Muse

by backtothestart02

Summary

Varying lengths of single-chapter stories &/or snippets inspired by spoilers detailed for future episodes.

Beginning in 3x01 and onward.

*Chapter 17 written for Day 7 of 25 Days of Westallen Fanfiction.
Chapter 1

Chapter Summary

3.01

Inspired by the tweet by Matt Mitovitch, following up the line "We were something else to each other where you come from, weren't we?", he says 'It's what SHE says next that is *crying emoji*'

“We were something else to each other where you come from, weren’t we?”

Before he can even come to grips with what to say to were, if it’s too risky to be specific or if he’s best keeping it vague, she continues with words nearly identical to ones he once said.

Not for the first time, he misses past memories, that girl, that moment, and how he felt. He misses how she specifically looked at him in that moment. Iris West, the girl of his dreams, who had been oblivious to his feelings for years and then in denial of her own, had looked at him as if just the possibility of them being together would make all her dreams come true.

“We were everything to each other,” this Iris almost whispers.

She swallows hard and his eyes mist. His mind races and he sees all those memories, and he misses them.

Then suddenly - dark.

“Barry?”

He feels her hand on his arm, looks up and sees her concerned gaze. It’s not the first time this has happened today. He doesn’t want to believe it, but his memories of a past life are slipping and it terrifies him.

“What…w-what did you just say?” He asks, needing more than anything to know.

“Uh…it was nothing,” she says, trying to brush it off.

He lifts his gaze to hers, straightens from the hunched over position he’d been thrown into hit him when the memory slipped away.

“Tell me,” he demands, regretting how harsh it sounds. “Please,” comes out softer.

She hesitates, then drops her hand to her side and says, “I said we were everything to each other where you came from. I asked what we were and then I answered for you. I guess that happens sometimes.”

She tries for a lighter air, but it’s not enough. Something has shaken him.

Barry is broken. He recites the words over and over in his head. He can feel in his gut that they are significant, but when he tries to put them to something that happened before now, he can’t.
The memory is gone.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

3.02

Inspired by the brief seconds of a Barry & Iris scene in the 3.02 extended promo and this quote by Candice Patton:

"Once we kind of get out of Flashpoint, they’re going to have to deal with knowing that they knew each other in that timeline and what that means for them in their relationship and if they want to move forward or if things have just changed so much that they can’t."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

“You need to tell me what is going on, Barry. Right now.”

He stared into her eyes, still trying to decide what he was and was not willing to tell her. Everything? Nothing? Of all the bizarre things that had been going on since he arrived in this warped version of the old timeline, his relationship with Iris has changed. From what he could tell, they were still best friends. They weren’t dating, because that last kiss hadn’t happened, but she could see something was wrong. She knew him inside and out. This wasn’t the first time she’d demanded answers.

“Barry,” she demanded, the fire burning brighter in her eyes.

His calm demeanor faded away and the nerves that had been beating down on him all day shown all over his face.

“I went back in time,” he finally said, running a hand through his hair.

She blinked. “What?”

“I couldn’t handle my father dying, so I went back in time and saved my mother.” He took a deep breath. “I changed the timeline.”

Silence, heavy as lead, sunk in the space between them as Iris tried to process what he was telling her.

“Obviously you came back,” she said quietly. Her eyes flitted up to his – why? But she didn’t ask it.

“Yes.” He nodded and then turned away, pacing across the short corridor. “But it’s different. It’s not the same. It’s—” He looked at her helplessly. “It’s not the same as when I left.”

“What are you talking about?”

“You and Joe were not estranged. Cisco wasn’t in rehab, and Caitlin didn’t have…cold powers.” He gestured about wildly as he spoke, each example more agonizing than the last.
Iris’s eyes widened. “Wait, Caitlin has the *metahuman* gene? I thought—”

And that was when he realized that nobody else knew. He squeezed his eyes shut and wrapped his fingers tightly around the bridge of his nose.

“I saw her…” He let out. “In STAR Labs. She was by herself and she didn’t know I was there. And her hand, there was…” He rubbed his hands over his face. “Oh god, what have I done…”

Silence settled again before Iris said, “So, this is why you’ve been acting so weird, like you’re confused by everything.” He looked up at her hesitantly. “Because you are. None of this is real to you. None of it is what you remember.”

“That’s just the thing, Iris. *I do* remember. In Flashpoint—”

"*Flashpoint?*” she asked, confused.

“It’s what the Reverse Flash called the timeline I created when I went back and stopped him from killing my mother.”

“But you killed him. Or Eddie did…” She was quiet for a moment and then shook her head. “He was erased from time.”

Barry laughed under his breath. He’d thought maybe letting everything out would make him feel better, but he just felt worse.

“*That* version of him.”

Iris’s brows furrowed; she was confused again.

“Look, Iris, there is a lot that is different from the way I remember it. But you and I, we’re still best friends. And the last time I left, well—”

“What?”

He sighed. “Let’s just say I was expecting you to be on the porch at Joe’s house when I came back. Or, at least inside waiting for me.”

“But my dad and I don’t talk, Barry. You know tha—” She stopped herself mid-sentence, remembering what he’d just told her. “You don’t know that.” She sighed. “Or you didn’t.”

“I messed up everyone’s lives, Iris. I don’t know what’s the same and what’s different, only that what is seriously wrong with everyone is because of what I did. I wish I could go back and undo everything, but—”

“No. That’s…no. I think, given the circumstances that’s a bad idea.” She paused, her mind switching gears. “How long were you in this…Flashpoint?”

He sighed. “Three months.”

“And you and I…were we? I mean, together?”

The look on her face was pained and hopeful at the same time. He couldn’t even relish the fact that she’d basically admitted that on this warped timeline of his original life she still had romantic feelings for him.

“Almost,” he said. “We had something. She felt it right away. And I—”
“What?” She shook her head again before he could say a word. “No, don’t tell me. I don’t want to know. We have bigger problems than me dealing with the fact that you might have been in love with another version of me.”

“Iris-”

“No.” She stopped him. “Don’t.”

His mouth opened in protest, but he made himself stay silent.

“I am going to tell you everything that I know,” she continued. “You tell me what’s the same and what’s different. Whether I’m mad or not, I am going to help you fix this, Barry Allen.”

He swallowed and nodded. “And what about us?”

She looked at him, tears threatening to fall.

“I don’t know.”

Chapter End Notes

I initially expected myself to write Iris a lot angrier than I ended up being. I guess it’s because I calmed down since I first watched the promo a couple days ago. Whoops. lol.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

3.04

Inspired by the Superhero All Week promo released after 3.03 aired where Barry & Iris (at the very least) make out on a couch (note: candle spotted in the scene). This snippet is the lead up scene to that.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Barry, I like that we’re going slow. I do. And I’m not saying we have to go…all the way, not that far. But… Maybe a little more than we’ve been doing? Maybe a little-”

“Heat,” he says, his tongue thick and heavy in his mouth.

Iris’s mouth goes dry too. Instead of catching his gaze, afraid the blush will rise in her face, she slides her hands up his shirt, resting them at her eye level.

“I was going to say passion, but…” she swallows. Now she does lift her eyes to his. “Yeah.”

His heart rate has kicked up so much he wonders why he isn’t panting at the mere thought of giving Iris more than a few chaste kisses.

Her lips on his, her breath against his skin, the look in her eyes when it’s just the two of them caught in an embrace…he can’t imagine anything better than that.

But it isn’t as if what she’s asking for isn’t what he wants either, so he nods, consenting.

“Yeah?” she asks, hopeful but still timid.

“Yeah,” he says, dipping his head to kiss her and lingering just a little longer than usual.

“Would it be weird if I lit candles?” She pulls back a little, so completely unnerved and maybe regretting that she asked it. “That’s weird for just making out, right? No dinner, just…”

He kisses her again, letting his tongue glide across her bottom lip. She shivers and involuntarily moans, needing a moment before she opens her eyes to register and accept what her boyfriend did just now.

“Candles sound perfect,” he says, and she wonders now if she needs them.

Chapter End Notes

I was tempted to write the actual scene, but I think I'll leave it here. Hope you enjoyed.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Assumed Post 3.09 (when written)

Inspired by Tom Cavanagh & Candice Patton's comments at a panel that HR asks out Iris in a future episode and how Barry & Iris react.

Chapter Notes

My longest chap in this collection of drabbles/oneshot to date, but it fit under the description of what this "story" is supposed to be, so I decided to put it in as the next chap. Lines have been slightly embellished from what Tom & Candice said at the panel, but overall it fits the bill of what could happen. In case any of you are reading it waaaay after I posted it, this was written after 3.07 aired, so for all I know it won't fit with the events of 3.08 and 3.09. This all came from speculation, discussion and spoilers circulating at the time.

*I thank sendtherain for inspiring with discussion and for beta'ing for me; and also a big thanks to idontownemotion (on tumblr) for helping me brainstorm a bit. This wouldn't have come together without you guys, so thank you. :)

Another day in STAR Labs. Another day trying to focus on the metahuman of the week while simultaneously trying to make plans for taking down Savitar and Alchemy. Barry had taken Jay’s advice just before Christmas, regarding both his personal guilt and the task of the two current big bad villains at hand. Things were good between him and Iris. He hoped in time they would be good between him and Cisco, too. In the meantime, something somewhat trivial in light of all they were dealing with – and yet for some reason very burdensome – to him plagued him this morning. It had plagued him ever since the most magical Christmas he’d had to date.

Iris told him she loved him, that she was in love with him. He’d reciprocated. And, well, things had gotten very steamy after that; about which he had no complaints. There was nothing wrong with the aftermath either. He couldn’t remember ever being happier or sleeping so well, or just enjoying the morning after they both woke up, thrilled that it was a Saturday and they had nowhere to be. Until, of course, Flash business came up. Surprisingly, the day was quiet in that sector and he could relish being in Iris’s company.

For all of that enjoyment though, he still didn’t know what in the world he and Iris were.

It was a stupid thought in and of itself, because duh, if they were dating – and had exchanged declarations of love— they were boyfriend and girlfriend. But they were also best friends. They were also soulmates. They were also each other’s salvation. They were…well, they were everything. As he had once told the Flashpoint version of Iris, what was between them escaped definition.
It bothered him that he couldn’t pinpoint exactly what they were. When they went out and introduced each other to someone new, what were they supposed to call each other? He couldn’t go on with his ‘Joe’s…my…Iris’ line. One of these times he would have to explain who she was to him, and not just her name. It gave him nerves and made him sweat just to think of a situation when he’d have to spit out one or two words and worry the whole way through what Iris would think of the words he chose.

