Rising Above The Ashes

by Wally Birb

Summary

When Felicity Smoak was 19, SHIELD forced her to join their ranks to work off the crimes that the people closest to her committed with her super virus. Also when she was 19, a kill order went out that forced three of SHIELD's top agents to defect so that she could escape with her life. No one knows why exactly the order went out, but years later the answer comes while Felicity is hacking investigating SHIELD.

Of course, knowing why it happened? Well that just puts more of a bounty on her head.

Notes

hahahaha guess who sucks at summaries?
okie dokie, so I changed Felicity's backstory a WHOLE DAMN LOT for this one so hold onto your hats. All will be explained eventually.

See the end of the work for more notes.
There was much more to Felicity Smoak than what Team Arrow knew.

Diggle and Sara knew more than Oliver due to the sheer number of nights they’d spent on her couch or she’d spent on theirs. She was as close to those two as anyone in her situation really could be. Nights of drinking games and TV show marathons, inside jokes and reassurances, kicking ass and taking names had bonded her to the two of them like nothing else could have.

Sara and Felicity had fully embraced the normality of being best friends with someone of the same gender: after a mere handful of awkward meetings, they’d become joined at the hip whenever Sara was in town. Digg and Felicity had always been each other’s touchstone in Oliver’s crazy: Felicity was the first one Digg told about Lyla, and Digg was the one to assure Felicity that whatever she was hiding was her secret to keep, but that he’d listen when or if she ever needed him to.

Even Roy had become a pseudo little brother after he broke into her apartment because his own trailer was too quiet without Thea. They had quietly bonded over sci-fi movies and ice cream and came out with a stronger familial relationship than either of them had had in years.

And Oliver…

The point is that against her better judgement, Felicity had developed a shocking number of attachments in Starling. She’d tried to avoid it. She played dumb with Oliver even though she’d known that he was the Hood from the start. She promised herself that she wouldn’t get in too deep with his operation--first by deciding not to help until they’d saved Walter, then deciding that with Oliver gone, the Hood should stay gone.

She didn’t know how this group of idiots had weaseled their way into her heart.

She even took a bullet for Sara.

Sara even kept quiet about the scars on Felicity’s back when she’d stitched her up. She held her silence for a week before pushing the subject over wine on Felicity’s couch.

"So...the scars on your back. Those look like whip scars."

“How do you know what whip scars look like?” Felicity hedged.

Sara grinned. “It’s cute that you thought that would work. I guess I’m just...Smoak, those seem like some pretty gnarly scars. I get that you don’t want to talk about them--otherwise you would’ve brought them up instead of your wisdom teeth--but I want to know you better. I know that you keep things in the dark for the team, and I respect it if you wanna draw the line with me, too. You’re just too important for me not to offer support, I guess.”

“Eloquent,” Felicity quipped weakly, downing her glass of wine. “I didn’t bring them up because I’m not proud of them. I’m sorry, Sara, but I can’t tell you everything.”

“Can I just ask one question?”

“I’ll try my best to answer.”

“Who made them?”
“...My...father...” Felicity traced her finger over the surface of her glass. She cleared her throat and forced a smile at Sara’s enraged expression. “So, what movie do you wanna watch tonight? Wanna have another go at trying to understand Inception?”

After that, Sara had stayed silent about it. It felt better, sharing just a piece of her burden with the woman that was quickly becoming her best friend. Not only that, but suddenly Sara had decided to stick around and basically declared herself Felicity’s roommate. It was tough to keep the rest of her secrets, but having Sara there was easily one of the highlights of her year.

Until, of course, Sara had to duck out to recruit the League of Assassins, but she’d left a note to warn Felicity so she was still Felicity’s number one best roommate experience.

It was precisely that bond--and the other’s she’d forged--that swindled her into believing that she was safe again. But the information on Felicity’s screen told her something completely different.

She quickly threw her laptop out of her window and started packing a bag--keeping both Sara’s and Natasha’s advice in mind.

Rule number one of going on the run: no electronics.

Felicity crushed her phone under her heel and took out the sim card before flushing it down her toilet. She packed her necessities--clothes that Natasha had recommended should she ever find herself in disguise and cold hard cash that she kept a good supply of. She changed into an outfit that was the opposite of her usual style and pulled on a wig that turned her long blonde hair into a short, dark red bob.

She washed off her make up that covered her freckles and added a few more before making her eye makeup darker and heavier than she had in years. She pulled on a black beanie and a loose fitting hoodie before snatching her go bag.

She left her keys and cut through her neighborhood to the house of an elderly man who never used his car. Silently, she prayed for forgiveness before hot wiring the vehicle and driving away from Starling.

As the city dwindled in her rearview mirror, she blinked away tears. Oliver would be fine. Digg would be fine. Roy would be fine. Sara would be fine.

No one needed her here--that’s how Clint and Natasha needed her to live. She’d needed to be able to be comfortable in her skin one second and then gone the next.

She’d lived like this since SHIELD realised who exactly wrote her virus. She’d lived like this since she’d been forced into their ranks. She’d lived like this since she’d discovered something hinky going on and made the mistake of sharing. She’d lived like this since the kill order went out. She’d lived like this since Nat and Clint helped her disappear.

She’d been prepared to live like this since the night she’d stopped her father from taking out his anger on her mother. She’d been prepared since she’d earned her scars.

She drove until she was in Keystone and stopped at a mall to find an electronics store. She’d made quick work of erasing every appearance of the blonde Felicity Smoak in Starling and created her new identity from scratch.

Barbara Gordon was as good a name as any--after all, Clint already called her ‘Babs’ because of all of her babbling.
She bought a few burner phones, a tablet, a wireless charger, and a backpack. She joked with the cashier about starting a new life without realizing how much of a hassle it would be. She stole the car of a frat boy who’d been charged with sexual harassment before the case mysteriously went away and back tracked to Central City to pad her cosmetics and wardrobe to have enough for people to buy the whole “newly graduate who had decided to go on a roadtrip” cover.

Mentally, she thanked her brain for allowing her to graduate so early that she was still young enough to pull it off.

She stole another car and switched their plates before she drove toward New York and made it eight straight hours before she had to stop, the tears in her eyes too overwhelming to drive safely.

Her grip on the steering wheel tightened, knuckles turning white.

Making a snap decision, she pulled out the shittiest of her burner phones and dialed Digg’s number.

"Diggle." He answered formerly, but she could hear the exhaustion in his tone.

"Digg," Felicity sniffed and brushed her sleeve over her wet cheeks.

"Felicity?" Digg’s voice switched from tired to alert in a second. "Where are you!? I went to your place and it looks like a tornado hit it and then when we tried to fill out a missing person's report--"

“I have to go, Digg.” Felicity’s voice sounded hollow even to herself as she worked to keep her sorrow out of it. “I...listen, you know that thing that I never told you about? Well, it’s going on again, and I don’t think it ever stopped. So, for your own good, you and Oliver need to forget that you knew me, okay?”

"Felicity--"

“John!” Felicity’s voice cracked as she yelled his name to cut him off. She blinked back tears and took a deep breath. “I’ll let you guys know if this all blows over--if I can come back.”

Digg sighed heavily. "When this all blows over--and it better--you’ll always have a place with us. A place on this team."

Felicity hummed and nodded before snapping the flip phone in half and throwing it out the window of her car.

She stopped at the nearest Starbucks to refuel.

Afterall, she’d definitely need to put some distance between herself and that call, now. And now? Now, the further she got away from that phone, the further away she was from Felicity Smoak.

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After a month on the run, she became a master of digging into SHIELD while stealing breaks in coffee shops with wifi. Playing the part of a hipster that’s traveling the country for her post college vacation/novel research, Felicity was able to blend in superbly well. Anytime anyone questioned how hard she was glaring at her laptop, she begged off with an excuse of writer’s block. Anytime someone questioned her typing furiously, she grinned and shot off with a ramble about the gift of inspiration.

She did, however, grow too complacent.
Felicity shouldn’t have booked the hotel room, but she’d been sure that SHIELD--or Hydra, as she was becoming more and more aware--hadn’t realized that she’d been snooping in the first place. All she wanted was a firm bed and sheets that had been changed. She wanted a shower with enough pressure to bruise her shoulders and she wanted a goddamn complementary massage, dammit.

So, she booked the hotel room before she’d even left the small town she’d stopped off at. She booked the room for two weeks and planned her vacation from all of this by the minute. When she got there, she was feeling good. She’d even flirted with the valet--a girl a little older than her by the name of Penny--and got promised careful treatment. She checked in and made her way to her room, intent on collapsing on her bed.

She opened the door and was already giddy in anticipation for the hot shower that she was going to take.

She froze in place and felt cold fear replace her excitement when she came face to face with the hard blue eyes of her favorite archer--who also happened to be a SHIELD agent.

“Clint, heeeeeeey,” Felicity drew out the greeting as she forced a smile at him. “How you doin’?”

“Me? Oh, I’m peachy.” Clint smirked, but played along. He grabbed her bag for her and closed her door before leaning on it and blocking her escape. “What about you? Anything new?”

“Oh, well, funny you should ask.” Felicity chuckled uncomfortably. She grabbed her bag and held up one finger in the universal ‘wait’ gesture. She plopped it down on the bar in her room and began digging through it. “I’ve just been enjoying a road trip lately.”

“I heard. How’s your novel going, Rambo?” Clint raised a single eyebrow.

“Rambo? What happened to Babs?” Felicity found the device that she was looking for and flicked it on. “Okay, that should jam the frequencies of any bugs on this floor.”

“You gonna tell me what’s going on now?” Clint asked, gruff worry slipping into his voice. “I tried to check in with you three weeks ago to find out that--according to all digital records--Felicity Smoak never existed.”

“SHIELD is compromised.” Felicity blurted. She set the signal jammer down and ripped off her hat and wig to comb out her hair with her fingers nervously.

Clint blinked for a minute before nodding slightly. “Okay, okay, sure. One question: what the hell is happening!?”

Felicity gnawed on her bottom lip and looked up at him. “Okay, so you know that I’ve been off and on going through SHIELD’s files ever since Phil tried to recruit me and you and Nat had to go rogue to save my life? Well, I sorta might’ve...stopped doing that for a bit of time.”

“This while you were busy cheating on me with the other archer?” Clint asked, a slight vehemence at the mention of Oliver’s alter ego.

“Oh, Barton. No archer could ever replace you in my heart.” Felicity joked easily. “But, yeah, I was too busy to work on it when I was working with the Arrow and the Canary. Anyway, after the March on Starling, the Canary left, so I was left with a lot more time to delve into my own extra research and I...may have found a conspiracy so huge that it sounds like a ridiculous plot to spy based movie.”

Clint narrowed his eyes slightly. “How much evidence do you have?”
“A lot,” Felicity breathed out. She shook her head and pulled up her tablet. She opened the encrypted file on Hydra that she’d compiled. She handed the tablet over to Clint and shared a serious look with him.

He flipped through the different pieces of evidence and pursed his lips. Felicity knew what he was seeing. Everything from Project Insight to some of his and Natasha’s missions to the literal Winter fucking Soldier.

“Felicity, this isn’t good. This- this means…”

“Yeah.” Felicity breathed out, dread keeping her voice small and quiet. “SHIELD is Hydra.”
If Introductions Are To Be Made

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It took two weeks for Clint to go through all of Felicity’s evidence—and a part of her despaired at the fact that every day of the relaxing break she’d planned was scrapped in favor of being interrogated all day. Every day. For two weeks.

He didn’t even try to stick to the matter at hand, either. Once he got her worn down enough, he just started demanding to know more about her life.

“Do you have a boyfriend? A girlfriend?”

“What is your sexuality, anyway?”

“Did you get any pets?”

“Okay, so I know that the other one is Queen, but who’s the blonde in the black leather?”

“Are you really going undercover as a punk hipster crossover?”

“How do you know so much about college culture? You were barely a teenager when you went!”

“Is throwing a pillow at my head really any way to treat a dear friend? I’m shocked and appalled, Rambo, shocked and appalled!”

Rambo, as Clint had eventually confessed (after Felicity refused to speak to him for half an hour) was short for “Rambles”. Apparently, Clint had come up with it the day after their last check in and had been excited to show it off—which was, he claimed, the main reason he had tracked her down.

What Felicity didn’t expect was that after Clint had finished reading the evidence, he had declared that he was taking her to the Avengers.

Hence their current stand off.

“No.” Felicity crossed her arms over her chest and glared at Clint, who stared back at her unbothered. The two of them were standing outside of Clint’s beaten up car in the parking lot of the hotel, each on either side on his open trunk as Clint kept shoving Felicity’s duffel bag into the trunk and Felicity kept pulling it out. “I’m not going to New York. I’m not going anywhere near a SHIELD base.”

