his thumb grazing one nipple then the other. She sucked in a breath and arched her back, pressing her body closer to his. Just the feeling of his hot flesh against hers was enough to light a fire inside her.

“Oh god,” she panted, when he spread her wetness, coating his fingers in her essence. He slipped one finger, then two, inside her and she groaned her approval, loudly.
“You feel so fucking good,” he whispered against her lips, his voice breathy.

“Right back at you,” she replied, nipping at his lower lip.

He chuckled and pressed his lips to her for another kiss. He set up a rhythm with his fingers inside of her and his thumb on her clit, rapidly bringing her to the edge of an orgasm. His pleasure was meddling with hers, making her feeling things tenfold.

“Oliver,” she panted between kisses as she felt something coil deep inside of her. She ground up on his hand, needing more, craving more. “Oliver,” she repeated, begging for more.

His mouth left her lips and he moved down, sucking on her left nipple, while he fondled the right one with his free hand. She felt the tension inside her grow tighter, ready to snap. But, in spite of Oliver’s desire fueling her inner fire, she wasn’t quite there yet and he felt it. He released her breasts, making her whimper at the loss of contact, and moved downer. He replaced his fingers inside her with his tongue and she yelped when he just dived in, and sucked on her clit.

Her toes curled and she cried out, loud enough to make her feel self-conscious for a second, until she realized he loved how loud she was being.

“Fuck,” she cursed. “Oliver, you– I– fuck–” she babbled incoherently as he flattened his tongue against her clit.

She gripped his hair and pressed to bring him and his wicked tongue closer to her core. He started building her up again, the sensation of his scruff against her inner thigh added to the things he was doing to her, in her, with his tongue were sending her higher and higher.

He touched her breasts with his hands, and sucked on her clit, hard. She felt her body tense and then she was falling over the edge, shouting his name, as waves and waves of pleasure crashed through her.

He helped her down from her high by kissing her, the tangy taste of her on his tongue making something inside her throb.

More.

She wanted more.

“Told you I’d take care of it,” he whispered in the shell of her ear and there was no mistaking his smugness.

“Let’s take care of you now,” she told him when she recovered enough of her bearings. She eagerly reached for the fly of his pants but he must have sensed that she intended to do more than help him find his release because he caught her wrists to stop her.

She arched an eyebrow in question.

He closed his eyes and pressed his forehead against hers. He was fighting with himself to regain his control but she wanted none of that. “I’m not sure this is a good idea,” he eventually said.

“Why?”

“You’ve been through a lot today, we shouldn’t–“

“Oliver,” she cut him off, “I’ve never been surer of anything else in my life before. I want you. I
want to be yours. Completely.”

Her words left no room for interpretation. She was ready for them to replace the fragile thread connecting them with something far stronger and unbreakable. She wanted to complete their bond.

“Oliver,” she said, kissing the line of his jaw until she reached his ear, “make love to me,” she whispered, speaking both with her voice and with her heart.

His resistance came tumbling down like a house of cards. Before she knew it, he was up on his feet and she was in his arms. She wrapped her legs around his waist as he walked them to his room, pure determination lighting his gaze.

He let her fall on her back on his bed and she raised herself on her elbows to watch him as he undid his pants and pushed them down his legs. She bit her lower lip, anticipation tightening her insides once again, when he stepped out of them before joining her on the mattress.

He leaned in and kissed her, softly, gently.

When they parted, he pressed his forehead against hers again, and she felt him shiver where his body pressed against her.

She put a hand on his chest, over his heart, and smiled when she felt it pound in time with hers. His soulmark was bigger than she had ever seen it.

“Condom?” He asked.

“I’m on the pill,” she replied. “You clean?”

He nodded, his nose rubbing against hers.

“Good,” she said. They had been separated by various things throughout their life. She didn’t want anything between them, not even protection, when they finally came together and became one.

“Felicity–” Oliver whispered, nuzzling her cheek gently.

“Kiss me already!” She commanded.

He did as he was told and brought his lips to hers. She keened when his tongue sought hers. It amazed her how strongly he affected her, even with such a simple gesture – compared to all the other things they had done in and outside the bedroom.