And once it was out, it was out. There would be no going back. Iris would want to talk about it, of course. She’d tease him if it was a good choice of words or she’d have a serious talk with him if she wasn’t sure about it. He wasn’t sure he was entirely okay with either of those options. What should have made him feel better about his predicament was that Iris seemed to be struggling with the same thing.

He’d spotted her trying to explain his frequent visits to CCPN to a new reporter, saw the uncertainty on her face and the hard swallow lumping in her throat when she answered.

“He…he’s my….he used to work at CCPD as a CSI.”

“What does that have to do with why he visits you so often? Is he your boyfriend?”

She’d given a forced smile and let out a tight, “We’re dating.”

Her co-worker had raised his eyebrows, but Iris had only looked away and returned to her work, shutting the conversation down without further discussion. The new employee hadn’t pushed, and instead just walked back to his own desk.

Barry didn’t press her about it, because that would open up the uncomfortable discussion of what to call them. Plus, it would also mean admitting his initial reason for lingering was because the new guy was talking to his…Iris?

He sighed inwardly. Jealousy hadn’t been a thing so far in their relationship, and he knew there was no reason for it. His emotions were just out of whack because he was bottling up this labeling issue.

What made matters worse was that no one else labeled them either. It would be so much easier if someone else just called her…whatever she was to him. It would be great if Iris was in the room when that happened, too. They’d probably make eye contact and silently agree that’s what they were. Then they wouldn’t have to have a conversation at all. They could just make out and murmur…whatever they were to each other.

Barry cringed just thinking about how much he was overanalyzing the situation. They should just talk about it. He should plan it. He should put it in his phone or the planner that he only half-used since he’d been forced to resign. They could have a romantic dinner—which he’d probably ruin by overthinking the conversation before bringing it up—and then he could tell her about all this overanalyzing he’d been doing.

And she’d just say, “Just call me Iris, Bear,” because he’d open with “What should I call you?” And he wouldn’t press and it would go on unresolved until some outside party pushed them to have that conversation. No beating around the bush. No nonsense.

But could he really count on someone doing that?

Today, he could.

Because moments after HR made the rounds, handing out everyone’s morning coffee drinks, he heard the quirky Earth 19 version-Wells make an interesting remark to Barry’s Iris West.
A proposition.

“Miss West. If...if I may, perhaps...at another time...” HR cleared his throat as his voice disappeared. “Do you want to grab a coffee?” His face flushed when Iris’s jaw dropped, but he pushed forward. “Again, not now, since you already have a coffee in your hand, that I gave you.” Nervous chuckles flooded out. “I just have to wonder... Is there something between us?”

Barry’s head snapped up, his eyes burning holes into HR’s head, but the man was oblivious. He seemed only aware of Iris’s face and what her answer might be. Barry was awfully curious as well.

“My boyfriend is right there,” Iris said, pointing towards Barry not even halfway across the room.

Barry’s stomach dropped. His eyes softened and his heart started to race. For one endless moment, it didn’t matter that HR had deigned to ask out the girl that he’d very clearly been dating for months now. Because that girl had labeled him.

Boyfriend. He was Iris West’s boyfriend.

Which, by default, made her his girlfriend.

Relief flushed through him. They had labels.

But then HR spoke again.

“Oh, no, you’re right, of course,” he blathered on, trying to brush aside the fact that he’d been hitting on a taken woman right in front of exactly who she was taken by. “My mistake,” he assured her about a breath away from fleeing the scene.

But then Barry walked over and glared at him – a ‘what are you doing, man?’ clear on his face.

“Allen,” HR said, his pitch slightly higher than usual.

“Iris,” Barry said, still glaring at HR, but clearly addressing his girlfriend.

Iris cleared her throat, her voice sounding strangled as she spoke.

“Yes, Barry?”

And in just that moment, Barry went from glaring at HR to kissing Iris West – his girlfriend. He cupped her face in his hands, sunk the tips of his fingers into her raven hair, and groaned heavily when her hands grazed his waist and pulled him to her, deepening the kiss.

“Who-hoa!” HR exclaimed somewhere near the beginning of the kiss. “Making out! That is... PDO. Yes, definitely, parents don’t...” He cleared his throat. “Observe.” All parties in the room briefly paused at HR’s unusual E19 version of PDA, but in a beat they resumed their activities.

Uncomfortably HR stood there a while longer, wondering if Barry and Iris would stop kissing in front of him. He glanced over at Cisco and Caitlin, who were firmly occupying themselves with something else to avoid what he was face to face with.

“I’m going to go...I think...now. Yes. Now, I will...I...I will be back.”

“He’s gone,” Cisco said neutrally when HR reached the long corridor, his footsteps receding into the distance.
Barry and Iris broke apart. They glanced at Cisco and Caitlin, who still appeared not to be paying any attention to them despite Cisco’s announcement. Then they looked back at each other, each blushing and barely containing grins. Eye contact was difficult.

Barry spoke first, lowering his head to nuzzle her nose as his fingers rubbed circles on the back of her hands.

“So, I’m your boyfriend, huh?” he murmured, taking extreme delight in the visible rippling of shivers that erupted over Iris’s body.

She looked up at him.

“Only if I’m your girlfriend.”

He grinned so wide his cheeks started to hurt. Despite the corner she’d forced him into, he couldn’t help but be so happy that she’d said it first, that he knew.

“You’re so much more than that, Iris West,” he whispered as he ran his thumb over her chin.

She pressed her face against his cheek and pulled him closer still, her fingers clutching his shirt. It caused his breath to hitch.

“To make things simple though…” she breathed against his skin.

His hands traveled up her arms and then encircled her waist as well.

“To make things simple,” he agreed.

She pulled back and looked deep into his eyes, love and adoration pouring forth. Barry knew the same look was in his own eyes.

“I love you, boyfriend,” she said.

His smile was as bright as ever. “I love you, too, girlfriend.”

Iris’s hands snuck up into his hair and Barry started to lower his head to kiss her again when—

“Oh, God.”

They both stopped and turned toward the sound.

Cisco was standing where he’d been before, but now his hands were on his hips and he was glaring.

“Really, lovebirds? Must you?”

Caitlin still wasn’t looking at them, but Barry could see she was fighting a smile.

Iris’s hand squeezed his and he turned back to her, still grinning. Her eyes twinkled as she looked up at him.

“C’mon.” She gestured toward the corridor and he let her tug him away, blissfully beaming both to himself and Cisco as they left the room.

“Thank you!” Cisco called out after them. Caitlin said something in response that made him loudly take his seat, but neither Barry nor Iris heard what it was because they were running down the hall laughing.
When they were out of hearing range, Barry sped them further away and then pinned Iris to a wall. Her face was flush with the speed and thrill of their departure. Finally, she linked her arms around his neck and pulled him until he was pressed up against her, his arms caging her in.

“We’re alone now,” she whispered, his lips inches from hers, their eyes glued to each other’s.

He kissed her once and then pulled away for only a moment.

“Alone with my girlfriend… Whatever shall we do?”

She smiled against him and stood up on her tiptoes. She kissed him hard and moaned into his mouth.

It was enough of an answer for him.
It was a new day. A good day.

A day where he hadn’t had raging nightmares that woke him up in a cold sweat. A night where Iris hadn’t asked him what was wrong, if he’d eaten something weird before bed and what could be so horrible that it had him staring up blankly at the ceiling until his eyelids grew so heavy that they closed again. Mercifully, this time his subconscious hadn’t plagued him with the future Jay had told him to ignore.

And he was trying to forget it. He was pushing aside the images that haunted him, and during the day he mostly succeeded in not letting it drag him down or sour his mood enough that those around him noticed.

Today had to be one of those days because today – tonight – was their housewarming party. Barry couldn’t remember whose idea it had been anymore. Iris maybe, because she was still so euphoric over them sharing a place together and him being such the romantic to do it on her favorite holiday. Joe was also a likely candidate, because even though he wasn’t one to announce get-togethers (minus the famous West Christmas celebration every year, though that was mostly implied), he’d simply gushed when Barry timidly informed him of Iris’s new residence. HR, as odd as it was, had talked about it the most after it was decided though, to the point where it seemed like he could have come up with it himself and maybe had. Caitlin was happy for them, but Barry was fairly sure she hadn’t been the one to suggest it. Cisco might have been more blatant about his happiness – or teased more about it maybe? Regardless, they were having it, and everyone was coming. It was going to be a good night. Barry and his live-in girlfriend, along with all their guests were going to be happy.

The sound of rushing water interrupted his thoughts and he turned to the sound of the woman of his dreams calling for him.

“Barry?”
“Yeah?” He approached the bathroom, catching glimpses of her half-naked body as she moved around the sink and peeked behind the shower door.

“Could you bring me my dress? And the lacy strapless bra? I’ve already got some panties in here.”

Off went the bra she’d been wearing. Right onto the floor.

Barry’s blood heated, gathering to his nether regions. He wondered if she was doing it on purpose. She had to know the bathroom door was still open enough for him to see from their bedroom.

“Uh, yeah, sure.”

He forced himself to turn away until he spotted the dress hanging over their closet door. It was a pretty number, one he’d picked out and she’d been proud of him for. As he grabbed the dress, he wished it was farther away so he could prevent her from getting dressed.

Stop it, he scolded himself. He could have sex with Iris after the party. Their guests would be there in approximately forty-five minutes. He’d already showered – missed your opportunity there, he thought, annoyed. Now it was Iris’s turn. He was well aware it took longer for her, and not just because she lacked super speed.

Still, perhaps he could sneak in a few quick kisses, leave her warm enough to squirm all the way through her shower the way he was squirming now.

“Oh!” Iris gasped when Barry was suddenly in front of her, holding the dress in his hand and staring down at her as if he was a predator and she was his prey. “Thanks, Barry.” She couldn’t meet his gaze.

Before she could step away from him, Barry lowered his lips and kissed her throat. Once. Twice. Nibbles. Tongue.

“Baaaarry,” Iris purred when his lips descended down one breast. She gasped and then moaned soon after when she felt his hand sneak beneath her silk underwear and cup her ass. His head moved then, prodding her other nipple erect with his teeth.