“Rambo, you are paranoid because you’re scared that they’re going to kill you. Do you know what my friends and I do? We save people!” Clint adopted a patient tone as if he was coaxing a particularly stubborn child into taking a fucking nap.

“No offense to you and your friends, but you’re all shit at keeping the little guys safe! You’re too busy saving the world to bother to leave enough world for anyone to live in!” Felicity growled irritably.

“Didn’t you tell me that your grandfather was liberated from a concentration camp by Steve? How’s that for looking out for the little guy?!” Clint’s lips twitched downward.

“Steve Rogers works for SHIELD.”
“So do I.”

“And I didn’t want to drag you into this, either! I know you, so I know that I can trust you. Same with Nat, because God help us if she ever even thinks about going evil, but I do not want to put anyone in your position. Worst case scenario: Captain America is a fucking Nazi. Reasonable case scenario: Captain America is more loyal to SHIELD than some random woman who hacked into a government agency to get her evidence. Best case scenario: I make Captain fucking America disassemble the very agency that was left as a legacy of and for him and his ideals because even this new part of his life is spoiled by Hydra!” Felicity huffed and narrowed her eyes at Clint. “Why the fuck are you smiling?”

A throat clearing behind her made Felicity squeak and turn quickly to come face to face with the chiseled jawline of the literal American Dream.

“I believe it’s my decision on what I do with valuable intel,” Steve Rogers’ voice was calming but unrelenting as he stared down at Felicity. “And if what you say is happening is true, I don’t care what I’ll have to, I will do it. Besides, I can’t say that I was always the best at taking orders blindly.”

“Well fuck me.” Felicity mumbled.

“No thanks,” Clint quipped. “You’re more like a little sister than anything else, sorry.”

Felicity turned and gave Clint a withering glare. “Shut up, Arrow Jr.”

“Junior!?” Clint squawked indignantly.

“Clint, focus.” Steve interrupted the two of them. He turned to Felicity and gave her a serious look. “I can understand how you might be wary of us, but you need to understand that if what you’re saying is true, it’s a problem we will have to deal with.”

Felicity bit on the inside of her cheek and looked up at him nervously. His stupid blue eyes felt like they were looking through her soul. She sighed and tugged her porkpie hat down lower over her wig self consciously. “I don’t want to go to the tower, but I’ll meet you guys somewhere else to show you everything.”

Clint scoffed. “Like we’re gonna let you out of our sight so that you can bolt like a scared little rabbit.” Felicity rolled her eyes and dug in the side pocket of her duffel before forcefully shoving a gold chain necklace with a small golden star of David into Clint’s hand. He looked down at it, eyes widening slightly. “Is this--?”

“Insurance that I’ll come back.” Felicity cut him off. “You know how much that means to me, it’s the last thing I have left of my old life.”

Clint nodded, his wit knocked off kilter by the weight of the moment. “I’ll keep it safe.”

Felicity nodded once at the both of them and grabbed her duffel, off to find the car that she’d driven to the hotel. She stopped and gave Captain America a nod.

“Where are we meeting?” She heard Steve yell as she walked by.

“Find a secure, public place. Think dropsite type of qualifications. I’ll find you.” Felicity answered over her shoulder.

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“I’m telling Nat that you planted a tracer on Captain America.” Clint accused as Felicity walked up to the two of them at a small cafe a town over.

Felicity huffed out a laugh and slid into the seat across from them. She held out her hand to Clint and raised her eyebrows. Without a word, he handed the necklace over to her, both of them ignoring Steve’s curious eyes. “You and I both know that Nat would buy me ice cream if that was true.”

“Okay, but I tried to throw you off! I went a town over and had Stevie here pick the location! There’s no way you could’ve predicted that,” Clint crossed his arms over his chest.

“I’ve spent years with you, Clint. I know you pretty well. And I’ve read both of y’all’s S.H.I.E.L.D files. I knew you would try to challenge me by using Captain Rogers and I also knew that you,” Felicity turned to Steve. “Would try to give me an advantage by picking the location the same way Clint would.”

The two blinked at her for a second before looking at each other, Clint with an exasperated expression and Steve with a triumphant one. “Told you she didn’t tag me without me knowing.”

“I’m feeling very unpatriotic at this moment.” Clint informed him dryly.

“Ms. Gordon,” Steve smiled politely at her from across the table. Felicity smiled back at him and subtly pushed some of her wig out of her face to remind herself that she was still in disguise. “You had information for me?”

She nodded and turned to dig her tablet out of her purse before handing it over to him.

“Look that over and double check everything. If you need to talk with me go to the voice recorder app—I switched it up so that you can leave me messages and I’ll leave you some back. Now, I have my star, you guys have your information, are we done here?” Felicity asked as Steve took the tablet and began looking it over.

“If half of what Clint has told me is true,” Steve’s eyes flickered up from the tablet to look into Felicity’s. “You need protection.”

“If half of what Clint has told you is true, you’d know that I can handle myself. Have done for years.” Felicity rebutted. She saw Clint’s face turn sour and rolled her eyes. “Trust me, you two dropping in on me was a reminder that I can’t grow complacent. I’ll be staying off grid from now on.”

Steve looked at the small girl. Clint had briefed him a bit. Graduated high school whilst barely a teenager, went to the same college as Tony and got two masters in fields Steve could barely understand. Rough home life in the form of an abusive father who fucked off after accidentally going too far one night and killing Felicity’s mother. Raised by maternal grandfather who passed away when she was only fourteen.

Her anger motivated her to write a virus to help people, but it was misused by the people she trusted with it—one committed a felony and then immediately pinned the crime on her, one tried to sell it to the highest bidder. S.H.I.E.L.D decided to recruit her, but after merely a month with them, a kill order went out. Coulson, Natasha, and Clint had all turned their backs on S.H.I.E.L.D to help her escape and Fury worked overtime to call it all off as soon as possible, but that experience had left its mark. She’d changed her last name to match her grandfather’s and fled to Starling City without looking back.

She wasn’t even 25 yet and she was an orphan without anything to bond her to this life.

“Rambo, you can’t.” Clint looked around, slightly panicked by her words. “You’re just a kid, you
need to live your life.”

“Tried that.” Felicity pointed out. “It didn’t take.”

“You need to live out in the open,” Steve interrupted Clint. “I know what’s it like to just...drift. To wake up one day and not feel like you belong in the world around you, but that’s why you need to create bonds with other people. You need trust someone, because you can’t--no one can--live this life alone.”

“Think of your pops, Rambo.” Clint leaned forward, a determined look staring back at Felicity’s startled one. “What was the last thing he asked of you?”

"Khamudi, this path you are on...please don’t walk it alone.”

“Not fair.” Felicity mumbled as she settled in her seat, her slight pout actually making her look her age for the first time since Steve laid his eyes on her. “You promised you would never play that card-”

“Unless I had to so that you could keep your promise.” Clint finished for her, eyes softening. “Babs, you’re like a little sister to me. Please don’t just...fuck off to nowheresville. I don’t care if I have to tear the other Avengers apart, I will keep you safe. I promise.”

Felicity was silent for a beat as Steve looked between the pair, trying to get a feeling for the relationship between them. He didn’t really know Clint all that well--usually only seeing him on missions or with Natasha between them--but from his experience with the man, Clint was usually the one holding himself back from trusting anybody. To see him with Felicity, so earnestly begging for her to let them in…

It was almost jarring, sometimes, just how much he didn’t know about his teammates.

“...Okay, fine.” Felicity mumbled, earning surprised glances from the other side of the table.

“Sweet! My favorite genius is going to get to meet my least favorite genius!” Clint cooed. “I do believe that this momentous occasion calls for pie!”

Chapter End Notes

okie dokie, so if you don't follow the first story in this series, I gotta give u guys a warning:

I am going to put writing on hiatus for a while because of some personal issues, some good (birthday busy) some bad (classified) but I don't know how long it'll be before I can clear my mind and write well again so I'm dumping all of the stuff I've already written onto here. I didn't want this to interfere, but unfortunately, my mind rarely listens to me. C'est la vie.
A Monument To Tony Stark's Fragile Masculinity

Chapter Summary

Felicity is welcomed into the tower and meets Tony and Bruce.

Avengers Tower was one giant memorial to overcompensation and Tony Stark’s billboard to the world advertising the fragility of his masculinity.

At least, that’s what Felicity had told Sara when they were talking shit about other superheroes. Felicity’s pretty sure that that was the line that made Sara laugh so hard the box wine that they were drinking that night came out her nose. Seeing the tower in person made Felicity yearn to call Sara to tell her that she’d been 100% correct.

Just the thought of the blonde assassin had Felicity’s mouth ticking upwards as a shot of pain went through her heart. Maybe Digg would tell the team not to worry about her.

Yeah, and maybe Digg would take her call at face value and not try that much harder to find her.

“Ms. Smoak?” Steve gently pulled the woman out of her thoughts as the elevator doors opened to the Avengers’ communal floor.

“Felicity, please.” Felicity corrected him as she hefted her duffel bag over her shoulder. He made a motion to help her but Felicity shrugged him off and gave him a small smile. “Don’t worry about this, Captain Rogers. I’m more than capable of carrying some clothes.”

“Call him Steve, Rambo,” Clint instructed her as he lead them into the large entertainment room. “He gets touchy with too much politeness.”

“I’m sure he can speak for himself, Barton.” Felicity rolled her eyes and looked over to the man in question. Steve gave her a wry smile, but nodded his consent.

“I prefer Steve to Captain Rogers, especially since we’ll be tower-mates.” Steve explained. “All of the Avengers have a floor on the tower. Not everyone uses them--Thor is currently in Australia with his girlfriend for her work--”

“Who’s his girlfriend?” Felicity asked curiously before shaking her head at herself. “If it’s not a huge deal to tell a stranger. The superheroes I know are all really touchy about subjects like that, so I get if Thor wouldn’t want me to know. Especially since he doesn’t know me. And I wouldn’t want to be some sort of security risk or anything.”

The smile on Steve’s face felt like it wasn’t going to disappear anytime soon around this version of Felicity. The genuinely curious, playful, and talkative (and now blonde) Felicity was someone who he could see himself becoming friends with rather quickly. He could imagine how Felicity was able to get so close to Clint, if this little babble was a look into how she normally acted. “Thor is pretty open about...well, everything. I don’t know how many superheroes you know, but Thor is a bit or an anomaly. He brags about Jane any chance he gets.”

“Jane?”
“His girlfriend, Jane Foster,” Steve elaborated and watched as Felicity’s eyes went wide with awe.

“Jane Foster the astrophysicist who theorized and later found proof of the Einstein-Rosen bridge?” Felicity asked excitedly, looking between Clint and Steve—Clint who looked a bit more smug than Felicity was comfortable with. “You knew that I admired her and you never told me that you know her!”

“What can I say, Rambo?” Clint smirked irritatingly. “I figured I’d need a trump card for if I ever needed a favor.”

“I heard that we adopted a new puppy!” Tony raised his eyebrows at the three of them as he waltzed into the room. His eyes settled on Felicity and he took her in—from her undercover hipster clothes to her thick-framed glasses to her hair that was a mess from being forced under a wig. “Welcome to the tower, Rover. Been awhile since I last heard from you.”

“You know my least favorite genius and you never said anything?” Clint asked Felicity incredulously, his smirk fading.

“After MIT, Tony was rather...persistent about wanting me to work for him.” Felicity explained. “He even handled my potential employment personally. Which meant that I had to tell him no a few times before he got the message.”

Tony grinned. “She told me to get the fuck out of her face or she’d use a Jericho missile to shove my job offer up my ass. Then she told Pepper about it and got me in trouble.”

“I love you.” Clint took Felicity’s hand and kissed it dramatically before falling to one knee. “Marry me. With your brain and guts and my strategic value and arrows, we could rule this tower, Smoak.”

“To be fair,” Felicity continued to explain to Steve, who was watching Clint’s one-sided proposal in amusement. “I was a lot angrier back then and he was harassing me before my coffee.”

“Whatever you say,” Steve huffed out a laugh when Clint licked Felicity’s hand, making her pull away in disgust and throw her discarded wig at him while he ran to take cover behind a couch.

“You’re a toddler!” Felicity rolled her eyes as Clint stuck his tongue out at her. She glared at Tony, who was laughing unabashedly, and wiped the back of her hand off on his suit. Ignoring his offended cry, she gave him a sweet smile. “Thanks for letting a lost puppy like me crash here. Is Nat currently here?”