He rolled on top of her and they shed the rest of their clothes, their underwear, together, slowly, reverently. They were both aware there would be no coming back after that, they would be tied together for eternity. It was without the shadow of a doubt the most important moment of their lives and they wanted to commit it to memory.

Once they were naked, they took their time kissing each other leisurely and caressing their bodies slowly, gently, mapping the other with their fingers. The experience felt almost religious to Felicity. She touched his body like one would pray at an altar, and she worshipped him, the other-half of her. And she found grace when he touched her back and worshipped her as well, loving her the same way she loved him.

It left them both shaking, shaking with lust, desire, love and reverence.

Until finally, she felt his cock brush against her wet folds. She whimpered at the sensations it elicited
within her. She sucked in a breath when she felt him grab himself and position his length at her entrance.

“Look at me, Felicity,” he whispered, his voice making a thousand sparks of electricity explode inside her.

She opened her eyes, they had fluttered close without her realizing, and met his gaze. He started pushing inside her and the moment he did, she felt her heart swell with love in her chest. The thread of their connection stretched, bringing their souls closer, as they physically joined.

She felt some pain and she let out a sharp breath and then he was buried inside her, her thighs gently cradling his hips.

He remained perfectly still inside her, letting her get used to the sensation. She wanted to tell him it was pointless, she’d never get used to feel him so close, but she didn’t. She focused on what she felt instead, on how incredible he felt inside her. The physical discomfort was mild, drowned by the love she felt coming from both of them. He peppered her face with kisses and she closed her eyes, letting him kiss her everywhere.

“You good?” He asked against her lips.

“Yeah,” she nodded.

He captured her lips as he started moving against her, slowly, as he was trying to figure out what she liked. Her feet fell in the crook of his legs and she panted in pleasure. The more he moved inside her, the more she felt the tension from before build inside her again. The sensations were made even more intense because she felt him take as much pleasure as he was giving her.

“You’re so beautiful,” he said against her ear.

“You make me beautiful,” she replied breathlessly.

He pulled back and thrust back in, harder than before, making her gasp. He reached for her hand, which had been raking his sides, making goosebumps break all over his skin, and placed them on either side of her head on the bed. He intertwined their fingers as he set a faster pace, bringing them closer to their release.

They started kissing again, their tongues meeting in time with his thrusts inside her.

Felicity was feeling so full, both in her core and in her heart, it was almost too much for her to handle. And so she didn’t and she abandoned herself to the moment, to Oliver.

He took everything she had to give, giving back just as much.

He let go of one of her hands and reached down for her clit. It didn’t take long for her to go over the edge. Lights exploded behind her eyelids and he caught his name on her lips with his own. Her release triggered his own and she felt him still above her as he emptied himself inside her. She clutched his shoulder with her free hand, holding on for dear life.

“God, you’re amazing,” he told her as the delicious, pleasure laden fog lifted from their minds.

“Right back at you,” she said again, earning a grin from him.

He pressed a chaste kiss to her mouth and slipped out of her. She immediately missed him.
He got up from the bed, unashamed in his nudity and threw over his shoulder “be right back” before slipping inside the bathroom.

Felicity smiled as her fingers found her soulmark.

Touching the mark on her skin felt like a slap that cleared out the last remnants of pleasure inside her.

Panic seized her heart as she realized that, as good as this had been, it hadn’t been great. She hadn’t felt anything in her soulmark during their bonding.

Her fingers clutching the comforter on Oliver’s bed, she felt tears prickle at the corner of her eyes when she realized she wasn’t feeling their soulmate bond, just the same fragile thread connecting them.

They hadn’t bonded.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry about the cliffy ending guys!!! Please, don't be mad, everything will be just fine by the time the story ends!

So, what did you guys think?
Don't hesitate to tell me in a review or leave a kudo. They both make me incredibly happy!

You can also find me on Twitter: https://twitter.com/JustineC_M
and Tumblr: http://charlie-leau.tumblr.com/
Don't be afraid to come and talk to me. I don't bite! :)

End Notes

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