“This…this is not—” Her breath caught in her throat when he pulled her flush against him, letting her feel his hard-as-rock length separated only by his boxers and pants.

She dropped the dress.

“I have to shower,” she whimpered after several hot, steamy kisses that made her head spin.

“So shower,” he teased, though his voice was low and gravelly and filled with desire. “Try.”

She huffed and tugged on his earlobe with her teeth, then peppered his neck with kisses as she clutched his shoulders.

“I don’t have powers,” she complained, kissing her way across his chest. “It wouldn’t be a fair fight.”

“No powers,” he said, tangling his hands in her hair and massaging her scalp before kissing her once more. “Promise,” he whispered in her ear, nuzzling his face into her neck and inhaling her scent.

“I stink,” she insisted.
“You smell wonderful,” he insisted.

“Ugh. Barry.”

She pushed him away roughly and glared at him, clearly annoyed. Barry, for his part, was wide-eyed with shock but didn’t close the distance between them. He stayed put and waited, seeing what she would do.

One second past. Two. Ten. Thirty. All he could hear was her heavy-breathing. He could see it too with the rise and fall of her chest, but only out of the corner of his eyes. He wouldn’t let his eyes shift away from hers. He’d get smacked for sure then. *It’d be worth it*, the lust in his head informed him.

And then she was on him, kissing him heavily, fondling him, making him groan and breathe harder, climbing onto him and wrapping her legs around his waist without any assistance from him whatsoever. She tugged him into the bathroom further simply by yanking on his collar. When they bumped into the shower door, it slid open and the spray of some water dampened their hair.

They both gasped and pulled apart. Taken by surprise, Iris slid off of Barry’s body until she was weakly standing on her own two feet again. Their eyes never left each other.

“Shower,” she said. “Now.”

Admitting defeat, Barry’s shoulders slumped as he took a step away. *You got kisses*, he reminded himself. *That’s what you came in here for.*

But Iris wasn’t having it. She grabbed a hold of his collar again and pulled him to her.

“You’re coming with me, Flash.” She released him. “Undress.”

She slid off her panties, already slipping from Barry’s heavy caresses, and stepped into the shower, leaving the door open no more than a few inches.

He didn’t have to be told twice. In a flash his clothes were off, tossed haphazardly near the dress that would surely be wrinkled by the time they were done. He vowed silently to iron it, since she would no doubt be annoyed.

He shut the bathroom door to keep the heat in the room – not that they wouldn’t generate enough heat of their own – and went into the shower, allowing himself to bask in the sight of the cascade of water sweeping the curves of her body before feeling a stab of guilt.

“Iris, look, if you’d rather…later… I know you’re short on ti—”

And then she was flush up against him, kissing him, making him lose his mind, tugging on his bottom lip and urging his tongue to fill her mouth. She pulled away for no more than a few breaths.

“I need you inside me,” she breathed heavily, lost in the world that was two of them beneath the steamy water. “I need your hands, your dick. I need you to *vibrate*. And I need you to do it *right now* and *fast*, because you’ll be cutting back my prep time by at least ten minutes.”

Barry lifted her and pushed her hard against the dripping shower wall.

“I can make it five.”

And she felt it. She let out the loud moans caused by his fingers slipping inside her, vibrating in
and out until she screamed. She hung on for dear life when he thrust into her, the vibrations switching to the other portion of his anatomy, for which she had no complaints. She begged him to go faster, harder, but when he did, she could hardly stand it. She had trouble keeping her legs wrapped around him, so he held them for her. His fingers dug into her thighs and then cupped her ass again, creating more friction as he thrust still harder, seeking his release after the three he’d given her.

All the while he kissed her. He sucked her breasts. He licked the water off her neck and cheeks, following the pathway it took down the front of her body. After his orgasm, he pulled out of her and lifted her so her legs were around his chest. He was tempted to lift her onto his shoulders, but was uncertain their ceiling was that high. He kissed down her stomach and licked into the dip of her belly button, sending delicious chills running all over her body, heating him further.

“You said five minutes,” she moaned, tugging on his hair with one hand and bracing her other against the ceiling she was less than a foot away from bumping.

So close to her core, Barry forced himself to retreat. He gently set her on her feet, the fire still in his eyes but the control resurfacing. Iris kept going though. She slid down to her knees and she took him in her mouth. Her tongue swirled around his already hardening length and her hands massaged his balls.

After one “Jesus, Iris,” he came from her licking his tip, sending the stream of cum in rivers down her breasts.

When she stood to her feet – with his aid – he was staring at her, still lustful but also in wonder because how could she be real?

“Now,” she managed, the air being sucked out of her still, “Go.”

He blinked. His brows furrowed, confused.

“I have to actually wash up. Water alone is not going to cut it.”

He grin was sappy when the realization hit.

“I’m not exactly as clean as I was before either, Iris.”

Her mouth opened, then closed, and then opened again. She rolled her eyes.

“Fine. But no fucking.”

He nodded once. “No fucking.”

“Keep that thing to yourself.” She pointed past his hips deliberately.

“Got it.”

“And your hands too.” She stared him down. “We soap up and wash off in separate corners.”

The heat returned to his eyes as his grin widened.

“No promises.”

And then she was in his arms again and he was kissing her, sweetly this time, tender with feather-like touches to her curves and the whisper of I love you in her ear.

She melted into him and they washed each other, not thinking at all about how the time was
slipping away.

Without a word, Barry quickly ironed her dress after. He wasn’t doing the best job, so she brushed him aside, mildly perturbed. That concern increased when the doorbell rang, and a look of panic flashed across her face.

“II’ll get it,” he said quickly, and she brusquely nodded.

Ten minutes later, she floated down the staircase to greet everybody. Her smile was wide as if nothing was amiss at all, but as she walked past him, Barry noticed the zipper down on the back of her dress. With no super speed whatsoever, Barry reached her in time and pulled it up.

Iris made no direct acknowledgement of the action and no one else took notice of it either. But after everyone had left and it was just the two of them sitting in the living room alone, wrapped up in each other, he heard a thank you tumble out from between her lips.

“For what?” he asked, not wanting to be smug without first knowing why.

“For the zipper,” she explained.

“The sex too, right?”

She jabbed him in the gut and he winced.

“The sex preceded the zipper.”

“Are you saying you wish we hadn’t had sex?” he teased.

She sighed and sank into him. He chuckled.

“And for waiting,” she added softly.

He turned his head to look down at her and found her looking up. Her fingers traced his jawline and then cupped his cheek.

“Thank you for waiting for me.”

He bent his head and kissed her.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

3.21

Inspired by multiple promos all featuring footage from this episode, in addition to the Barry & Iris 3.21 episode still. This is the scene featured (mostly) in that episode still.

Chapter Notes

Dedicated to: sendtherain

I'd love to say this is a request, but my flawless beta unfortunately does not do such things (often), so I had to get sneaky and just ask her a ton of specifics of what she'd like to see out of the episode, particularly in regards to the Barry & Iris still and Iris's specific feelings on the matter of a version of Barry being Savitar. (So mostly Iris's POV/feelings in this one!) Everything that happens in this fic is a detail she wanted to see in the episode/that still scene tonight.

I hope you all enjoy!

*Obvs many thanks to the aforementioned beta, sendtherain, who beta'd her own dedication fic. Lmao. Bless her. But now it's perfect. ;)

He tried to tell her on his own. She had to give him credit for that.

After a restless night of sleep and him not answering any of her prodding questions, she knew something was up. He’d been sleeping through the night as of late, despite the current circumstances surrounding them. But last night he hadn’t slept. He’d stayed awake, tossing and turning. At one point, he got up and left the room, went downstairs and paced for over an hour. She’d gone to the top of the stairs to watch him, but he never became aware of her.

His inability to sleep made it hard for her to sleep, but she was certain she’d at least gotten a few hours. It pained her to see his forced smile in the morning when he handed her coffee and pancakes he’d made special. The light was gone from his eyes, and she ached to know why.

Something had obviously happened when he’d run off the night before. He’d evaded any real questions when he returned, bringing pizzas and informing them he’d had a craving he could no longer ignore. Suspicion was ever present on their faces, but none of them pressed him. She hadn’t either.

She wondered now what would have happened if she had.

Would she have broken down crying? Would she have backed away from him, afraid? Would she have screamed at him to leave?
She told herself no, she wouldn’t, not ever, but…

“I’m Savitar.”

She hardly had time to catch her breath before they both became aware of movement from the doorway. Wally. He’d heard. He didn’t say anything either, but Barry – both of them really – knew this couldn’t be a closely held secret, not even for a few more moments. They had to tell the team, and they had to figure out a plan to stop Savitar. They couldn’t dwell on the fact that Barry was Savitar. It would only slow them down, and that would give their enemy the advantage.

Barry repeated his confession when everyone was gathered together. It drew wariness and confusion, as was to be expected.

“How can you be Savitar?” Joe asked, bewildered beyond measure, but clearly taking it seriously.

“Part of me is,” Barry said sadly. “It’s who I become when I lose Iris.”

“But…” Joe continued, still confused. “How can you become Savitar if Savitar never existed in the first place? Before Flashpoint, Iris was alive and married to you in 2024, right?”

Wally interjected before Barry could even open his mouth.

“Savitar is a version of Barry from the future,” he clarified, which didn’t really help. The silence was deafening and heavy. Everyone was still confused. No one knew what to say. They were too shocked to move. It was amazing, Iris found herself thinking afterwards, that Wally was able to push forward and be the driving force on the team, help everyone refocus.

Because then he continued, “He remembers everything that Barry does.”

And so began the brainstorming for how Savitar could possibly be stopped.

“What if Barry can’t remember what we’re doing now?” Cisco suggested.

Silence again, but this time a clear degree of intrigue.

“You want to mess with his brain?” Joe asked, dubious of what good that would do.

“Just a little bit,” Cisco assured. He turned to Barry, who looked lost in a haze. “I want to stop you from making new memories.”

And so, it was decided.

If Savitar was a future version of Barry and remembered everything Barry would do, they could alter Barry’s memories and maybe Savitar would forget too – giving them the advantage.

It was a good plan, and hopefully one that would work. Everyone agreed to it. Cisco promptly left to begin work on a device that would accomplish what he’d announced he was going to do. The shocking revelation was all but erased. Suddenly Barry and Savitar were two separate entities, sharing nothing but memories, a face, and the power of speed.