Steve shook his head negative. “I left her a message to let her know that you were going to be staying here for your protection because she had a meeting with a...friend? She said that she’d be back ASAP.”

“I’ll get settled before saying hi, then.” Felicity nodded at Steve in thanks. She turned to Tony. “Where can I stay without getting in the way?”

Tony gestured to the elevator. “I’m on my way to my workshop. I’ll show you to the guest floor and then take you to meet Bruce! You can join in on the Science!”

“I do love Science!” Felicity chirped lightly. “What are you working on?”

“Well!” Tony started animatedly, steering the conversation down a road that the other two blonds in the room wouldn’t have been able to understand if they tried.

Steve watched as the two geniuses disappeared behind the elevator doors, their excited techno
babbles disappearing with them. He didn’t quite know what to make of Felicity Smoak yet. She’d had a lousy lot in life, that much he could safely say. When he’d first met with Clint, though, he could plainly see the scars from these experiences. He could see the pain from loneliness, the trust issues, the desperation for a place where she could belong without hurting anyone. Once they’d arrived at the tower, however, it was as if she’d created a mask.

He wondered if that mask was how she’d survived years in Starling with no one find out her secret. He liked this Felicity nonetheless. He found her easily disarming and charming without any real effort being extended on her behalf. She had that inherent curious that Steve had noticed in most of the intelligent people he’d met: Howard, Tony, Bruce, Jane, and now Felicity. He found her slip into babbling endearing. Watching her handle Clint without breaking a sweat was both admirable and amusing.

He like this Felicity, but he wanted to get to know the real one. He wondered if she’d ever allow him the privilege of dropping her guard the way she did around Clint.

Clint, however, was watching the thoughts play across Steve’s face as he stared at Felicity’s vanished form. He snickered to himself.

“You totally got Smoak’d.” He announced to the team leader, snapping Steve out of his reverie.

“Smoak’d?” Steve asked Clint, raising one eyebrow at the term.

“Yeah, Smoak’d. You like her. You want to know more about her. I coined the term after Felicity got her second secret admirer at SHIELD.” Clint elaborated.

Steve blushed slightly and shook his head. “Oh, no. I mean I like her fine but not romantically.”

“Sure, sure.” Clint exaggerated a wink at Steve before sobering and pointing to the tablet in Steve’s hands. “You might want to get started on that. You might not like everything in it.”

Steve nodded and rapped his knuckles against the screen lightly. He started to move to the elevator to read in his own room before pausing and turning to Clint. “You trust her, right?”

“Completely. Surprisingly, but completely.” Clint answered.

“If you know her, though?”

The archer paused and pursed his lips. “As much as she lets anyone, I guess.”

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Dr. Banner was a scruffy, gentle looking man. Felicity could easily wax poetic on him being his own foil in life, but she wanted to do him the favor of not thinking about “the other guy” while she looked over his work. When she’d first stepped into the lab, Bruce had been welcoming, if antsy. Tony had insisted that she look over some of his work, despite her protest that computers were more her forte.

Still, she could see how thorough Bruce’s work was--how beneficial.

Tony had abandoned them after a minute of silence, though. Since then, Felicity had been given her first real silence since Clint had ambushed her in her hotel room two weeks ago. She could tell that Bruce was the quiet sort even around Tony, so she decided not to be offended by his taciturn replies to any questions she had on his project.
What was starting to both her, however, was Bruce’s constant fidgeting over the past few minutes. He’d started trying to speak to her a half a dozen times, yet remained silent. Felicity had a good deal of practice with awkward people—Oliver and Roy needed entire evenings and constant nagging to admit to something that was bothering them—but she wasn’t sure how to handle an awkward and gentle person.

Deciding that the straightforward approach might be best, Felicity cleared her throat and looked up at Bruce.

“Was there something you wanted to ask me?” Felicity asked, careful to keep her tone gentle so as not to make Bruce think that she was annoyed.

Bruce shuffled from foot to foot before meeting her eyes. “Tony told you who I am, right?”

“Bruce Banner, yes.” Felicity nodded, confused.

“No, I mean...the other guy.”

Felicity’s mouth formed a small ‘o’ as understanding dawned on her. “Yes, Bruce, I know about the other guy.”

Bruce tilted his head slightly, his mouth ticking upward. “Why are you being so calm around me, then?”

“Would you like me to freak out?” Felicity asked, smiling incredulously at him.

“Well, no, but it’d be understandable.” Bruce shrugged and shook his head. “I’m not used to people like Tony, and you apparently.”

Felicity leaned back in her chair and smiled wryly at him. “I like to surprise people. Besides, I also tend to withhold judgement on someone’s character when I’ve never gotten to know them.”

Bruce gave her a small smile and turned to allow her to read in peace.

For a mere minute before Clint bursted into the room, grabbed her hand, and practically dragged her out of the lab and into the elevator, ignoring her loud complaints the entire time. Bruce blinked at the chair that she left.

“JARVIS?” Bruce looked up at the ceiling habitually, “Is she going to be okay with him?”

It appears that Ms. Smoak and Mr. Barton have already been acquainted. If it further eases your mind, he is taking Ms. Smoak to Ms. Romanov.

*  

“Clint!” Felicity finally shouted once he’d pulled her into the elevator. “What is going on?”

“Nat’s back in the tower and she brought a friend who needs to see you.” Clint shuffled on his feet, looking over at her. Felicity tilted her head to the side and looked up at him in curiosity.

“Okay? Who are they?”

Clint pursed his lips together and stopped himself from saying anything as the elevator opened to the communal floor—opening to put Felicity face to face with someone she’d resigned herself to never seeing again.
“Who the fuck do you think you are?” The voice basically yelled as Felicity stood, shocked. “You think you can just fall off the face of the earth and I won’t use every connection I have to hunt you down and drag you back home?!”

Felicity blinked. “I um...well...you haven’t exactly been home...so I was…”

“Hoping that I wouldn’t hear about it!?” Sara finished the sentence for her. Behind her, Nyssa and Natasha were both silently watching the two blondes. Clint was behind Felicity, making increasingly hilarious faces at Nat, who could offer him no answers.

Felicity stared at Sara in shock before getting back to herself. “Well, I was hoping you wouldn’t hear about it so quickly.”

“My father called me in a panic because your place was wrecked!” Sara lifted an accusatory finger at Felicity. “What the hell did you get yourself into!?”

“SHIELD is a front for Hydra and I hacked into the files and managed to figure it out and now the big shots at Hydra are gunning for my head, apparently.” Felicity spilled immediately, earning an exasperated look from both Natasha and Clint.

“Why didn’t you call me!?” Sara shouted.

Felicity raised her eyebrows in exasperation. “You told me not to contact anyone who I normally wouldn’t before going on the run!”

Sara narrowed her eyes.

Felicity kept her face determined.

Clint stepped away quietly, typing out a text on his phone.

“God, just come over her and give me a hug, you goddamn idiot!” She demanded, making Felicity shug and latch onto the other woman. “I’m glad you’re alive, fucker.”

“I love you, too.” Felicity pulled away and went up on her toes to kiss Sara’s forehead.
“Don’t you dare do cute things to me when I’m mad at you.” She frowned and turned to Natasha. “Thank you for telling me.” Turning back to Felicity, Sara gestured at the doors to the elevator. “Now, I’m taking you back to Starling so that we can talk about this.”

“No.” Felicity rooted herself to the ground, causing both Natasha and Sara to tense, ready for a fight. “No?”

“No.” Felicity repeated. “I love you and Team Arrow, but the people best equipped to keep me safe at this moment are the Avengers. I will not drag this mess to Starling and let Oliver try to take the blame.”

Nyssa snorted. Sara looked unamused.

Huffing, Sara moved forward to get nose to nose with Felicity just as Steve silently walked into the room to stand next to Clint. Reinforcements, Felicity realized. Unfazed by the supersoldier, Sara spoke in a voice that’d be too quiet for anyone else (normal) to hear.

“Do you trust them?”

Felicity pursed her lips and let Sara see her thinking before answered with a subtle nod.

“I’m staying here with you.” She declared, turning to look at Steve challengingly. “Any objections?”

“Maybe you should ask the owner of the tower,” Steve responded dryly. “Felicity, who is it?”

“Your m--”

“This is Sara Lance, also known as the Canary. She’s a good friend.” Felicity leveled Steve with the same determined look she gave Sara. “I trust her with my life.”

“You say the sweetest things.” Sara deadpanned.

Nyssa stepped forward and looked between Sara and Felicity. “I will speak with my father and tell him that Hydra taking over again would be bad for the league. I’m sure he will support your mission here.”

“Thank you, Nyssa.” Felicity gave her a gentle smile. “I’m glad I have your support.”

“Of course, Felicity Smoak, MIT class of ‘09.” Nyssa smiled sarcastically back at her. Sara snorted at the exchange.

“I think that was the moment when you earned Nyssa’s loyalty.” Sara mock whispered.

The corner of Natasha’s mouth twitched. “When did this happened?”

“During the March on Starling,” Nyssa answered. “I introduced myself to Felicity and she introduced herself to me.”

Clint barked out a laugh and looped his arm around her shoulders proudly. “Thatta girl! That’s our trainee, Nat. Standing up to assassins like it’s nothing!”

“Yes.” Natasha narrowed her eyes at Felicity. “She challenged an assassin’s pride.”

Felicity shrugged. “You say that like it’s such a bad thing, but that’s how we became friends.”
Steve’s gaze bounced over everyone in the room before landing on Felicity. “Can I have a word?”

Tilting her head to the side a bit, Felicity followed Steve out into the hall. “I’m willing to give you the word ‘titillated’ but ‘cucumber’ is off limits.”

“What?” Steve’s eyebrows wrinkled before he processed the joke and snorted. Steve, Captain fucking America, snorted. Felicity made Captain America snort. “I get it. I’m sure we can all share the words.”

With a dramatic gasp, Felicity looked up at Steve. “How very socialist of you!”

“Don’t tell anybody.” Steve joked, the corner of his mouth ticking up with amusement as this different Felicity seemed to surface with her friend’s arrival. “So, Sara?”

“Sara Lance.” Felicity answered.

“Can you give me a rundown?” Steve asked.

Felicity nodded, realizing that this was a chance to earn trust. Steve was going to dig into Sara no matter what she told him, but if the information backed up Felicity’s assessment, it’d go one step further in letting the team establish trust with her. “Sara was on the Gambit with Oliver when it sank. There’s a lot of politics and bad blood within the Lance/Queen families. Oliver was dating Laurel Lance, Sara’s sister, at this point in time. Sara, like Oliver, survived the crash and eventually found her way to Nyssa and by extension, the League of Assassins. Nyssa trained Sara.

“Sara came back to Starling after the Undertaking to protect her family and eventually started doling out vigilante justice. That’s how we met her. She left the city for a while because the League came after her for leaving without permission. When she came back, she helped us deal with...Deathstroke. Slade Wilson.” Felicity pursed her lips and shook off the ghost of the sword against her throat. “She got Nyssa to join in on the effort against...him. She bargained herself for their help and rejoined the league after everything was finished. While she’s in Starling, though, she’d stay with me.”

Steve nodded as he digested that information. “You two are close?”

Felicity nodded in confirmation. “I trust her, Steve. She could’ve killed me a thousand times over without anyone being the wiser. She knows what I’m capable of, too. She’s like a sister.”

Steve accepted that. “If you can trust her, I say we let her stay. I want you to feel as comfortable as you can here.”

“I do feel better with her. No offence to you, I just don’t know you or Tony or Dr. Benner that well. I’m sure I could learn to trust you one day, but--” Felicity started babbling.

“I understand.” Steve assured her. “I’m going through your evidence right now. I’ll keep you safe. I’ll earn your trust.”

She bit back her immediate comment against him and decided to actually look at him for a beat. His eyes were bluer than anything she’d ever seen, but had a few specks of green that made them even more captivating. His hair was cut in a modern style--probably either Natasha’s or Tony’s influence. He was beautiful, Felicity realized.

She had such a bad track with letting beautiful, blonde heroes into her trust circle without realizing it.

“My grandfather talked about you a lot,” She told him abruptly. Steve’s eyebrows shot up in curiosity and...disappointment? “He was proud of himself for surviving the concentration camp more
than anything else, but his hope was fading, you know? Then, just when he thought that hope was lost, you and the fucking Howling Commandos show up. You told him to go get the other prisoners. You told him that he did good. You were his hero. He trusted you. I trust you.”

Steve nodded jerkily. He was silent for a beat while the two of them walked over to the elevator. They stopped in front of the doors before he spoke once more. “I’d like to earn your trust on my own merit.”