Everyone’s ability to just ignore the impact of what Barry had told them and focus on the problem at hand should have been enough for her. It was what she did in situations like this. Figure out a plan now, freak out over the emotional turmoil later. That was how you solved problems, by not losing control in the moment and by detaching long enough to succeed.
But this time Iris couldn’t do it.

Barry was Savitar? The monster who was trying to kill her? How could any version of Barry be so cruel? How could any version of the man she loved so much be willing to kill her just to survive?

And even if she ignored it. Even if by some stretch of the imagination she could accept that this was only her Barry if she died and that reality drove him past the brink, she still had to face the very present casualty of this memory operation. And that was if Barry temporarily lost the ability to make memories, and in the end, he was unable to stop Savitar from killing her, their future together, their relationship, it ended here – now. There would be no new memories. These last weeks together…there would be no goodbye for him to cling to, no last kiss, last I love you, last anything.

The only thing he would remember was learning that a future twisted version of himself wanted to kill her, and that some crazy idea of Cisco’s would end up saving the day.

It was too much.

Iris turned away from the few people who still congregated in the room and headed down the hall. She needed to get away. She needed to break down. Everything was crumbling around her. She couldn’t be strong anymore. Not for anyone. Not even for herself. And certainly not for Barry. She felt like she couldn’t breathe, and she needed to. She needed air to survive, to feel alive, to escape what her life had become. She needed a new life.

“Iris?”

She closed her eyes and slowly sat down where she stood in the speed lab.

He’d come after her. Of course, he’d come after her. He was Barry Allen and his whole world revolved around her. Everything that he was centered on loving her and protecting her, making her feel cherished and not alone.

“How in the world was she supposed to be okay? Her fiancé was her would-be murderer. The present version of him was going to erase what might be their entire future together. And here he was asking her if she was okay.

This wasn’t like asking her if she was okay when she showed up in his CSI lab in tears because she’d been hiding the secret about Wally from her dad. They hadn’t been on speaking terms, but that was still a huge secret to keep from him. It had been eating her up inside. She hadn’t been able to put on a brave face anymore. She’d gone to see him just to say hi. That’s what she had told herself. Especially when she saw him cuddling up to his new girlfriend and knew he deserved that happiness, even as she herself was miserable. Because she missed her best friend. She missed not having secrets. She missed having a family that was whole.

But he’d asked her if there was anything wrong, and she’d unleashed all the sadness and worry welling up inside her. She didn’t care that he was asking something he obviously knew the answer to. The point was he was asking, and she was finally able to answer, and that was enough.

Then there had been that second particle accelerator explosion.

He’d asked her then too, right after she’d explicitly told him she didn’t think she could handle him getting hurt again the way he had before. He still asked her and she still answered him. She told him everything.
He didn’t know what she’d say that time, but he knew something was up. He took the time to ask, and that was great. But he still knew, and he asked.

The least he could do, she thought now, was… She didn’t know what. She wasn’t okay, and he had to know why.

Why couldn’t he leave her alone right now? Why couldn’t he just give her some time? Just a little time, and she could resume her duties of reassuring him and reminding him of who he was and that he was doing the right thing.

She couldn’t do that in this moment, because everything inside of her was screaming.

“Are you?” She found herself asking and knew right away this would be the hardest pep talk she’d ever have to deliver.

Barry came over and sat beside her. Without saying a word, she knew he was deep in thought.

“This has to be hard for you,” she continued, swallowing hard. “Knowing that you’re him.”

“Part of me is,” he said quietly, his voice tortured and broken.

Iris felt for him then, as she always did. Right now, she hated that. She hated that she could feel for him. Her life was on the line, but if Barry hurt, so did she. And this wounded his soul.

“No,” she insisted, pushing past her fears, letting her feelings for Barry take a hold of her. “You’re not him. You could never be.”

“It’s because I lose you, Iris,” he said, enunciating with painful precision, clearly trying to keep emotion out of his voice. “He said it was like looking in a mirror. That power, that pain… That’s where Savitar comes from. From loss.”

She swallowed hard, trying to understand the gravity of what he was saying.

“You…feel bad for him?” she asked incredulously. “He’s planning to kill me.”

“He’s me, Iris.”

She closed her eyes. “No, Barry—”

“Without you, without Joe, having lost my mother and father… Caitlin becomes Killer Frost… I must lose everyone in order to become a monster that wants to kill you.”

“Losing everyone doesn’t make you a monster. You have to choose that. You have to want it.”

He looked about to argue with her or confirm her worst fears that maybe he would want it if everything was taken from him that way. So, she continued. “Besides, you being Savitar? That’s not what’s bothering me,” she lied. “That’s not…why I left the room.”

His brows furrowed. “It’s not?” he asked, confused.

She shook her head, thanking her lucky stars that he sometimes couldn’t read her as well as she could read him.

“I know he’s not you, even if you don’t.”

“Then what?”
Her sigh was shaky as she gathered her resolve.

“Barry, if you don’t save me—”

“I’m going to save you.”

“If you don’t—”

“Iris—”

“Barry.”

Her eyes burned, so he stopped.

“If you don’t, and you follow through on this crazy plan Cisco has to keep you from making new memories… That’s exactly what will happen. This memory right here is going to be the last thing you remember until I die.”

“You’re not—”

She widened her eyes in warning, and he sighed.

“It’s only temporary, Iris. I’m going to save you, and this is one step in the direction of doing it. We have to try it.” Her lips parted to interrupt, so he took her hands in an attempt to reassure her. “If it looks like it’s not working, Cisco will pull the plug. And if it does work, the next thing I will really remember is you in my arms and Savitar defeated.”

She couldn’t find words, only looked at him sadly. It was getting harder and harder to believe anything coming out of his mouth. It felt like a lie, like blind hope. How in the world could he defeat a heartless, much stronger version of himself?

“Besides,” he continued, pulling her out of her thoughts. She felt him tuck some of her dark locks behind her ear and made herself look at him. “Even without the memory of anything that comes after, I know all I’m going to do is fall in love with you all over again.”

She sighed shakily and nodded, fell into him and let him hold her.

*How could this man be Savitar?* He couldn’t. There was no way.

But inside, she was still screaming. And the tighter he held her, the more her emotions threatened to explode.

“Iris?”

She sighed shakily, preparing herself for another pep talk, hating that she wasn’t looking forward to it.

“Yeah, Barry?”

“Why don’t I scare you?”

Her brows furrowed, and she slowly pushed herself off him.

“What are you talking about?”

“I told you I’m Savitar, and you didn’t even blink. Why doesn’t that news scare you?”
She swallowed hard, and he knew already he was going to push her. If he succumbed to wallowing, even with such a massive blow as this, she would seek to console him, and he would lap it up because he needed it.

But if he let her help him, who would help her? She had to be going as out of her mind as he was, and yet she remained composed, focused on problems less significant than her life being at stake.

He realized with sudden clarity that she deserved more than that, and that she’d gone without her right to truly feel for way too long.

“Because you’re not him, Barry,” she said plainly, concern plain as day on her face. “I don’t know how you can’t see that.”

“Iris.” She heard the warning tone, and it made her tense up. “He’s me. He has my memories. He has my face. He may have lost his humanity, but he’s only that way because he lost you.” He waited a beat and then clutched at her arms. “He’s me.”

“Stop it.”

She roughly pulled away and stood to her feet. She ran her hand through her hair, over her face, and begged him in her mind to not do this, to stop.

Barry watched her for a moment, then stood and waited. He swallowed.

“You’ve been so strong, Iris. You’ve held me up when I didn’t deserve it, and everyone knew that.”

She turned around and met his gaze, didn’t know how much longer she could keep from screaming. Or running. Or crying so loud the whole team would come rushing in.

“Your life is on the line, Iris. And the monster responsible for it is a future version of me – the hero who wants more than anything to protect you.”

She swallowed.

“Let yourself feel.” He approached her and took her arms in his hands. “It’s okay to not be the strong one. It’s okay to hate me even.”

“Barry, I don’t—”

Her breath caught in her throat. Tears filled her eyes. They burned.

“It’s okay if you don’t think I’ll succeed.”

She looked up at him, searching his eyes for reassurance of all the encouragement she’d given to him, but she found none.

“Hate me, Iris.”

“Wha—”

“I did this to you.”

“Bar—”

“I created Flashpoint. I undid it. I gave Savitar the brilliant idea to suck your brother into the speed force, so that he could come out. I tortured Wally. I killed people. I did all of it, because I am him.”
“Stop it!” she cried, shoving him away from her. “Just...don’t. Stop!”

“Let it out, Iris,” he demanded, approaching her again. “Let all of it out. Let yourself hate me. Take off your ring.”

She gasped and backed away, tears streaming down her cheeks.

“You’re afraid of me,” he said.

“I’m-I’m no—”

“You’re afraid—”

“No.”

“Say you hate—”

“No!”

He was unthwarted.

“Say you hate me, Iris.” He crowded in close. “Say it.”

“I hate you!” She screamed, driven to her breaking point by his proximity and his demands.

Silence thundered around them, Iris’s heavy breathing the only sound inside it.

“Is that what you want to hear, Barry? That I hate you? Well, fine! I do.” She ran her hand through her hair and started to pace. “I. Hate. You.”

“I want to kill you.”

The deadly, dark words made her still. When she slowly turned around to face her fiancé, her eyes widened in horror, and she nearly fell to her knees. There was a lilt to Barry’s voice that frightened her, a darkness she’d never heard before, and the look in his eyes was so dark she feared for her life. She was afraid now. She was terrified.

“A disfigured face,” Barry said, voice still dangerous and hollow. “No soul, me in the future...”

“Savitar,” she whispered.

It clicked, and Barry saw when it did. He relented. His face softened. He approached her, but she backed away.

“You did this to me,” she accused, the fire stirring inside her now.

She could see the look of uncertainty on his face. He’d meant to push her, just to make her see the severity of it all. So she could understand what was at stake, so she’d feel it.

And she did. Mission accomplished.

Mission more than accomplished, because her rage hadn’t simmered down - it was boiling over.

Tense and worried what the outcome would be, but knowing he’d talked her into this state, Barry took everything she had to throw at him.
“I did it.”

“You ruined everything.”

He nodded. “I did. I was selfish.”

“You were so selfish. I wasn’t good enough for you. My love wasn’t enough. You defeated Zoom, and I…I was ready for you, but you—”

“You weren’t enough for me,” he finished for her.

“Why?” She raged, closing the distance between them with a hard push against his chest. “Why wasn’t I enough? Wasn’t I what you always wanted? Didn’t it matter that you were erasing everything? Our whole history? And you never even put it together. You broke my family apart, you ruined all of our lives. You did that. And in the future, you kill me because your decisions cost you everything and nothing matters but you.”

Her heavy, fast breaths was the only sound in the nearly empty room. She didn’t know if she really meant everything she said, but it felt good to say the words out loud. It was cleansing. And to have him not breaking down in front of her either helped too. She didn’t have to worry about making him feeling better or feeling guilty for anything she said, because all he was doing was standing there existing, as a sounding board.

Barry made no attempt to console her. He waited for what would come next. For her to take off her ring. For her to shout at him more. He deserved every word, and she had the right to say it. But that didn’t happen.

“Barry.”

She choked the word in a half-strangled breath.

She crumbled, her ferocity gone, and began to sob. He caught her before she hit the floor, and he held her close. She clutched at his shirt, pinned her body to his chest, repeated his name over and over, as if it would save her, as if it would save all of them from all of this.

“I didn’t mean it, Barry. I swear I didn’t.”

And she hadn’t, not really. Because would she let him hold her now, would she still be so crushed by the idea of no more memories between them, if she did?

“Shh,” he soothed her, stroking her hair as he held her close, and she let him. “It’s all right.”

She sighed shakily.

“I…I don’t hate you. I love you so much, it hurts.” She whimpered, her voice pained as tears wet the front of his shirt. “Don’t make me do it, Barry. Don’t force me to…to—”

“Okay,” he whispered gently.

Her shortened breaths slowly returned to normal. Then she was quiet, but still clinging to him, still with her ear to his heart so she could hear every beat drumming steadily inside him.

After a long time, she lifted her head to look at him. She saw no disfigurement, no detachment, no hatred, no malice, no sign of evil in those pretty, green eyes she adored. Those eyes looked down at her with love and concern and a fierce need to protect.
“You don’t scare me,” she said softly, stroking his skin from forehead to chin. “Savitar scares me, and you’re not him.”

“Iris—”

“Please don’t push me, Barry. I love you. That’s all I want to do.”

He nodded reluctantly and wrapped his arms around her, holding her close. He felt her relax against him and knew it was enough.

“That’s all I want, too.”

“I don’t want you to forget me,” she said, and he knew the subject had changed. “I don’t want you to lose us or any future memory we have just because you’re trying to save me.”

She could feel the tension in him, the slow, heavy sigh and knew he was restraining his “just because?!”

“Do you have to?” she asked before he could produce an argument.

“We have to try, Iris,” he said, tired, weak, needing to believe in the impossible.

She lifted her head and found all those emotions residing in his eyes.

“But I’ll never forget you,” he told her firmly. “I remember everything from all the timelines I’ve been to. You’re my constant.” He cupped her face, and she found herself unable to look away. “I will remember you.”

She swallowed and nodded.

“Okay.”

He slowly dropped his hands and then reached for hers. She intertwined their fingers and then brought them to her lips, kissing each of his and then laying her head on the back of his hand.

“I will always love you, Barry,” she whispered, then lifted her head to look at him.

“I will always love you,” he returned, a sweet love in his eyes that filled all the empty places in her heart with incredible warmth.

She lifted her face and felt the warmth spread through her when his lips met hers. She made the kiss last, drew it out until they both needed to breathe.

“Let’s save you, okay?”

She smiled tremulously and nodded.

“Okay.”

Hands still clasped, they walked with new purpose out of the room and down to where fate would next lead them. A risky mind swipe that hopefully would guarantee some hope for the future.
Iris stepped into the hall as she’d done time and again for the past six months. She’d gotten used to no presence before or beside or behind her, no warm breath against her neck or arm slipped around her waist or hand in hers. She’d gotten used to being alone and the sound of silence that echoed around her all night every night after she walked in the doorway. Barry had been gone for so long she had started to wonder if he’d even really existed, if they had lived together, if they had been together, if the gaping hole she tried to fill up day after day with the constant focus on keeping the city safe had really been caused by his absence from her life.

In those months, her heartache had turned to anger and bitterness and an emotionless drive to push forward, to harden herself, to forget what love and tenderness and compassion was — at least in scenarios that didn’t involve the everyday innocent citizen of Central City.

And now here he was before her, completely unaware of the anger that still brewed inside her over him leaving her behind without a moment’s notice, without even discussing it with her first. Maybe it had been the only way. Maybe the city would’ve suffered countless casualties if he’d delayed for even a second longer. But she still hated that he left, and she hated that she couldn’t tell him she was mad at him for leaving — then, because he’d had to leave and she was trying desperately to hold onto him; now, because he’d just come back and she could already feel the softness she’d buried away starting to break through.

And, also, because…well, he was confused.

“Wow, we decorated fast,” Barry said, the sound of his voice bringing her back to the present.

They’d walked down the hall, unlocked the door, and were walking into their home. There had been no whoosh! that would have brought Iris back too, but the effect was the same.

Not for the first time since his return from the speed force, Barry’s comment made her pause. She turned and looked at him, a puzzled look on her face.
“You don’t remember living here?” she worried aloud.

In her gut, she knew he did – or would in a few moments. It had been the same way when he first emerged. He remembered all of them, but actual memories were fragmented and slow to come to the surface. The timing of them all was inaccurate, which she knew was to be expected.

Still.

Barry stepped further into the loft and examined his surroundings, his eyes lighting up after a few seconds.

“I remember,” he said softly.

“Yeah?” She asked, hope swelling inside her as it had before, when his form had appeared in front of her and she didn’t know if he’d even remember her name.

Iris.

And then she’d lunged into his arms and cried into the kiss she thought she’d never feel again, and she knew she wasn’t dreaming.

Hesitantly, she went to stand with him, taking his hands in her own so she could feel him again, that pale skin against her darker one. He seemed not to notice.

“I proposed to you over there,” he said proudly, drawing her attention reluctantly to the windowsill to the left of him. She smiled softly, remembering.

Barry’s gaze shifted abruptly to the center of the room, confusion coloring his voice again as he spoke.

“And there.” His mouth opened and closed as he tried to connect the dots again and inevitably abandoned the effort. “I hope I didn’t do both in the same day.” He licked his lips, contemplating. “I wonder why…” and then the color drained from his face. “We broke up,” he said, looking now towards the dining room table.

She tensed, the memory flooding over her again, only this time another accompanied it. Her hands wriggled a little in his grasp, suddenly damp and sweaty. He looked down and found the evidence of her second memory, her ringless finger. That memory belonged only to her.

She could feel the heat of his gaze and the weight of his sadness as he stared at her, waiting for her to meet his eyes. It felt like a millennia before she could summon the courage inside her and lift her heavy head. She’d overcome so many feats these past months at the helm of Team…Kid Flash? But this – her heart – was another matter entirely.

"Are we still broken up?” he asked softly.

She lost the ability to speak. She wanted to say no – no, no, no, no, no. But how could she when there was no ring on her finger and he remembered both proposals?

“It’s been six months, Barry,” she said, somehow summoning all her strength.

She felt the goosebumps prickling his skin and saw the shiver in his shoulders just before he released her hands. It wasn’t meant to be cruel, and she knew that, but the loss of his heat nearly caused her to involuntarily break down right in front of him.

“Is there someone else?” he asked, and she wanted to scream.
He didn’t remember in this particular moment. She had to remember that. But also, this was something he could genuinely not know. It baffled her, but maybe he had picked up on the anger she’d been trying to stomp down.

“Iris?”

The detachment in his voice made her want to cry, but the undercurrent of aching need pushed her to keep moving forward.

“Is that why you don’t have your ring on? Before I left, did we—”

She silenced him with a kiss, moaning softly when his initial surprise evolved into holding her closer, in responding to her lips moving against his.

“There’s no one else,” she breathed heavily against him, barely an inch between them. “God, Barry, there could never, ever be anyone else.”

She felt the shift in atmosphere and knew he was going to ask why again – why was she without her ring, why wouldn’t she answer if they had broken up or not. She didn’t want to answer those questions. They would release the resentment she had buried the moment she saw him appear in the fields.

We didn’t break up. You left me.

She didn’t want to deal with that now. He was here and in her arms. Any struggles between them could be tackled tomorrow or the day after that or the day after that, because they had time to fight about normal people problems. They had time for everything.

She clamped her hands around the back of his neck and stood up on her tiptoes, closing the little distance there was between them. Maybe it was because she’d nearly forgotten, but he tasted amazing. And he wasn’t asking questions. He was just responding to her, kissing the way she was, clutching, holding, gripping, and inevitably grinding against her the way she was him – only he intensified his movements by picking her up and pinning her to the wall.

“Barry,” she gasped, but he was too busy kissing her neck, unbuttoning her shirt with one hand and holding her up with the other.

His nibbles across her collar bone were enough to make her cry out in pleasure. She clutched at his shoulders, seeking some form of control even though everything inside of her was telling her to let go.

“Let go, Iris,” he said, his voice husky against her skin. Then he broke the heat for a single moment by being so Barry and asking, “Have we done this before?”

She laughed and groaned, taking the brief stilling of his aggressive kisses to pepper her own along his jawline.

“The wall or the sex?”

“The wall.” He paused. “I really hope we’ve done the sex.”

She laughed again as her fingers crept beneath his shirt.

“We’ve definitely done the sex.”

“And the wall?”
“I can’t remember.”

His head reared back, shocked. “Really?”

She nodded. “It’s been a long time since… I tried to forget…” she trailed off, not letting herself finish.

His brows furrowed, probably sensing what she was trying not to say. She wouldn’t let that happen. Not tonight.

“Let it be the first time,” she said, her fingers curling into his hair. She nuzzled her face against his before biting down on his bottom lip.

She reveled in the growl that came out of him in response.

“Let everything be the first.”

“Irisss,” he slurred and then clutched her tighter.

Her mouth closed over his in response, her tongue delving deep, tangling with his as her fingers wound through his brown locks and dragged down the back of his neck, then came around his front to run down his chest.

She tugged at his shirt, trying to yank it out of his waistband, but it was difficult because of their respective positions as well as the jacket he wore home.

Still, she figured it was better than having a leather suit in the way. That would have been even more frustrating – although not impossible – to get off.

“Take your jacket off,” she breathed heatedly into his mouth.