There was a pause.

“I think you’ll be able to manage it,” Felicity teased him lightly. “You going in the elevator? Because I’m ready to take about a thousand naps, so I’m gonna go down to the guest room.”

“I am, but I don’t think your friends would be happy with you not telling them where you’re going first.” Steve jerked his chin towards the common area. “I don’t want pissed off assassins coming after me.”

Felicity chuckled lightly. “Smart man.”

*

It takes four days before Steve finds the file on the Winter Soldier.

Felicity knows because Steve sought her out in her new office and slammed the iPad down on her desk with enough force that Felicity was genuinely surprised when it didn’t shatter. He had the decency to look ashamed at the way she jumped at his sudden arrival, but glossed over it with only a slightly apologetic glance.

“What is this, Felicity?” He asked in a measured tone.

“That,” Felicity started, keeping her tone level. “Is one of the files I recovered.”

Steve made a frustrated noise. “You know that’s not what I meant. The picture on here, the name. You know who this is! You didn’t- you didn’t even warn me.”

And that, the betrayal in his voice? That got through.

“I…” Felicity’s eyes flickered down to the desk in front of her. “I’m sorry, Steve.”

“I don’t want an apology, I want an explanation!” Steve’s voice cracked. “Why would you let me go into this blind?”

“Because I planned on being gone by now.”

Felicity was wrong. The betrayal in his voice was nothing compared to the kicked puppy look on his face now. After spending a week with Steve—happily eating breakfast with him, introducing him to puzzle games on his phone, sicing him on Stark, and just generally being with each other, it was obvious they had become friends.

Hearing that she’d still been planning to leave, it got him right in his heart.

“What?” He asked dumbly.

Felicity let out a low whine. “Steve, I’m sorry, okay?”

“You were going to leave.”
In wasn’t a question, but Felicity answered. “Yes.”

“Why?”

“Because having an escape plan has saved my life more times than I can count and just because I trust the people here doesn’t mean that I can sit here with a goddamn target on my ass!” Felicity exploded, standing to try and be on equal ground with Steve. Even with the stilettos, Felicity was a few inches shorter than him.

Steve slammed his hands down on her desk and moved his face closer to hers. “You’re not the only in the tower with a target on your back and you’re not the only one at risk for you being here!”

“Then maybe me leaving is the best for everyone!” Felicity used her Loud Voice at Steve for the first time.

As if the wind was taken from his sails, Steve realized what was happening. “No, Felicity, that is not--”

“It isn’t!?” Felicity asked before he could finish, rounding the desk to get into Steve’s face. “Newsflash, American Dream, you know as well as I that being in this tower only benefits me! I’m putting you and the rest of your team at risk! You have the information you need, you don’t need me anymore! I’ll just get out of your hair.”

“That’s not what I meant and you know it!” Steve yelled back at her, an almost desperate touch to his voice. “And it’s not true! You have more value than what you know! I want you here because you’re my friend, but every life is worth saving, Felicity. Especially yours!”

“Sure, yeah, whatever, but you wanna know how I’ve saved my own life until now? By being vigilant!” Felicity reminded him. “I had to start escaping since I was barely a fucking teenager! You think the magic of friendship is going to stop that? I’m sorry that I let you go in blind, but I did not plan on dealing with the fallout. According to my plan, I’m in Canada right now.”

“But you stayed! You stayed and you still didn’t warn me!” Steve pointed out.

“That’s because I told her not to,” Sara interrupted, Natasha at her shoulder--both seeming to appear from nowhere.

“Knocking!” Felicity snapped at all three of them. “Fucking learn how to do it!”

“Why would you tell her not to!?” Steve demanded from Sara.

Natasha shrugged. “I wanted you not to have any reason to hate her before you got to know her. Didn’t want you to displace the anger you feel about Barnes onto Felicity the way you’re doing right now.”

“You were playing more head games, Natasha. I told you--no more head games! We’re a team!” Steve pointed a stern finger at her unaffected, amused face.

“If we’re a team, then why are you coming after Felicity like she’s responsible for Hydra when she’s the only reason we know about it?” Sara asked, leaning her shoulder against the door frame and cocking her head to the side. The two assassins standing together, both of them questioning the supersoldier in front of them…

They made a mighty force.
“I’m not--” Steve huffed. “I’m asking why my friend left me out in the cold.”

“What an interesting choice of words!” Sara chirped happily.

“Leave him alone.” Felicity rubbed the bridge of her nose irritably. “I understand that you’re trying to protect me, but it’s Steve. He’s not gonna hit me. He’s gonna make me feel like America is disappointed in me.”

Natasha smirked slightly at her. “You don’t deserve that, either.”

“I don’t- I don’t want you to feel guilty, Felicity--” Steve stumbled and blushed slightly.

“Aw, look at him!” Sara looked over at Nat. “I like this game! Thanks for inviting me along! ‘Come get coffee’ you say. ‘You’ll love it’ you say. You sneaky little minx!”

“Anyway, we’ll give you some time to read through the file and sort through your feelings while we get some coffee,” Natasha smiled dangerously at Steve, who looked around at the three women surrounding him and seemed to realize his position.

“Felicity--” He started in hopes of getting out of this.

“I’m sorry, Steve. I can’t go against them either.” Felicity gestured towards the assassins, who smiled in chorus. “They can eat me.”

“Kinky!” Sara cooed.

“Shut up.” Natasha elbowed her playfully. She turned to Felicity. “Grab your coat, we’re going to Starbucks.”

Felicity wrinkled her nose. “Starbucks?”

“I like it. You have a problem?” Natasha raised one eyebrow.

“I’ll see you when I get back,” Felicity spoke to Steve without looking at him. “We can talk then.”

“Just--” Steve sighed and caught Felicity’s hand as she walked by him. “Stay safe, okay?”

“I’ve got the assassin twins with me,” Felicity shrugged playfully. “What could go wrong?”

“Well now you’ve done it!” They all looked up when Clint’s voice came from the ceiling.

Chapter End Notes

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Felicity walked with Sara and Natasha to a small cafe that they’d discovered within Sara’s first week in New York. (With Nyssa’s help, of course, because Nyssa had a talent for finding kosher eateries that surpassed even Felicity’s.) Sara and Nat made enough small talk so that the trip didn’t feel silent or empty, but Felicity didn’t exactly participate. Her mind was firmly stuck on the look on Steve’s face when he realized that Felicity was running away from the argument.

She could almost regret it—allowing Nat and Sara to pull her out before they could settle anything—when she relived his angry and disappointed expression. Almost being the operative word because even Felicity could tell how that would’ve gone down. Shouting match. Tears, probably. Of frustration and on Felicity’s part, most likely.

It’d be better to be calm. Clint’s voice in her head giving her mocking confrontation advice. Mocking, of course, because it was actual advice and Clint’s strategy for confrontation was always “punch it ‘til it stops bothering you”.

“Do not use accusatory ‘you’ statements, only ‘I’ statements. Like, Felicity, I feel that you have been eating more mint chip than Nat’s training can keep off of you.”

Honestly, Felicity’s hand still stung at the memory of how hard she’d slapped Clint that day.

“Felicity,” Nat’s husky voice brought Felicity out of her trance.

“Huh?” She asked intelligently, looking around to only just now notice that they were already at the cafe, Sara in line to order for them while Natasha and Felicity sat in a booth. “Wow, I just spaced out something fierce.”

“I figured,” The redhead chuckled and tapped her fingers in a tattoo against her wrist. “I just wanted to make sure that you knew that you didn’t have to come with us, right? You can disagree with us.”

Felicity waved her hand dismissively. “Of course I know that, Natasha. I’m not stupid, and I know you and Sara aren’t. You guys would never force me to do something. I just happened to agree with you this time about needing to chill before Steve and I, you know, talked.”

“Talked being code for yelled at each other,” Sara announced as she sat down with them, distributing the coffees to everyone. To Felicity, a vanilla bean frappe, to Natasha an iced Americano (that she’d taken to drinking since becoming Steve’s partner simply so he could send him a snapchat of the order every single goddamn time), and a green tea for herself (Nyssa and Sara had made a bet about who could give up coffee for the longest and Sara was determined to win). “Felicity, have you called Digg or Roy, yet? Trick question, I know you haven’t because they won’t stop blowing up my fucking phone checking to see if I’ve found you.”

Felicity let out a little noise as she took a sip from her straw. “No, I haven’t. I keep having nightmares about running away from things because of the way I’ve been avoiding so many different confrontations.”

“Your number one character flaw,” Natasha remarked as she pulled out her phone to take a picture of the drink—which Sara had ordered under the name ‘Steve’, god bless. She sent the picture to Clint, Tony, and Steve. Also Phil, because he would definitely appreciate that.
“You’re so fucking predictable.” Sara raised her eyebrow at Natasha before turning back to the other blonde. “I love you, cutie, but you need to woman up and face these people at some point. Take my phone and call Digg while we’re out of the tower so that if anyone pings the call, you won’t be completely giving yourself up.”

“I resent that remark.” Natasha replied to Sara without looking up from her phone. “Felicity, take your own advice and get your head out of your ass. You’re gonna have to face them eventually.”

Felicity looked at Sara and Natasha both with a startled expression. She stared at them both for a beat before sighing in defeat and holding out her hand for Sara’s phone. “I would like it to be made known that I am not doing this because you two are ordering me to. I’m doing this because you happen to be making good points. And using my own words against me like the mean little sneaky sneaks you are.”

“Mean little sneaky sneaks,” Sara repeated in a delighted tone as she handed over her phone.

Felicity rolled her eyes and thumbed through the contacts before clicking Digg’s “codename” (Papa Bear) and leaving the table to speak with her friend in private next to the restrooms.

“Sara, tell me you’ve got something. Roy is just about pulling out his hair dealing with Oliver right now--”

“Hey, Digg.” Felicity squeaked.

“Felicity!?” His tone conveyed his hope and surprise better than any emoji ever could and struck a chord of guilt as it plucked at Felicity’s heartstrings.

“Yeah, Digg, it’s me. I’m- it’s pretty complicated, right now, but yeah, it’s me.”

“Where are you? What’s going on?” Felicity could hear Roy’s questions in the background as well.

“I...can’t tell you that.” She managed to get out. She leaned against the wall of the restaurant and closed her eyes. “I’m in...a bit of trouble. In over my head, in all honesty. I found something out that no one wants to be found out and now I’m just trying to keep my nose above water. I’ve found some old friends of mine and Sara’s who can help us--who can deal with this.”

Felicity could practically see Diggle’s angry-with-your-self-sacrificing-bullshit expression. “You’re in trouble and you expect me not to worry? Woman, I swear to Christ, you are worse than Oliver when you want to be.”

“I mean, you could fly up to New York and try to handle it yourself, but--”

“Felicity, the Arrow can barely manage Starling City.” Digg admitted in a frustrated tone. “But as much as we all admire the Avengers and are grateful for what they’ve done...they don’t save the little guy. Just...make sure you aren’t acceptable collateral damage because I don’t wanna have to punch Captain America in the face. I mean, I will. For you. But I’d rather, you know, not do that.”

Felicity huffed out a laugh. “Steve is actually pretty tuned into fixing the problem and also keeping
me safe. You don’t know them like I do, Digg. They’re all fairly...dedicated. They do this is protect people.”

“That doesn’t mean that people won’t end up dead.” Digg remarked. “It okay if I hand you over to Roy? Boy looks like he’s about to piss himself if he doesn’t talk to you.”

Laughing at Roy’s indignant squawk, Felicity allowed herself to be passed between the two for the next half hour, assuring them that she was fine and not in danger and no, Roy, she wasn’t going to get Steve’s autograph for him.

It was precisely what the doctor ordered until the end of the call.

“So, are you ready to tell Oliver where you are so that he can find his chill?” Roy asked as he sharpened an arrowhead.

“Um...no? I can’t really stay on the phone much longer so if you two could--”

“It’s real cute, Blondie, that you think we’d be able to stop him from hopping on a plane straight to New York.”

Felicity sighed. “I’ll call Oliver. Don’t tell him where I am, but I’ll tell him that I’m okay. I’ll have to call him later because I’m pretty sure that Natasha is getting twitchy about me being out of her sight for so long and once I get ho- to the tower, I have to discuss the situation with Steve.”

“I can’t believe you call Captain fucking America ‘Steve’.” Roy murmured. “Your life is a sitcom, Blondie.”

“More like a soap opera.” Felicity sighed.