“I’d have to set you down to—”

“And your shirt and your pants and your underw—” she gasped, “—underwear.”

His hands squeezed her thighs as he kissed his way down her chest, each kiss as sweetly soft and lingering as the next. There was a heat to them though that set her on fire.

“You’re hot for me, aren’t you?”

She trembled as the words tumbled past his lips. The understatement of the century, she thought. She could hardly stand how close his erection was to her core but with still so many clothes in the way and her higher position preventing access.

“I-I thought you were confused,” she managed.

“I remember everything at once,” he murmured against her skin. “Sometimes I forget things, but they bounce back. It’s a mix of memories that haven’t arranged themselves yet, so that part is confusing.”

“So…” she gulped. “Then how come? It’s been so long… I can hardly—”

He smirked against her neck, and she lost her voice completely.

“Muscle memory,” he said simply, his voice still husky with desire. “My mind is fuzzy, but my hands…” He slid his hands up slowly to grasp her ass cheeks and squeeze, eliciting another gasp
and then groan from her. “My body remembers everything,” he breathed hotly against her.

She arched herself against him, her only weapon left the moisture soaking the crotch of her pants. She hoped it would transfer to his shirt somewhat. He couldn’t possibly miss how aroused she was.

He groaned and pressed her back against the hall, his forehead pressed to hers, his breathing heavy.

“You want me,” he said roughly. “You want me as badly as I want you, as I’ve wanted you for… for an eternity.”

She slid her fingers beneath the collar of his jacket and pushed it back as much as she could without him dropping his arms to finish the job.

“Barry,” she purred in his ear.

The shivers erupted all over his body, turned into vibrations, and before she knew it she was aligned with him, still pressed to the wall but now she was naked. They both were.

And then he was pushing into her, and she held on tighter. He was so hard, and he went so deep. The pressure felt amazing. The pleasure almost bordered on pain. When he reached the hilt, she cried out. Moisture wet her eyelashes, and when she pressed her face to his, she knew he felt it because he stilled in her arms.

“Iris?” he asked, concerned. “Are you… Are you crying?” He pulled his head back to look at her, keeping his self-control in check.

“I’m fine.” She nodded and then smiled at him. “You didn’t hurt me. I’m ready for this.” She brushed his hair back with her fingers. “More than ready. It just feels like…”

“Lifetimes,” he finished, understanding.

“Yeah,” she whispered, her eyes slowly traveling to his lips, his chest; her mind dwelling on the strength of his arms and the hardness of his dick inside her. She licked her lips and dug her feet into his back.

Without a word, Barry kissed her sweetly, then retreated his length a few inches and moved in slowly again. He repeated the motion once, twice, three times. Then he extended the length a little further and thrust back into her harder. It felt like hardly seconds later that he was pounding into her so fast she was afraid her head would bang against the wall if his hand wasn’t cushioning it as his kisses drew her nearer.

And then he came, emptied out inside her. No precautions this time. No condoms, no birth control. They’d worry about the possible repercussions later.

After a while, he slowly set her down. Her legs were trembling so badly, she would’ve fallen if he hadn’t caught her.

“I’m okay,” she said before he could ask. “But Barry?” She looked up at him, his warm eyes drowning her, making her heart swell, feel a happiness and pleasure she never thought she’d feel again.

It was insane to think about, but in hindsight she knew she’d never been more certain and would never regret the word that tumbled past her lips next.
“Again.”

Barry blinked, startled, but his shock was momentary, and given all her reassurances, he didn’t need to ask again. He kissed her once, a gentle, lingering kiss promising love and whatever else it was she wished.

Then he lifted her up in his arms, sped them upstairs to their pristinely made bed, pulled back the blanket, deposited her on the long ago-abandoned mattress, and made love to her for hours into the night. He filled her time and again, and not once did she let him part from her.

“I need to know I’m not dreaming,” she said, eyes closed and face pressed to his shoulder. “I need to feel you pressed to every inch of me, inside me, around me.” She swallowed hard. “Please.”

“Okay,” he said, and one-handedly pulled the covers over both of them, shifting only slightly to achieve a more comfortable position on his back.

Iris quickly scrambled to press herself to him. Her hand smoothed over his whole upper body, mesmerized by the feel of his skin, memorizing every inch of him in a way she hadn’t been able to the night he left.

This had to be real. It was too shattering in its intensity not to be.

“I love you,” she whispered when no sound but their slowed-down breathing could be heard between them. She felt him press his lips to her forehead and his fingers tangle in her hair.

She needed to hear the words badly though, even though she knew they were true, even though he’d said them earlier when he first returned. Although it’d been only seconds, she nearly prodded him to get him to respond. So fierce was her ache for it.

And then he said it and she relaxed and let the drowsiness she’d held at bay slowly overtake her.

“More than life itself, Iris West,” he whispered softly. “I love you.” Another kiss to her forehead. “I love you. I love you.”

…

When Iris woke up the next morning, Barry was still asleep – but he was beside her. She had to physically stop herself from sitting up immediately, shocked to be in a bed – their bed – with her Barry sleeping beside her. The rise and fall of his chest beneath hers as she lay half on top of him was a surprise. Once she accepted the reality of it though, she felt this overwhelming peace wash over her.

It hadn’t been a dream.

She wanted to cry she was so relieved. Her limbs tangled with his, his exhales blowing little hairs across her forehead, the hard strength in his arms, the enduring love in him, the passion that never managed to take her breath away - t was all back, hers for the taking. She wanted to lay in bed forever to treasure that.

She wanted to kiss and nuzzle and tell him how much she loves him and hear it in return. She didn’t want to do anything but stay here with him, even if just for a day, and revel in the fact that he was really back and that maybe those save-the-date cards could still be salvaged.

But then she remembered how her dad had guaranteed Barry still had a job at the precinct and
how she had a job herself, and that if Barry woke up as confused as he’d been when she brought him home, he’d still need time to acclimate to even being the Flash again, despite the nifty suit he’d returned to them in.

And then there were her feelings – the ones that raged about how dare he have left her, the right decision be damned.

Carefully, she extracted herself from his embrace, making sure not to wake him in the process as she slid off the bed and quickly searched the room for a shirt to put over her tiny frame. She’d buried all his clothes in the closet at the end of the hall, but his shirt from last night lay on the floor. The shirt smelled so much like Barry – more so than his clothes he’d left behind months ago – that she couldn’t help but breathe in the scent both before and after she’d popped her head through the collar.

She sighed contentedly.

“Barry,” she murmured into the shirt.

Barry tossed a bit on the bed in response, an almost silent mumble and a hand reaching across the bed searching for her. Her initial plan to go downstairs and make him breakfast would clearly have to wait. He wasn’t awake, but he wasn’t fully asleep anymore either, and truth be told, she wanted nothing more than to crawl back in bed and sleep a little while longer in his arms.

…

“Good morning,” she chirped when he came down the stairs roughly an hour later.

She’d manage to sneak away the moment she felt him settle into a deep sleep. She’d been so mesmerized by the rise and fall of his chest that she hadn’t been able to fall asleep herself, and in the end it worked out for her purpose of making him breakfast.

“Morning,” he mumbled, running a hand through his hair and then dragging it over his face, halting where he likely felt stubble.

“Need to shave?” she asked, peeking behind the corner where she stood at the counter.

“Yeah.” His hand traveled down his neck, and he grimaced. “More than I thought.”

“Well, you were in there six months. I’m surprised you didn’t come out with a full beard.”

He frowned as she approached him, a plate of pancakes and sausage in her hands.

“Where was I?” he asked.

She blinked. Her heart crushing in on itself a little.

Was he forgetting too now instead of just slowly remembering?

“The speed force…” she said slowly. “You were off saving the world from impending doom.” Her tone was dramatic, but the light in her eyes was missing. “You don’t remember?” She quirked her head to the side.

“I do. I think I do at least. It just didn’t feel like…a force of speed. More like…watching my life
I do. I think I do at least. It just didn’t feel like…a force of speed. More like…watching my life flash before my eyes over and over for an eternity.”

She forced a smile, guilt arcing through her as she thought about how that must’ve been for him.

“What’s this?” he asked, his eyes falling to the plate in her hands.

“Oh. Uh…” She blinked, forcing herself out of the small trance. “Breakfast,” she grinned.

“You made this for me?” His smile mirrored her own.

“Yes. There’s juice and fruit on the table too.” She gestured towards the windows.

Barry followed her gaze. “And cereal,” he added, then looked back at her, grinning.

She shrugged, smiling sheepishly. “I thought I’d offer a variety.”

For a moment longer than was necessary, they just stood and stared at each other, so caught up in the overwhelming love evident in their eyes.

“This feels familiar,” he said slowly, that Flash smirk of his making her weak in the knees.

“I’m glad. You uh, did something similar for me for Valentine’s Day.”

The did I? was on his tongue, but a beat later he remembered.

“I did.” He smiled cheekily. “Except I also made French toast and waffles and your favorite dark roast.”

“Among other things,” she said, her eyes darkening. She saw the shift in his own eyes too and knew there needed to be no words between them.

“We didn’t get to the food,” he said, taking a step towards her, placing his hands on the plate as if to take it, but not moving, pressing his fingers along hers instead.

Iris licked her lips, wondering how it was so easy for him to light the fire inside her.

“We got to it,” she said. “It was just cold.”

His sexy laugh sent chills racing up and down her spine. He leaned down and brushed her lips, groaning when she slipped her tongue inside his mouth.

“Barry,” she whispered breathlessly.

“Yeah?”

“You have work today, I have work today, and I spent a lot of time making it, so…”

He pulled back, smiled lazily at her, and took the plate from her hands.

“Breakfast usually is better hot,” he allowed.

She smiled tremulously. “Yes, it is.”

“You’ll eat with me?”

Her heart melted. “Sure, I’ll eat with you.”
She went to turn and get her own plate, but one of Barry’s hands wrapped around her arm and halted her exit.

“Iris.”

Barely daring to breathe, she looked up at him.

“Yes, Barry?”

“After?”

His eyes were molten lava and melting her insides. *How was she still standing up?*

She swallowed hard.

“After. You have work. We both have work.”

He released her arm and slid his hand beneath her shirt – *his* shirt. He lowered his lips to her ear while simultaneously inducing more shivers from her by tracing the curve up the center of her back.

“I’m pretty sure I can be quick.”

Her eyes were unfocused when he pulled back at first. He didn’t ask her again, didn’t tease with anything but his eyes. He just went straight for the table, taking a solid bite out of every entrée and side she’d prepared for him. Some of them got two bites.

But that was all the progress he made before she climbed onto his lap at the dining room table and kissed him and fucked him and made him forget all about hot breakfast food.

Chapter End Notes

Next chap will address the other Barry/WA-esque scene in the DCTV promo.
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

4.02

Inspired by the DCTV promo featuring Barry telling Iris (presumably) "The weight of the whole city falls on my shoulders." Also, some dialogue from the (4.01) Hero Reborn promo is included. The chapter is about how that scene could play out.

Chapter Notes

My first draft of this chapter was so, so messy. But with the help of not only my wonderful beta, sendtherain, but also a fellow westallen fanfiction writer, sophisticatedloserchick, I was able to craft something much better. Thank you, ladies, for turning a flop into something hopefully resembling a quasi-masterpiece.

Note: I realize the Iris lines from the promo are probably meant for 4.01, not 4.02, but they fit so perfectly into the scene I was writing, I couldn't resist. Hopefully you won't mind. ;)

He found her at STAR Labs, sitting alone, deep in thought. The room was empty. They had just caught another bad guy mere moments after Barry and Iris finished up their first couples therapy session, which had proven to be both comical and eye-opening. Barry hadn’t been totally sure where they stood by the end of it, but he knew they’d made progress. He believed that.

“Go,” she’d said when they got the alert from Cisco.

He realized in that moment that he’d been waiting for her okay, for her direction, for her permission.

He, The Flash, the guy who had made all the decisions in the past, after one therapy decision hadn’t dashed away immediately. It wasn’t on purpose either. It was natural. It felt right. And it made him wonder if he hadn’t always subconsciously looked to her for guidance.

In the dire moments, sure, but always?

“Iris.”

She looked up from where she was sitting and smiled genuinely, softly, but it didn’t reach her eyes.

“You caught the bad guy.”

“We caught the bad guy.” He slowed to a stop when he reached her and then took a seat. “We all did.”
Her smile was tremulous. “We did.”

He sighed and took her hand in his, watching how his hands clasped over her smaller one. “Look, Iris, about the therapy session…” He pursed his lips, and then looked up at her. “It was kind of a disaster,” she finished, biting her bottom lip. “I mean, right?”

His thoughts had been serious, but her words made him recall how confused the therapist had been throughout the meeting in their attempts to explain the situation without giving away his superhero identity. He laughed. “I don’t know why no one told us that would be an obstacle we’d have to overcome.”

“We’re adults,” she said, taking on a dignified air. “We should have thought of it ourselves.”

“Too bad we don’t know any therapists who know my identity.”

“Or that we don’t have one of those…” She gestured with her fingers around an invisible device. Her brows furrowed, forgetting what it was called.

Barry got it though and smiled slowly. “One of those memory eraser things.” Iris’s eyes flashed to his and lit up in recognition. “From Men in Black.”

“Yes.” She nodded enthusiastically. “Yes, one of those.”

“Those would come in handy.” He sighed wistfully.

“Shouldn’t Cisco have come up with one of those by now?” Iris asked with a laugh. Barry joined in. “I’ll have to get on him about that.”

The shared laughter between them subsided until there was only silence. Neither risked catching a glance. Finally, Iris cleared her throat. “So…”

“Yeah.”

“The therapy.”

“Right.”

“Do you… What did you think?” she asked.

Barry knew it was no joke this time. Not from the vulnerability shining in her eyes. They had tackled serious issues during the session, even if they had blundered their way through attempts at hiding from the person they were supposed to unveil everything to.

But the undertone was clear. Sure, he felt like she was trying to walk all over him at STAR Labs, but she was also truly, deeply hurting on the inside. Not only that, she’d been holding STAR Labs and the team up for six long months. It was because of Iris that Team Flash hadn’t gone under. For all the things he’d learned while in the speed force, it hadn’t occurred to him what those he’d left behind had endured in his absence. Or how deep the impact ran.
Things were a lot clearer to him now.

“I think…maybe you’re upset with me,” he ventured carefully.

She blinked. “About what?”

He gave her a knowing look, and she rolled her eyes.

“Well, obviously I’m not a fan of you giving a direction that is the opposite of my direction, since I’m—”

“Iris.”

He threaded their fingers together, and she sighed shakily. Her eyes closed, and he saw as tears wet her eyelashes.

“I just…” She swallowed hard, and then looked up at him. “I tried to keep going.” She nodded, pursing her lips together for a moment so a tearful gasp wouldn’t escape her. “To keep running like you said.” She released the breath she’d been holding and tried to focus on his thumbs moving in soothing, warm circles on her hands.

“In the beginning…I was in…shambles. I couldn’t sleep. I couldn’t eat. I cried all the time.” She looked up at him. “I couldn’t bring myself to sleep in our bed alone. It was too hard. It felt so empty.” She paused and looked away, trying to compose herself. “I would wake up in the middle of the night and reach out for you. And you,” she caught her breath, sinking her face into his hand when it suddenly appeared there, cupping her cheek. “You were never there.”

“I’m so…” The pain on Barry’s face was palpable. “I never wanted that for you, Iris.”

She looked up at him, a glint of anger and disappointment in her eyes mixed with heartbreaking sadness.

“But that’s what happened, Barry.” She moved back slightly, causing his hand to lose contact with her skin. He made no attempt to recapture it. “And I had to rebuild the team in your absence, because we were so…so lost without you. We wanted to do right by you, but…” She sighed and looked away, remembering. “We couldn’t.” Her voice broke, and then she fixed her eyes on his again. “So, I put my heartbreak in a box, and I tucked it away. I hardened myself enough to keep the team together, so we could protect the city the way it needed to be protected. I turned over all the pictures in our loft because seeing them hurt too much. They drew out the girl who just wanted to curl in a ball and cry all day. So, I didn’t look at them. Because the team needed a leader who wouldn’t break.”

She paused to catch her breath and reclaim a hold of her wild emotions. She swallowed hard.

“And all of this – all of it – happened because you made a snap decision. You made it, and you just…” She swept her hand in an angry gesture. “You just left.”

“Iris, I—”

“You left me.”

Her eyes were blazing. Barry was rendered speechless, his mouth hanging open.

“You left all of us,” she continued, and he thought for a moment she was going to sweep her first statement under the rug. “But you left me.” Her voice cracked and tears flooded her face as she
looked away. “I’m your wi—I-I was going to be, I…”

“Iris, Iris, hey, hey…” He was beside her then, cradling her in his arms. “I’m right here now, okay? I’m here.” He pulled back enough so she could look at him. He tilted her chin up to meet his gaze when she didn’t. “I’m sorry.”

She swallowed and nodded, scooted back a little and then said softly, “I know.”

He sighed and created a little more distance between them.

“Iris, I wasn’t trying to hurt you. Or any of you.” He took a breath and then looked at her sincerely, trying to express the ache that was in his heart. “The weight of the whole city falls on my shoulders.”

She couldn’t look at him for a second, but then she made herself.

“Sometimes I have to make tough choices, choices that I don’t want to make, that I would never have to make if I was just Barry Allen, forensic scientist for the CCPD. I don’t get that luxury, because I’m not just that guy anymore. I’m the Flash.” He tried to lighten the mood with a strangled laugh, but he knew immediately it hadn’t worked. “If I could’ve thought of a way to save the city without sacrificing myself, I would have.”

“Would you have?” she asked. There wasn’t much spite to the question. Mostly it was genuine curiosity. And heartbreak. She licked her lips and attempted to regather her thoughts. “It was so easy for you, Barry. You saw the speed force coming out of that hole and you just…you said a few short goodbyes, and you left. You even told me it was your redemption. You wanted to go in there.”

He swallowed and nodded once. “Maybe.”

She looked away, wiped away the tears that had only half-dried on her face.

“I did so much damage when I created Flashpoint. In the end, it was HR that saved you by sacrificing himself. If he hadn’t done that…you would’ve died.” He sighed. “I couldn’t fix anything that I did. Everyone else fixed it for me. I wasn’t the hero. I tried, and I still got the happy ending because I let people sacrifice theirs for me.”

Iris was torn between the need to scold him, to yell at him that that wasn’t a good enough excuse, and the very real desire to hold him in her arms because even when he was at fault, she hated to see him sad. He might have super powers, but he was still very human. He was allowed to make mistakes.

“I wanted redemption, Iris,” he said, fixing his gaze on hers again. “But that doesn’t mean for a second that I didn’t want you or that I didn’t want our life together.” He took her hands and kissed each gently. “If I have to spend the rest of my life proving that to you, I will.”

She sighed quietly and nodded subtly.

“Because all I want to do,” he began sincerely, and then broke into the gentle tune, “is come runnin’ home to you.”

Her sudden smile turned into a laugh, albeit a short one. It made his heart swell to see the shift in her.

“Can you just talk to me first next time?” she asked, her voice still light enough that she didn’t sink into herself again. “Just give me a head’s up, ‘Hey, Iris, I’m about to jump into the speed force to
save the city, and I might not come out again. Prepare yourself.’ Maybe we can even talk about it and see if there’s another way?"

He softened for her and nodded. “I will.”

Her shoulder sank as the relieved breath swept out of her.

“I learned a lot during my time in the speed force. I’ve moved past the pain and regret and guilt from seeing my life over and over again for what felt like an eternity.” He stopped. “But Iris, you have to know that sometimes I do have to make tough decisions. Sometimes there is no other way.”

“Barry.” She took his hand and squeezed it. “There is always another way. Someone very wise told me that.”

He didn’t want to contradict her anymore, so he let it go. After all, in the past he had always believed there was another way – another way out of killing, another way other than crossing a line that shouldn’t be crossed.

“Well, I’m sure you’ll remind me of that,” he said, “since you’re the one I’ll be following.”

She blinked and released his hand.

“What are you saying?” she asked slowly.

He laughed lightly and shook his head. “I’m saying I’m an idiot.”

Her lips twitched at the corner.

“Iris, from the very beginning, the very thought of you has been what’s kept me going. Whether it was just as Barry Allen or as the Flash. I went into the future before you were saved, and I saw that I had absolutely fallen apart without you. I had stopped living. I had stopped saving people. I had stopped caring about anything but my grief and my failure to protect you. In the here and now, in the worst situations, it is your voice on the com that gets me through it. Your direction, your spirit, your words of encouragement, memories of you – they are what keeps this team going.”