*

Steve would have loved to say that he didn’t pour over the files on Bucky while waiting for Felicity to get back from coffee with two thirds of the assassin population in the tower, but that would be a lie and, according to Tony, lying is against the Captain America Brand™. Instead, the reality was that, even though he stood and paced every few minutes, Steve spent those three hours (how long did it take to drink a damn cup of coffee, dammit?) memorizing every detail.

And maybe, just maybe, he was glad that Nat had called a timeout before Steve had done something drastic--like make Felicity think he didn’t want her in the tower anymore or that she was to blame for everything that Bucky went through--not that he’d tell Natasha or Sara, of course. First, because Steve wasn’t stupid and didn’t, actually, enjoy being teased by everyone all of the time. Tony got a free pass because that was the only way he knew how to show affection, and Felicity got leniency because every time she did it, he felt like he’d been given a sweet little present, but from anyone else, it made him feel like that scrappy kid again.

Bucky loved to tease him, but was sensitive enough to Steve’s mental state that he knew when he pushed too far. And god, Bucky would hate being called that. ‘Sensitive’. Or, well, no. Knowing the affect that Rebecca and Steve’s social awareness had on Bucky, he might’ve worn the description like a badge of pride. Proof that he was not tied down by this world’s toxic masculinity.

Toxic masculinity--Steve learned the term when Felicity was telling him and Clint about her team back in Starling. The younger archer, Roy, Steve recalls, had to have the ‘toxic masculinity beat out of him’ before Felicity could start giving the boy more extensive training in things like specialized lock picking and basic hacking. In the end, though, Felicity had even convinced the boy to start doing yoga with her.
Bucky would’ve loved Felicity. Steve’s lips quirked upward in a small smile. It wasn’t the first time he’d had the thought. God, Bucky would’ve loved her. From her quick wit to her sharp glare to her biting insults and gentle smiles, Bucky would’ve eaten her up. Or, she probably would’ve chewed Bucky up, spat him back out, and then demanded a thank you. That had always been Bucky’s type. Tiny, sassy, and ready to conquer with or without your help. It’s why Steve and Bucky had been such great friends.

Then again, Bucky would take one look at Steve and realize that he was beyond gone on this girl.

God, speaking of Bucky’s teasing. Every other interaction with Felicity while Bucky would be present would be balancing the torture of racking his brain on how to talk to someone he was romantically interested in and the torture of making sure Bucky wouldn’t say something stupid like “Hey, Felicity, my buddy Stevie-boy here thinks you sure are a swell gal. You wanna go to the movies with him sometime?”.

Steve turned bright red just thinking about the embarrassment he would’ve suffered in another world.

He looked down at the tablet with the file. The embarrassment he could very well have a chance at suffering in this world if he could find and save his friend. And isn’t that something stupid? Looking forward to getting embarrassed by Bucky’s brass manner? Oh, but he wouldn’t trade that embarrassment for the world. Steve had held onto every memory with Bucky with an iron grip.

Steve could remember every time Bucky had tried to get him a date, every time Bucky yelled at him in front of all of New York or Europe or one time an entire company of nazis for being so goddamn reckless (by your goddamned self had been repeated often enough to be feared by every single one of the Howling Commandos and, man, Steve could only imagine if he had to face Bucky’s by your goddamned self along with Felicity’s get your head out of your ass). Steve could remember coming out to Bucky before either of them really knew how frowned upon it was to be attracted to both genders. He could remember Bucky beating the snot out of a kid who called Steve some not nice names. He could remember every single part of his best friend.

He could remember the exact number of beers he’d downed in an effort to numb the pain when Bucky had fallen. And god maybe if he’d been out there longer, maybe if he’d looked harder, maybe if Steve hadn’t dragged Bucky into a goddamn war zone--

But then, Bucky would be pissed if he found out that Steve was beating himself up about that.

Steve looked down at the Winter Soldier’s tired, worn, and defiant expression in the file.

He was going to save his best friend, and then they were going to tear Hydra down. He knew who was to blame for this. And he knew who he had to thank for getting the chance to save his best friend--because that chance, that precious fucking chance, was more valuable than any other thing in Steve’s life.

Which meant that when Felicity hesitantly stepped into the common area, Steve was passed ready to make up with her. To apologize, to say anything he needed to say to get her to stay for as long as she could because he knew that this would end. As soon as the threat to Felicity’s life was manageable once more (and god, did Steve wish that “manageable” really meant “nonexistent” but they no longer lived in a world of absolutes) she would be gone. She would be back in Starling City with her team and Queen and back to living her life and that shouldn’t leave such a sour taste in Steve’s mouth but it did.

The point was that she brought his best friend back to life for him and Steve was fast on his way to falling in love with her gigglesnort of a laugh and he didn’t want to fight with her. Never with her.
He looked up when he heard the sound of her high heels stepping off of the elevator and the two of them stared at each other in silence as she made her way to him. Once they were standing facing each other with a coffee table between them, they both spoke.

“I’m sorry!”

They both blinked at each other in surprise, but Steve’s mouth wasn’t as quick as Felicity’s. “You don’t have to be sorry, Steve. I should’ve warned you, I should’ve done something, eased the blow. I mean, we became real friends while I’ve been here and I trust you with my life and I should’ve been more open with you. You didn’t deserve to learn that the way you did. I was just...scared and looking for a way out. I’m so sor--”

“No. No, you- you shouldn’t be apologizing. I- I’m not objective when it comes to Bucky.” Steve admitted, stepping around the coffee table to walk towards her. “He was always my best friend, my family. I saw that he was alive and I read his file and everything that’s he’s gone through--that he’s still going through this. I got angry, and I took it out on you, and I am so sorry. I’m just- I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said those things, I shouldn’t have ever made you feel like I didn’t want you here. I love having you here, like you said- I- we’re friends. And I don’t like fighting with my friends, even when I am the one who picked the fight.”

Felicity huffed and shook her head before giving Steve a small smile. “I still don’t think that you were really in the wrong, but...we’re good?”

“We’re good.” Steve nodded gratefully and swept Felicity up in a relieved hug before thinking about it. Much to his delight, Felicity laughed and wrapped her arms around Steve happily.

The moment of joy broke when Felicity stepped back and pinned Steve with a serious look. “There’s a bright side to this, though, and that’s that they’re very particular about how they keep files and tabs on Bucky. They won’t know that I grabbed as many files as I did and Bucky’s was by far the most protected, which means that they don’t know that we’ve got that intel. Which means that I can use the backdoors I put into their software and that, theoretically, I can find Bucky.

“I’ve been building a virus to keep them busy while I look through their data, but first I need to figure out how they back-hacked me, because according to Sara, Clint, and Digg, my place was ransacked after I left. Meaning that someone went through my belongings, presumably Hydra agents.” Felicity explained, speaking quickly and gesticulating the way she did anytime she explained something to Steve. “I’ve been reviewing the code--”

“Relax, Rambo, Steve’s got total faith in you,” Clint announced, dropping down from the vent over them to stand on the coffee table. “Also, he’s been semi-glazed over after that hug.”

“Barton!” Steve barked in embarrassment, trying his hardest to ignore the heat under his cheeks.

“I calls ‘em like I sees ‘em, Mr. Rogers.” Clint grinned happily and jumped down from the coffee table. “Rambo, why don’t you get Stark to look over your coding? You two could work together and shit so that you can come in from both sides?”

Felicity looked vaguely offended. “Tony? Clint, I’m used to my magnificent mastery of coding kung fu. You’re asking to team up with Tony Stark’s drunken ramblings?”

“You’ll have JARVIS on your side.” Clint pointed out.

Felicity stopped and grinned. “Touche. JARVIS, you up to taking down Hydra, my good sir?”

“Always, Miss Smoak.”
Clint waited until Felicity was on the elevator before turning to Steve. “Alright, Romeo, what’s your game plan?”

Steve sputtered. “What- what game? What are you talking about? I- I don’t- why would I have a plan? Why would I- I don’t even like plans.”

Clint raised his eyebrows while Steve closed his eyes and let himself revel in his own lack of lying ability. Once he opened his eyes he could see the amusement and protectivity written clearly across Clint’s features--and Steve really should know better than to think A) that he could keep Clint in the dark when it came to anything regarding his “Rambo”, B) that he could lie to a superspy (and thank anything out there that’s holy that he was face to face with Clint instead of Sara) or C) that Clint would lax in his ‘team mom’ duties enough not to confront Steve about his feelings.

“Listen, Steve,” Clint started, taking pity on his target. “I’m not gonna give you the shovel speech. Rambo can handle herself better than I could ever hope to manage her, and she’d be furious if anyone ever believed any different. But. I want you to know that that girl has put up with a lot of shit from life. She’s gone through enough heartbreak. Whatever your plan, I hope you all of the luck in the world, but wait, okay? Wait until we have Bucky. Wait until you don’t need her help. Then tell her. Don’t make her choose in between working on this and being comfortable and don’t make her think that you’re using her feelings to get her to stay.”

“I- I’m not gonna say anything, Clint.” Steve told the archer in a stilted voice. “Once we’re done, she’s going back to the other side of the country. I can’t- she has a life. She has friends and a guy and a pseudo-family with a cop father figure who would gladly give me the shotgun speech if you aren’t up to it. I wouldn’t ever try to take that away from her. I- I could see myself loving her, but we’re just...it wouldn’t work.”

Clint gave Steve a flat look that made Steve feel like he was two inches tall and being ordered to stand in the corner to think about what he did. “You have until we’re done and...then what? You’re going to let her go?”

“Yes.”

“You’re an idiot.” Clint bluntly told him, making Steve wince. “I’d never thought you’d be one to actually run away from a fight.”

Chapter End Notes

RIP the Captain America Brand™
JARVIS was Just A Rather Very Intelligent System. He was used to a master by the name of Tony Stark who was the dictionary definition of “self destructive”. He knew the behaviours of a work binge just as easily as he could identify the behaviours of binge drinking. And even after the very short time that they’d had together, JARVIS had been able to grasp Felicity Smoak’s habits.

Which was why, four months into the will-they-won’t-they dance that was Steve and Felicity working together to find the Winter Soldier, when Felicity was on her 84th straight hour looking through the file, JARVIS was able to realize that...he should probably get some assistance.

“Felicity,” Steve gently tugged on Felicity’s ponytail to get her attention, frowning even harder when she hummed absentmindedly. “Felicity, are you listening to me?”

“...yeah, uh huh.” Felicity nodded.

“Tony showed me a brand new monster that’s he been hunting up and down the east coast.”

“That’s nice.”

“A one-eyed, one horned, flying, purple, people-eater.”

“Uh huh.”

“That we saw for the first time today.”

Felicity nodded and continued typing away. “Yeah, sounds…” She stopped and looked up at Steve. “Wait...what?”

Steve held her gaze for about a second before his serious facade broke and he couldn’t help snickering as her thoughts showed on her face. The confusion was quickly wiped away by annoyance at being teased. “I’m sorry, I just needed to know just how distracted you were.”

“Laugh it up, Captain.”

“Oh, are we back to ‘Captain’ now, Ms. Smoak?” Steve tilted his head and raised his eyebrows at her. “How long have you been working?”

“Just a few hours,” Felicity rolled her eyes at his overprotectiveness.

He nodded and looked up at the ceiling to address JARVIS, “JARVIS, how long has Ms. Smoak been working?”

“This is her 86th hour.”

The look on Steve’s face was the definition of smug. And a bit concerned.

“Allright, Felicity, what’s going on?” Steve leaned against her desk and crossed his arms over his chest, pinning her with an expression filled with friendly concern. Felicity looked away from him to look down in her lap. “You’ve been holed up in here, working at a pace that makes Tony cringe, not eating, and barely looking away from that screen. What’s going on?”
“Nothing, Steve.” Steve was almost impressed, really, by how bad the lie was. He raised his eyebrows at her in disbelief. “Okay, it’s not...nothing. I’m just- I- God, words are hard. It has nothing to do with you, Steve.”

Steve blinked a few times before pursing his lips and nodding once. “Alright, then.”

“No, Steve, I didn’t mean--”

“No, Felicity, it’s fine.” Steve swallowed down his hurt. “You don’t have...to tell me what’s going on. But you’re my friend, and that means that...whatever it is? I hope it works out. But you can’t ever work something out by hiding from it.”

When Steve went to walk away, the thing that stopped him was a small hand in the crook of his elbow, gently stopping him. He turned to look at him, hopeful and curious. She had quickly removed her hand, as if she didn’t want to touch him more than necessary, and was now steadfastly not looking at him, but down at her lap. “I’m sorry, Steve. It’s not- it’s not like I don’t trust you, I was just saying that- I was trying to make sure you didn’t think that the problem was your fault. I don’t- I’m not used to people actually asking, you know?”

“Felicity,” Steve breathed out and, God, every time he learned more about her, he wanted to punch someone because Felicity didn’t deserve that kind of life. “Anytime I ask, I’m not asking for me. I want to know what’s going on with you, because you’re you and you happen to be my friend. According to Sara, you took care of everyone around you in Starling. If it’s okay with you, I wouldn’t mind being allowed to take care of you.”

Felicity looked up at him, a sweet smile on her lips that tugged on Steve’s heartstrings. Her expression change to deliberation before determination. “I talked to Oliver after we cleared the air last week.”

“Oh.” Steve crossed his arms and swallowed down any instinctual anger he felt to Oliver. While Felicity didn’t make a habit of telling him about her feelings and past (and really, how was he cursed to be in love with the female version of Tony?) but he’d gathered enough from her, Sara, and Clint to know that her relationship with Oliver was...complicated to say the least. “Are you- what happened?”

“I called him,” She shrugged and rolled her eyes at her own nervousness and misery that she still felt after the call. “He was...pissed. Concerned, I guess, and unable to express it in a healthy way. But, I don’t know, he said...it doesn’t matter.”

“When it has you locking yourself up to work nonstop for over three days, it matters.” Steve argued. “What did he say?”

Felicity looked back down at her hands in her lap and watched as she wrung her fingers anxiously. “It’s my fault.”

“What?” He blinked, unable to process her words.

“It wasn’t anything- he didn’t mean it maliciously.” She defended, looking like he wasn’t the one she was trying to convince. “He just- he’s not good with words. He um- he accused me of bringing Hydra into Starling without preparing anyone from the very start, didn’t even trust than SHIELD hadn’t planted me on his team. He was- I get it, I do. He was angry and worried and concerned and I refused to tell him where I was or how I got involved in SHIELD in the first place--”

“Why does he need to know?” Steve shook his head. “Why do you defend him?”
Felicity huffed, “He has a good heart, Steve. He means well.”

“Meaning well and doing good are two different things,” Steve told her. “Having a good heart and being a good man or even a good friend are very different things. I know you care about him--”

“Not like that,” Felicity interrupted with an eyeroll, making him pause. She blinked up at him. “Oh, what? I don’t- he reminds me of my dad. Before everything went to shit, my dad would have these weeks, right? These weeks where he’d sober up. He’d get some work, he’d make me dinner, he’d tuck me in at night, and he’d promise to be there, sober and there in the morning. It wasn’t a promise that he ever kept, but it came from a good place, a good heart. And yeah, sometimes I think that I could have more with Oliver, but just being his friend hurts me. I can’t- I can’t start a life with someone I wouldn’t trust.”

Steve nodded. If there was one thing that he could relate to her on, it was their shared alcoholic father issues. “My dad would do the same. I don’t think I’d ever be able to see the best in him or anyone who’d ever reminded me of him, though.”

Felicity paused for a beat—she’d never talked about this with anyone other than Clint and never since she’d first been recruited by SHIELD. “I think... it’s part of being a coder. And it sounds lame, but hear me out, alright. The first time you code anything, something’s gonna go wrong. So, you learn to look at coding, at problems, at life, at people as parts of a whole. There are the parts that you can keep, the parts that wouldn’t hurt you, and the parts that either need to be fixed or go. And if they won’t be fixed or go, you have to decide if you need to scrap the project or live with it as is. I don’t want to be with anyone I have to fix.”

“Sounds like a lot of pressure for the future Mr. Smoak.” Steve nudged her shoulder gently.

“Mr. or Ms., I’m an equal opportunity challenge,” Felicity joked lightly before grimacing. “Though, maybe I might be more enticing if I take a nap. And shower.”

“You look beautiful the way you are, but I’d advise against working anymore or JARVIS will tell Tony.” Steve teased her.

Felicity rolled her eyes as she stood. “What did I ever do to get saddled with a tattle tale AI and a salty soldier?”

“You got yourself targeted by Hydra by looking through a government organization’s secret files.”

Felicity laughed lightly and Steve hated himself a little less for it. “You’ve got a point there, Stevie-boy.”

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JARVIS didn’t need to alert Steve when Felicity woke up the day, because Felicity had decided to simply go to Steve instead of pining away or brooding. She knew better, after all. Brooding is for people with stronger jawlines like Clint and Oliver. And man, she wondered if having a jawline that could cut glass was a prerequisite for being an archer, because damn those two. Neither of them really had anything on Steve, though, in the jawline or the arms department, though Steve was too wholesome to brood. It might ruin his image.

And loathe as she was to admit it, she could tell that her feelings for the captain were becoming decidedly less platonic, meaning that Steve’s image was something that haunted her train of thought often.

(And she’d thought of him when she was talking to Oliver on the phone. After Oliver’s voice
switched from relieved to confused to angry to tired, he settled on resigned. It was only by miracle that she hadn’t let on how much the accusations had hurt her. Maybe she didn’t love him, but she trustworthy, dammit, and she’d never sold him out. She’d never once compromised her secret for her own gain, and if hurt that he could ever believe she would.

That was, of course, when he’d said it. Voice low and torn. Felicity could hear the battered heart beating beneath his facade.

“But what about us?”

And God, she had hoped he wouldn’t ask, because yes, they had been doing the tango all around a potential relationship since Slade and the ‘confession’. She had felt it, too, but now? With time and distance?

She didn’t want it.

Or well...she did want a relationship. She wanted morning breakfasts and lazy cuddling on a couch and laughter filled kisses, but she didn’t think of Oliver when she thought of that anymore and that was what scared her more than anything else. If she could just finish her work here, she could disappear again and no one would have to deal with any feelings.

The sooner the better.)

She was glad that Steve had talked some sense into her, had listened as well. She hadn’t realized how badly she’d needed to talk about Noah before it slipped out, and while she was in a tower with gaggles of people with daddy issues to match her own, she knew logically that Steve was the best choice for this. So she’d told him about Noah and about how Oliver reminded her of him and she’d hoped that that would be enough to explain why she may fall harder for Oliver one day than anyone else, but she’d never be with him.

She figured that she would’ve had to elaborate more.

She underestimated him.

After seeing his smile in greeting when she walked off the elevator to check in after her sleeping for half a day, she resolved to never do that again. He was too good--too pure. She should never underestimate something who could make her heart evaporate with a single smile.

Chapter End Notes

don’t order me to update or I will update with the entire script from the bee movie, don’t test me
"You know him, don’t you?" Felicity asked Natasha as they sat across from each other, two throw away cups full of crappy coffee from a cop diner down the street. They’d been sitting in the little nook in the common area since Natasha had sent Felicity a message to meetup to discuss their current case.

It had, of course, been a ploy. Once Felicity had sat down with the coffees, Natasha had started in on the warning--her knowledge of the Winter Soldier delivered in a terrifyingly believable story of a face to face and a bullet wound.

But Felicity had been face to face with someone while helpless. The aching in her shoulder every time it was cold reminded her that she’d even been shot before. She knew that that kind of fear wouldn’t come from some one time encounter with a faceless killer. It didn’t shake Felicity, and Nat was leaps and bounds more stable than the blonde.

So she’d stayed silent for a beat, looking out the window instead of at the redhead and contemplated the plausibility of the story.

Her conclusion had Natasha blinking owlishly at her before her expression shut down so completely it almost hurt Felicity to look at.

"Take whatever risks you want," Nat mumbled, gathering her coffee and purse as she stood. "Just don’t say I didn’t warn you. I’ve always been taught to let sleeping dragons lie."

Felicity watched her leave silently, scraping her fingernail against the cardboard warmth guard around the cup. She waited for the elevator doors to shut before addressing the deceptively empty room. "You can come out now."

Steve sheepishly ducked out form in the kitchen and moved to occupy Natasha’s now vacant seat. "That sounded tense."

"Could’ve cut through the air with a butter knife." Felicity mumbled into her cup before looking up to find Steve’s guilt ridden face. "Don’t worry about overhearing. If I knew you were there, so did she."
“No, I figured.” Steve nodded and his adam’s apple bobbed up and down as he worked some moisture back into his suddenly scratchy throat.

“What is it, Steve?” Felicity asked gently, pushing her hair out of her face and her concern for Nat away for the moment.

“I never meant for this search to cause a rift between you and Nat.”

Felicity chuckled humorlessly and shook her head. “Oh, Stevie. You didn’t cause anything. There’s some obvious history between Nat and Bucky—complicated shit, if I were to wager a guess. I know she does believe in my skills, but it might’ve been that she didn’t realize how close we were until I let it slip that I need to figure out how to counteract the mind control. It’s why I wanted to see you today, actually.”

“Nice pivot,” Steve propped an elbow up on the table and balanced his cheek on his palm, smiling up hopelessly at the blonde in front of him. “You and Nat, are you two gonna be okay?”

“We’ve been through worse on shakier ground.” Felicity smiled reassuringly at him. “I wouldn’t worry about us.”

Steve snorted. “But you will, though. She’s part of your family.”

“Mishpocheh.” At Steve’s curious expression, Felicity elaborated. “My mom used to say that. It’s Yiddish for family. ‘Mishpocheh means family, and family means that no one gets to mess with you without messing with me.’”

“Sounds like my mom, too.” Steve chuckled. “She was a nurse. I used to get into fights all of them time and she’d patch me up. And every damn time she finished up, she smack me upside the head.”

“Let me guess,” Felicity cleared her throat and borrowed the thick Brooklyn accent that Steve would adopt when he’d angrily shout at Clint during Super Smash Bros tournaments. “‘Steven Grant Rogers, I raised you better than to keep getting in scraps. One of these days you’re gonna kill yourself—or I’m gonna do it.’ And probably some Gaelic. Knowing how fucking rebellious you are, probably some ‘don’t you roll your eyes at me, boy’. You’re Catholic, too, right? So add in a few ‘Jesus, Joseph, and Mary give me strength’.”
Steve blinked at Felicity in awe. She’d perfectly portrayed his mother when she was angry, down to the mutter prayer that was usually in Gaelic instead of English. He felt his lips stretch into a smile before shortlles began to overtake him. “Christ, that was perfect. Oh, wow. Amazing.”

Felicity laughed a little herself at Steve’s surprise. “I had to take some less technical classes in college. I ended up in a theatre program that actually almost had me becoming an actress.”

“I would say that you missed your calling, but I’ve also seen you code.” Steve ran his hand through his hair and grinned Felicity. “What about your mom? What was she like?”

“Bright.” Felicity answered first. She leaned back in her chair and tried to remember her mother before the night that had changed her life forever. “She was a waitress in Vegas. So fucking strong, you know? She wore stilettos everyday, and let me tell you, that hurts. She never took any shit from anyone other than Noah, but that was only because he used me against her. I think she perfectly embodied the idea of a Jewish mother. Kind, caring, loud, and if you messed with her kid, she’d fuck you up.

“I remember that one of my first teachers called to tell my mother that I wasn’t acting ‘ladylike’ in class because I was building with the blocks instead of playing with dolls and my mom went off on her.” Felicity smiled in remembrance of Mrs. Birnbaum's stupid, scrunched up face. “I used to want to be nothing like her, you know? Sabba, my grand dad, he wanted me to forgive her, but I was too young back then. He tried to tell me that I got my strength from her. I honestly hope that I did.”

“You look pretty strong from where I’m sitting.” Steve offered her a sad smile. “Your mom, what’s her name?”

“Donna,” Felicity answered. “I kept her maiden name.”

Steve looked unsurprised. “Do you have any pictures of her?”

“I um…” Felicity bit her lip and scraped her fingernail against her cup. “Everything I have of theirs, I left in Sabba’s old house. He and his boyfriend had paid it off a long time ago, so he left it to me. It’s down in Boston.”

“You kept it?” Steve asked, judgement kept out of his voice.
“Well, I lived in it while I was in college until it was too painful. Then, I moved on campus, but Sabba’s boyfriend, Baba, he was a big deal accountant, and Sabba had invested some of the money Baba left him into maintenance for the house. It was just easier to keep some money for the maintenance in their names and ignore it otherwise, back when I was angry. After that, Clint recruited me and became my self-appointed therapist, so I started to work through some things. When this is all done, I think I’m gonna go back to Boston, live out of the house, and...I don’t know, start a life for myself?”

Steve hummed and forcibly kept his hands relaxed. He chastised himself for forgetting the expiration date that was attached to their relationship—her friendship. “I almost forgot that you weren’t staying here in the tower.”

Felicity looked down at her coffee cup and shrugged. “I don’t know, Steve. I don’t- I don’t think I’m cut out for this life. I’m partially responsible for the deaths of over 500 people because as a handler, I didn’t keep control. It’s a lot different being on this side of the action—both helpless and responsible. It’s terrifying and emotionally draining. Being on the run was a nice break, and that’s just...sad.”

“Felicity, that wasn’t your fault.”

Felicity looked up at Steve through her eyelashes, a sad smile quirking her lips upwards. “Maybe, maybe not.”


Felicity cocked her head to the side and shrugged, neither disagreeing or agreeing. The displeased frown on Steve’s face told her that it hadn’t escaped his attention. He leaned forward in his chair and crossed his arms over the tabletop. He pinned her with the kind of look that half reminded Felicity of her grandfather.

“It looks like a subject change is in order,” Clint announced as he waltzed into the room. “Rambo, can I borrow you?”

“Well, I’m not a commodity to trade and swap, but I can spare some time.” Felicity rolled her eyes and painted on her usual smile that seemed ever so much more fake to Steve.

Clint huffed in exasperation. “Yes, yes, I respect you, blah, blah, blah. Caffeine and chat?”
“Is this a ploy to warn me about the Winter Soldier? Because Nat already coffee’d me up for that.” Felicity asked as she stood, grabbing her cup to throw away.

“No, it’s...just come on,” Clint gestured for Felicity to follow him onto the elevator. Felicity furrowed her eyebrows in concern, but nodded. She turned to Steve and gave him a quick smile.

“I’ll update you on the search when I get back.”

“Good luck,” Steve waved at her, his eyes flickering over to Clint.

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“Alright, Clint, what’s up?” She asked once they had settled down in a little coffee shop outside of the tower. Clint tilted his head to the side and fiddled with his coffee stirrer. “Out with it.”

“I need you to stay calm, okay?” Clint spoke in the low voice he used every time he had bad news. “I’m always calm. What’s going on?”

Clint pursed his lips before letting out a long sigh. “I was going through some Hydra files that Tony found, and I found a personnel file.” He took out a folder and slid it across the table for Felicity to look through.

Felicity flipped open the folder and took one look at the name before looking back up at Clint, her eyes wide.

*

“Hey, Felicity,” Steve chirped as the younger woman arrived back to the tower. “I was just gonna call- Felicity?” He stopped in confusion as she grazed him without acknowledging him. “Felicity--”
“Let her go, Steve.” Clint stopped him with a hand on his shoulder.

“What’s going on? What did you tell her?” Steve could feel the defensiveness in his voice, but he couldn’t help it. Something was wrong with Felicity.

Clint rolled his eyes and glared at Steve, his own protectiveness of Felicity coming out full force. “Why don’t you can it with the attitude, alright?”

Steve took a deep breath. “I’m sorry, Clint, but she was mostly fine, she went out for coffee with you, and now she didn’t even notice that I called her name three times.”

Clint huffed. “It’s not my story to tell, Rogers. Why don’t you ask her?”

Steve clenched his jaw and turned to find Felicity. It didn’t take him long—she was in the office that Tony had given her. She was staring at a file on her desk. She had her hands flat on the surface, tears in her eyes as she stared down at the picture in the file.

“Felicity?” Steve asked. When she didn’t answer, he gently put a hand on her shoulder, snapping her out of her daze. “Felicity, what’s wrong?”

“Steve,” She breathed out, looking up at him for a beat before seeming to remember something. “Right, right, the update—”

“No, Felicity, forget the update.” Steve held both of her shoulder in his hands, internally marveling at how small she seemed in that moment. “What’s wrong?”

“I—” She started before swallowing nervously. Her eyes flickered down the the file before she grabbed it and offered it to him. “It’s my dad.”

Steve blinked at her in confusion.

“He— he’s the lead scientist on the Winter Soldier project.”
Happy Holidays!!!!
8. The Sales Pitch

Chapter Summary

the story of how Felicity was recruited

Chapter Notes

lmao this is not worth the wait...i have no excuse tbh

“Noah Kuttler,” Felicity dropped the file on Steve’s lap as she walked into his office. “Hacker and criminal mastermind. Recruited by Hydra when he got on SHIELD’s radar after being arrested in Las Vegas, Nevada for murder of the first degree.”

Steve stared up at her as she spoke, voice level and clinical in its separation of duty and emotion. Her blue eyes were hard and if he didn’t see the red tinges around them, he might even be convinced that she was as fine as she was trying to appear. Tentatively, he opened the file and came face to face with a very unassuming face with a very smug grin. “Felicity--”

“Under the guise of transferring him to SHIELD for consulting on a potential hacking case, he was recruited by Hydra to take on cyber threats. It is--” Her voice faltered just slightly, just enough for him to catch it, “It is most likely that he was the one who warned Hydra of the threat I posed to SHIELD and was monitoring my cyber activity. It is likely that because of this, Team Arrow is on Hydra’s radar. I’m going to have Sara call them and update them of the risk level and then I will use Tony’s resources to mask my digital fingerprints and continue the search for Bucky without Hydra interference or red herrings.”

Steve stood and circled the mahogany desk Tony had set him up with to lean against the front of it and stare Felicity down, his arm crossed over his chest as he regarded her.

“Alright.”

Felicity started, blinking rapidly in confusion at his ready acceptance. “Really? That easy? Not going to address the bring pink and purple polka dotted elephant in the room?”

“Are you or are you not a grown adult, Felicity?” Stever tilted his head to the side and gave her a reluctantly humorless smile. “I trust your judgement--with Bucky, with your father, and with yourself. I wholeheartedly believe that once you’re ready to talk to someone, you will. And I believe that you’re smart enough to know that I’ll always be willing to listen.”

Felicity stared at him for a beat before moving forward and pulling him into a grateful hug. “You have no idea how comforting that is to me. Tony sent Dum-E into my office to annoy me into talking, Clint’s been stalking me in the vents--he’s here right now, say hi--Bruce gets all puppy faced, and Darcy knit me a hat.” Steve gently wrapped his arms around her, just holding her tiny form. “Sometimes I just want to scream that all I need is a nice hug and some damn peace and quiet.”
“Well, I can offer you the hug,” Steve promised, tucking her head into his shoulder, “I’m not sure about the quality.”

“The best,” Came her muffled reply.

“And I can offer you a sympathetic ear when you’re ready,” He continued, following her lead when she began to sway slightly. He’d picked up on that habit in most geniuses: unable to stay still. Tony was perhaps the most severe case he’d ever seen, but that was probably mostly the ADHD and PTSD. Either way, he was always tapping. If he didn’t have a ready surface, he’d tap on the arc reactor in his chest. With Bruce is was fidgeting. Pens, pencils, markers, straws, tongue depressors—nothing was safe.

Felicity just moved all of the time. She would twirl in her chair or shift her weight from foot to foot constantly. She was always moving, always in motion. If she was standing, she was ready to run. If she was sitting, she was ready to get on her feet. Her brain moved too quickly for her to stay still.

As if on cue, she pulled away, looking as if a weight had been lifted off her shoulders as she gave him an impossibly tiny smile.

“I’ll take you up on the offer once I get everything straight in my head. I just— I’m processing, you know?” She tapped her temple self deprecatingly, “Emotions move pretty slow up here. They’re messy and hard to untangle.”

Steve’s lips quirked up into a wry smirk, “Well, slow for you will still leave everyone else in the dust.”

“Flatterer.” Felicity allowed herself an amused expression, flicking his shoulder gently in admonishment.

“I’m just tellin’ the truth,” He argued. He opened his mouth to say something else when both of them were cut off by Sara storming into the room, a determined look on her face.

“You’ve gotta see this,” She told Felicity solemnly, shoving a tablet into her hands. Felicity spared them a worried expression before looking down and feeling her lips grow into a wide grin. “Turn the sound on, too.”

Doing as Sara instructed, Steve heard the sounds of a man behind a camera talking to his cat outdoors. Apparently the cat’s name was Baggie and Baggie wanted to either play or challenge a lion in an inclosure next to the field that Baggie was laying in.

It was the happiest Steve had ever seen Felicity, watching her watch that tiny cat running around in front of a lion and the owner chasing after it asking it to stop.

*  

Dum-E and U were adorable lab mates when Felicity was crashing in Tony’s lab for a few reasons, including but not limited to: someone to fetch tools for you who wouldn’t ask questions, fucking robots, they were used to Tony Stark levels of overworking so Felicity’s didn’t even faze them, they were robots, and they were so adorably incompetent that Felicity was able to keep her mind in a dark place for too long. And they were robots.

Cisco would be so jealous.

Sara sat perched at the end of the table where Felicity was fiddling with her hard drive. Tony was out for the day in meetings. Clint and Steve had disappeared on SHIELD business, which Felicity hoped
meant other finding allies in the fight against Hydra, rooting out Hydra agents, or keeping up their cover and not doing anything particularly stupid.

Beside her, Sara was patting Dum-E on the head and watching Felicity work.

“Can I ask you a question?” The assassin asked.

“You just did,” Felicity answered. She could practically feel the unamused stare boring into the side of her skull, so she pulled away from the hard drive and looked up at Sara. “Yes, dear?”

Sara hopped down from the table and stood next to Felicity as Felicity leaned back in her chair, “How did you, Nat, and Clint happen?”

“A very persistent man named Philip Coulson, an ex-boyfriend who broke the law, and a bottle of wine.” Felicity turned in her chair to face Sara and basically strapped in for a story. “When I was in college, I had a boyfriend, Cooper. I went to MIT. It’s hard to find rebellious nerds, but well...I wasn’t exactly in a happy place. My dad killed my mom when I was a kid, and my grandfather, Sabba, had died a few years before that but I wasn’t in an emotionally healthy enough position to process that, so I needed to rebell.

“Cooper and his roommate and I decided to be hacktivists.” Felicity shook her head slightly at the stupid word. “Make the world a better place all Anonymous style. I was the best coder there, so I flexed my muscles and created a super virus.”

Sara’s eyebrows went up, “A super virus?”

“Yup,” Felicity put a little pop on the ‘p’ and sighed heavily. “I was an idiot. I didn’t think about the ramifications. So caught up in what I could do that I never thought about if I, you know, should. I made this virus and then before I could even start in on any patches, Cooper had used it to hack into the Department of Education and wipe out 3,000 student loans and his roommate, Myron, had already put out feelers to sell it.

“The problem was that Cooper and Myron were fucking idiots. The FBI put it together and they arrested them. It didn’t take long before they were at my door. Cooper had to serve a couple of years for the whole fraud thing, but what they really wanted was the person who wrote the virus. It was a simple carrot or stick situation. The carrot was to come work for the FBI, the stick was to go to prison for aiding and abetting fraud,” Felicity gave Sara a smile, “I chose the carrot.”

*

Felicity flexed her wrists in the cuffs attaching her to the table and looked around the empty room. She knew from watching too many FBI crime shows that the mirror on one side of the room was a one-way mirror. She rolled her neck and turned to look at the mirror. Figuring that is was a 50/50 chance that someone was actually behind the glass, Felicity held up her middle finger at them.

Fuck them.

A few minutes later, Felicity was counting ceiling tiles when the door opened again. Expecting to come face to face with Agents Hannison and Dunn, Felicity ignored the sound of people shuffling into the room.

“How many tiles?” A slightly amused and much gentler voice than Felicity expected asked. She startled and looked at the door, where two unfamiliar men stood. On was wearing full tac gear, a sarcastic expression, and biceps for days. Beside him was a clean, accountant looking older man--presumably the one who had gotten Felicity’s attention.
She looked between the two of them and settled answering the accountant warily, “Twenty-eight.”

The accountant’s mouth quirked up into a little smile, “Ms. Kuttler—”

“Felicity,” She practically growled at the last name that she hadn’t been able to get rid of, despite the reminders with which it came.

“Felicity,” The accountant didn’t pause. “I’m agent Phil Coulson, and this is my partner, Clint Barton.”

“You’re not FBI,” Felicity observed.

Coulson hummed, “What gave it away?”

“Jack booted thug over there,” She nodded towards Clint, “has a collapsed bow and a quiver on his back. Not exactly standard issue.”

“Hear that? She thinks I’m special!” Clint cooed. Coulson raised his eyebrows at him until Clint realized how that sounded. “Shit.”

Coulson looked amused and turned back to face Felicity. “Have you heard of SHIELD?”

“Secret jack booted thugs? I’ve heard whispers.”

“Hi! Jack booted thug has a name!” Clint settled into the corner of the room, his arms and ankles crossed as he leaned against the wall.

Felicity raised her eyebrows at him. “Ask me how much I care, Jack.”

Before that could get out of hand, Coulson spoke up, “We saw your work with the...super virus.”

“It’s not a--” Felicity started, annoyance growing. She stopped herself when she saw Clint looking at her with an amused expression and Coulson looking...genuinely interested. She looked away from the two of them.

“We understand that the FBI is also interested in you and your talents.” Coulson continued in a soft voice.

Felicity snorted.

“We’d like to help alleviate your situation here.”

“What, now I have a third option? Join the FBI, join SHIELD, or join the prison debate team?” Felicity looked Coulson in the eyes with a hard stare. “I didn’t do anything wrong. When there’s an armed robbery at a store, no one locks up the maker of the gun. When there’s an explosion that kills innocents in Iraq, no one puts out a warrant on Tony Stark. I’ll take my chances with conviction, thanks.”

Coulson leaned back in his chair and regarded her evenly. He brought up his hand to point at the scrape on Felicity’s cheek. “The fibs give that to you?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know?”

Clint shuffled impatiently, “You know, you’re pretty damned fighty for someone that we’re just trying to help.”
“Please,” Felicity scoffed, “Save me the damn sermon. No one cares to help anyone unless they’re valuable to you. You need me, not the other way around.”

“The way I see it, we could both make use of each other.” Coulson told her in that infuriatingly gentle voice of his. “You have a pretty cynical way of looking at the world, Felicity.”

Felicity shrugged and covered up her discomfort, “You hear to be my therapist, Coulson? Bring me a couch and I’ll tell you all about how my daddy issues make me distrust faceless governmental entities.”

Clint snorted. Coulson shot him a quelling look. “It’s funny that you bring up your father. I’ve come across some hard stories while doing this, but this is one of the tougher one. Your mother killed by your father. He goes to prison for life and hangs himself. Your grandfather’s partner dies in a mugging not five years after they finally manage to make the state play ball and place you with them. And then your grandfather--”

“Do you have a point?” She snarled at him, her hands clenching into fists on the table.

“I’m sorry,” Coulson apologized, looking as genuine as anyone who looked like a high school teacher really could. “Felicity, I’m sure you’ve realized that you’re a turning point in your life. A crossroads, if you will.”

“So you want me to sell my soul?” Felicity deadpanned.

Coulson’s lips thinned, “I want you to be aware of your options and choose what you think is best. We understand what you’re going through and we can help.”

Felicity scoffed and turned away, but before she could respond, Clint stepped forward. “You’re angry. And scared. You’re lashing out because you know that there’s no one in your corner to defend you,” He uncrossed his arms and leaned against the interrogation room table. “Every time it seems like something good is finally happening to you, you get the rug pulled out from underneath you, and you’re sick and tired of it.”

Felicity’s breathing picked up as Clint’s cornflower blue eyes peered through her damn soul.

“You desperately want help. A little part of you is sobbing inside, screaming that someone notices it. You don’t know what to do, but you know that you don’t trust the people who slammed you down onto the ground, handcuffed you, and stuffed you in a tiny room so that they could watch you like a damn side show, so the only thing you’re sure of is that you don’t want them to win.” Clint leaned closer to her, “Believe it or not, princess, I’ve been in your shoes. So cut the crap, and listen to the sales pitch.”

Coulson sent an unsure stare Clint’s way before turning back to the problem in front of them. “And, of course, SHIELD pays better than the FBI.”

Felicity skipped her eyes over to Coulson for a second before landing back on Clint. “You were in my shoes?”

“Facing charges a lot worse than yours,” Clint nodded.

“And...and you--” Felicity cut herself off and looked away.

“SHIELD gave me a partner and a team.” Clint confirmed, voice soft. “We could do the same for you.”
“And you could walk away anytime.” Coulson ensured her.

Felicity looked regarded the agents in front of her for a beat before nodding.

*If anything, She could prove Clint wrong.*

*“I was taken to the FBI offices and held in an interrogation room to stew for a few hours when a new face came in. Phil Coulson, an agent of SHIELD. Joined by, of course, a very sarcastic bodyguard by the name of Clint Barton. From there, Phil recruited me. Brought me into his little gang of misfits. Clint had brought Nat in a couple years before that. I’m pretty sure Director Dury was in a constant state of being angry at us.”*

Sara chuckled a little bit at that. “So how long were you with them?”

“Only about a year? But that’s a lifetime in secret agent time,” Felicity sighed. “I even remember the mission I was on when Nat finally snapped and dragged me to the training room to start teaching me how to defend myself. It was in Belgium, near--”

“Near Brussels,” Natasha interrupted, walking into the lab like she owned the place. She barely spared Sara a glance. “Bad mission.”

Felicity shrugged, “Not a good one by far.”

“Can we talk?” She asked, face unreadable as per usual.

“I haven’t been avoiding you,” Felicity answered.

Sara looked between the two of them awkwardly for a second before exclaiming, “Well! I have a...thing that I need to do. Let me know if you two need anything.”

And like that Felicity was left with the most dead assassin in the world...waiting on an apology.

“I heard about your dad,” Natasha started, almost stiff in her attempted small talk.

“Yeah, well, at least now we know what we’re up against.”

Natasha nodded and sat on the table next to Felicity. “I know that you can take care of yourself, Smoak, I do. But the thing is, you’re one of very few people to whom I feel an actual connection. I don’t want you to get hurt.”

Felicity leaned back, understanding that to be the apology that it really wasn’t. “The best way you can stop me from being hurt is by being with me in the thick of things. If you want to protect me, have my back.”

Natasha smiled gently, “I always will, лисичка.”
Felicity needed caffeine. She was pulling an all nighter (she slept last night, and Steve didn’t actually voice his complaints when she mentioned it at dinner, so she’s like 92% sure he’s okay with it) researching neurolinguistic programming and other brainwashing tactics. It had been a few months in the tower, and Felicity didn’t bother turning the light on as she walked through the kitchen. She yawned and reached down to grab a mug when there was a thump on the window. She frowned and looked up, greeted by the view of the window shattering from repeated gunfire.

She swallowed down her panic and bunkered down behind the cabinets, “JARVIS!”?

No answer, just a rain of bullets and glass.

“JARVIS?” She could hear the panic in her own voice, but she wasn’t freaking out, so there’s that. “Buddy, come on, I need you.” She reached forward to grab her phone, thankful that she let Stark make her one after he’d seen her burners. No service. Must be a jammer. She used her foot to open the refrigerator, but kicked it back closed when no light came out.

No power.

The question was, was this only on the communal floor or was this a tower wide attack?

Felicity looked around for an escape when she spotted a floor vent. *God help her if Clint ever found out about this.* She stayed crouched and used the Swiss army knife on her keychain to unscrew the vent before another bullet whizzed over her head and she decided, *fuck it,* Tony could afford another vent cover anyway, and kicked it off.

She crawled into the vent and pulled up the tower’s blueprint on her phone. And Pepper called her paranoid. She crawled over Clint’s bedroom and dropped down from the ceiling into his kitchen to find an arrow aimed at her chest.

“It’s me,” Felicity held up her hands and looked around the dark apartment.

Clint smirked and put his arrow into his quiver, but kept his bow tight in hand at his side, “You turn the lights out to scare me, Rambo, or so that I wouldn’t see you in my territory?”

“I didn’t turn them off, but the common floor was shot up. Special rounds, I’m gonna guess, because I doubt Tony’s stupid enough to have a superhero clubhouse without making the glass bullet proof.” Felicity moved passed Clint to the breaker panel in his living room. Tony had put a breaker in Clint’s floor because Clint was a paranoid mother fucker and appreciated the more simple things in life. “I’m finding our paranoia very useful at this moment. It wasn’t an EMP because the phones can still turn on, but there is--”

“A jammer, I know. I tried to call Nat.” Clint lit a candle and held it up so that Felicity could see the
labels in the breaker as she flipped through them without a response. “Any chance Stark just didn’t pay his bills?”

“And the bill collectors took a potshot at my favorite coffee mug?”

Clint shrugged, “They can be nasty fuckers. You know how they disguise their numbers on your caller ID to make it look like your grandmother’s calling?”

Felicity raised an eyebrow, “Barton, stay on task.”

“God, you’re like a teacher.” Clint rolled his eyes.

“You didn’t go to school after seventh grade, circus brat.” Felicity deadpanned and sighed, slamming the breaker panel closed. Clint pointedly rolled his eyes at her again to show her that he thought she was being fucking rude. She huffed out a laugh, but both of them froze at the sound of boots upstairs. She narrowed her eyes and whispered, “How many?”

“Twelve- thirteen, maybe. They must’ve shot out the windows to get in, you were just in the wrong place at the right time.” Clint tilted his head up as he listened. “You know that I would’ve been up there in a second if I didn’t hear you kick in the vent, right?”

Felicity gave him a gentle smile and squeezed his upper arm. “So Tony’s new hearing aids?”

“I feel like a robot with super hearing. I’m thinking that next time I can convince Lord Stark to put in a police scanner.” Clint drawled.

“Got it, got it.” Felicity nodded, taking the hint not to pry.

Clint looked from Felicity back up to the ceiling, “What are the chances that someone else will take care of this and we can just hang out here?” Felicity cocked her head to the side and gave Clint a look. “Yeah, yeah, I know. Who’s in the tower?”

Felicity paused to think, “Bruce is out of town looking into a calming drug that cropped up in Madagascar, Pepper had to drag Tony to LA for a board meeting. Sara and Nat both went on patrol in Hell’s Kitchen--they have a bet on whether or not the Devil there is real. And Steve was...in the gym, I think. Is Kate in town?”

“Nah, she’s dealing with some transphobes.”

Felicity sighed heavily, “Sounds right.”

“So Steve’s the only backup we have?” Clint raised his eyebrows. “Lucky us.”

“You’ve memorized the layout of the tower and the vents, right? How do we get to the gym?” Felicity asked, putting her phone in her pocket to pull her hair up into a ponytail. Her face lit up when she had an idea, though. “Did you lose your Avengers card?”

Clint blinked a few times before digging his wallet out of his pocket and opening it, looking proud when he was able to hand it over to her. She took it and raised her eyebrows at him in question. She was pretty sure he’d been through at least 26 IDs since she met him—not counting fake ones—and she knew for a fact he would’ve lost a card like this unless he had a good reason not to. “The Starbucks next to my apartment in Queens will give me a discount if I show it to them.”

“You’re shameless,” Felicity smirked and turned the card over. She grabbed his thumb to activate the SOS based on biometric signatures. Once she was done doing that, she turned to Clint. “Do you
have lock picking tools?”

Clint nodded and put down the candle for Felicity to use while he grabbed the picks and a small electronics toolkit that he used to repair fritzy arrows. He put it down next to her and froze when he realized something. “Do you hear anything?”

“...No?” Felicity furrowed her eyebrows as she glanced upstairs. “Wait, where’d they go?”

The sound of the elevator down the hall opening caught their attention. They turned and gave each other equally panicked looks. “What’re the chances that your beacon also told them where we are?”

“We don’t even know who ‘they’ are!” Felicity hissed.

“Technologically capable enough to get passed bulletproof Stark glass.”

Felicity let out a huff and nodded, handing the card over for Clint to destroy it. “Great, now we have no allies, no intel, and no way of finding Steve.”

“Spy mode, my dear Rambo. The solution that you’re looking for is spy mode.”

*

When the lights went out, Steve was a few punches away from finishing up his work out. He straightened and looked around, his confusion turning to concern when JARVIS didn’t answer him. He dialed Felicity and got a similar answer. Mentally he went through who was in the tower.

Just Clint and Felicity--just a floor apart, it wouldn’t be a jump to assumed they’d find each other. They had a way of doing that. If it was just Clint, Steve would get up there as soon as he could, but with Felicity in play, he might just need to wait until they figured out how to let him know where they were going. The vents, probably. Damn spies were always in the vents.

He unwrapped his hands and stole a look at the vent. Even if he could handle the cramped space, Steve doubted his shoulders would fit through. Oh, what he wouldn’t give for Thor to return from his vacation early. Or to know where he was at all.

A voice in his head that sounded suspiciously like Felicity on her better days accused him of being a mother hen, but then again Steve didn’t actually lecture Felicity about treating her body right when she mentioned that she would be pulling a damn all nighter, so if anything, he’s getting better.

Steve fiddled with his phone, trying to get any call to go through.

At the sound of heavy footsteps, Steve sighed and looked around. There were at least four people heading towards him. He looked around the room for a second before he remembered the crawlspace that Tony built into the gym. God bless that paranoid man.

*

“Stop staring at my ass,” Clint shot over his shoulder for the fifth time since they’d both hopped into the vents.

“That wasn’t funny the first time.”

End Notes
Go follow me on social media:

see wally_birb for pretty pictures

see alpha-whale for snark in spades

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