She was so shocked and incredibly touched, she didn’t know what to say.

“Barry…”

He took her hands back and smiled brilliantly at her.

“I have been at the helm of this team ever since Eobard Thawne was erased from existence.” Iris looked away briefly, but Barry’s thumb smoothing over her fingers brought her back to him. “I didn’t know how things had changed, and I didn’t understand that it was for the better.”

“The whole city doesn’t have to fall on your shoulders, Barry,” she said gently.

He smiled softly, letting that possibility sink into him.

“We’ll all carry it together.”

Her heart was so full she thought it might burst.

“You have done an amazing job keeping the team going while I was gone,” he said. “I can’t think of a single other person I would follow into battle than the love of my life, future wife, badass
“reporter by day and leading a team of superheroes by night – and in her free time.” He winked.

She caught her breath.

“You’re sure,” she said. “You’re sure this is what you want?”

“It’s what I want, Iris. You’re what this team needs. And you know…” He slinked away. “I’m not sure I’d want my job back even if you tried to give it to me.” He folded his arms across his chest, and she smacked him playfully until he giggled and her eyes were shining with happy tears.

“You’re still the Flash, you know. You’re still the guy the team is going to follow out into the field. They look up to you in a way that they’ll never look up to me.”

“Iris.”

“And that’s how it should be,” she said firmly. “You lead them out into the war zone. I’ll keep you all grounded at home base.”

His eyes sparkled, and so did hers. At the same time, they both moved towards each other, melting into a sweet kiss. Iris sighed happily into him.

“Besides, I think you’ll like me telling you what to do.”

He wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. “Oh, yeah?”

Her darkening eyes lowered to his lips then slowly raised to his green-eyed gaze.

“Yeah.” She slipped her arms around his neck and slid herself onto his lap. “I think you are going to love it.”

He held her close. “Well then, by all means, we should have started this sooner.”

She laughed and leaned in for another kiss that built into a more passionate one.

It was going to take more than one therapy session and one heart-to-heart to smooth the new dynamic out between them and the rest of the team. But this was a good first start. It was a breakthrough. They were different people now than they were before he had left, but that wasn’t a bad thing. It was a new chapter, and they were living it together.
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

4.01

Inspired by the Hero Reborn promo featuring Barry a bearded Barry and an eager Cisco trying to bring his friend back by saying, "I made you a new suit. Want to take it for a spin?"

Chapter Notes

I never wanted to write chapters for this fic out of chronological order, but it just happened. I was inspired for the other two first and we got spoilers for the first two episodes pretty simultaneously, so...yes. This chapter is essentially a how-Barry-gets-shaved-after-coming-out-of-the-speed-force scenario. Enjoy!

Many thanks to sendtherain for her amazing last minute beta job! :D

Iris sat in the next room and tried to stuff her emotions back beneath the surface. Barry had come back. He had actually come back. What they had done had worked. He was here. In the same building. With all of them.

But he wasn’t Barry.

She’d dissolved the minute she peeked into the room at CCPD and caught a glimpse of his form. *Her Barry was home.*

But he wasn’t.

He was talking gibberish. He didn’t appear to remember any of them. His biggest focus was on drawing strange symbols all over the walls that didn’t make any more sense than the words he spoke aloud. He wasn’t the Barry they knew, and she was falling apart all over again.

That couldn’t happen.

We shouldn’t have done this. I shouldn’t have done this. I should have prevented this from happening. I should have...

But she knew she wouldn’t have. For all her resolve and determination that not rescuing Barry from the speed force was the best course of action, there was a little flare of light inside her that whispered to her *what if...*?

And that light – and Cisco and her dad – had pushed her to help. And they’d brought Barry home, even if they didn’t realize it at first.
It was just his body, though. It wasn’t him. Maybe he was buried down there deep somewhere. But if he was — *he was*, she assured herself — they didn’t know how to bring him to the surface. The predicament threatened the six long months of sturdy walls she’d built around her in order to keep the team together. She couldn’t fall apart at this venture, and so she left Barry’s bedside to get some breathing room.

She he didn’t go far though because…well, *Barry*.

Unlike herself, however, Cisco was feeling much more cheerful and proactive about the situation. He strode right past her down the hall, not even glancing in her direction, and entered the room where Barry was currently lying on a bed, presumably sleeping.

“Cisco—” she tried, but her voice was too soft for him to register her.

She followed just to the doorway of the room and waited, watching to see what would happen.

He hovered, then shone a light over Barry’s closed eyes. Iris’s brows furrowed, getting mildly annoyed.

Barry’s eyes must’ve opened because Cisco’s form bounced slightly, his words carrying when he informed the nearly comatose man, “I made you a new suit.”

Iris blinked, unsure if she’d heard him correctly. Cisco shone the light over Barry’s eyes a few more times. She could see Barry squinting even from where she stood on the opposite side of the room.

“Cisco.”

The younger man stopped suddenly and spun around, flashlight aimed directly at her for a second until she squinted as well. She wondered how it could affect her from across the room with the lights on, but Cisco was known for his high-tech gadgets. She wouldn’t be surprised if this particular light could shine into the darkness for miles on a dark night.

“Iris.” His eyes were wide, his mouth hanging open in surprise.

*Deer caught in the headlights*, she thought.

“What are you doing?” she demanded.

“I-I-…well,” he stopped and glared at her. “What are *you* doing?” He put his hands on his hips, which was somewhat difficult with the flashlight still in one hand.

She raised her eyebrows. “Watching over our patient.”

He tried to fold his arms across his chest but that proved difficult as well.

“Oh, yeah? Then why weren’t you in here?” he demanded.

“I was.” She shrugged nonchalantly. “I stepped out a moment before you got in here.”

He eyed her suspiciously until he decided she was probably telling the truth.

“Well, can I have a moment alone with him?”

Iris’s lips parted in a prepared refusal, but then she realized that would probably be unreasonable.

“Please?” he added, and the guilt set in.
She nodded and stepped out of the room, retreating to her spot slightly down the corridor where she was out of sight but not out of hearing distance should some cause for concern suddenly arise.

For maybe five minutes she didn’t hear anything. Some pacing, maybe Cisco sliding a chair over to sit on by Barry’s bedside. But she couldn’t hear either of them speaking and wondered if Cisco was okay. She was on the verge of pushing herself off the wall to check in on them when she heard…

“Want to take it for a spin?”

“Oh, God,” she muttered under her breath and charged into the room. “Cisco, what the hell are you doing?”

He spun around again, eyes and mouth both wide again in apparent shock at her arrival, but there was no flashlight to blind her this time.

“Iris!”

“Cisco.”

“I…I’m…” His eyebrows narrowed again. “I’m trying to reach him.”

Iris folded her arms beneath her breast. “And you’re trying to reach him by…?”

He shrugged nonchalantly, avoiding eye contact.

“I’m just uh…telling him about his new suit.”

He lifted his gaze to meet hers and immediately felt intimidated by her offending stare.

“Even if he’s all Flash and not Barry, he has to be excited about that.”

She sighed and looked back at Barry, whose eyes were scanning the ceiling with no apparent direction.

“He’s…he’s not even…” She held out her hand in a gesture and then dropped it to her side.

“What?” he demanded.

“She walked across the room, stopping just short of the bed. “Just look at him, Cisco. He’s practically comatose. He doesn’t speak, and when he does speak it’s all a bunch of nonsense.”

“Oh, you mean like that diapers bit?”

“He doesn’t even remember us,” Iris said sadly.

Cisco moved to comfort her, but she suddenly lifted her gaze to his, eyes blazing.

“And you pushing him to answer a question like this, and being so- so-”

“What?” he demanded, annoyed.

“You’re…you’re jumpy and excitable and it’s…it’s more than he can take right now.”

“You don’t know tha—”
“He’s not even shaved yet!” She threw her hands up in the air.

“Fine!” Cisco managed to outdo her in volume. “Then I’ll shave him!”

“You can’t shave him! I’ll do it.”

She moved to leave and presumably gather supplies, but he stepped in front of her suddenly, instantly halting her departure.

“I’m a grown man. I know how to shave. I can shave my best friend’s nasty ass speed force beard!”

Iris’s eyes narrowed, but Cisco’s determined stare never wavered, so finally she nodded.

“Fine. You can shave him.”

“Thank you!” he declared, leaving the room now to gather the supplies.

“Or try to,” she muttered under her breath.

...

It was a little weird, Cisco admitted to himself, slathering up his best friend’s half-covered hairy face with shaving lotion. Especially since the speedster’s eyes alternated every so often between darting around the room and staring numbly up at the ceiling. At one point, Cisco wondered how long it had been since Barry had blinked.

He shook off the agitated, worrisome feeling though, and resumed his duty. He patted the lotion down when he was finished, his brow furrowing when he realized his hands were full of the stuff. It took him a moment to remember the dry washcloth lying on the nearby rolling table.

He could practically feel Iris either glaring or rolling her eyes from the other side of the room. His face burned from the sensation, but he refused to turn around. He didn’t need any more pressure when the expectations were already so high, or at least they felt that way to him.

As soon as he’d finished wiping his hands, he grabbed the conveniently located razor and approached Barry’s bedside again.

And then he floundered.

He searched Barry’s face, looking for an appropriate starting place. There was foaming lotion everywhere beneath his cheek bones, plenty of clear opportunities for where to start. But Cisco second-guessed himself, wondering if one place was better than the other and trying to remember where he started when it was him. And that maybe it should be the opposite of how he did it then. Or if it should be the same. Or if there was some middle-ground.

There was also the worry if he accidently cut him. Or if Barry moved suddenly. Or if in his nerves, patches of hair were left unshaved beneath his chin or along his jawline or down his neck.

Reluctantly and shamefully, he turned to look at Iris helplessly, the razor hanging pathetically at his side.

In her seat by the door, she raised one eyebrow and said nothing.
“It’s different when it’s not yourself…”

“Oh, for God’s sake—”

She strode across the room, hand already outstretched for the shaver, but at the last minute he pulled back.

“No, No, I got this! Let me do it!”

Her temper just barely reigned in, she backed off.

“Fine. Fine. Do it then.”

“I will,” he sassed, nearly sticking out his tongue in retaliation.

Iris rolled her eyes but refused to create more distance or sit back down.

Trying to put her presence out of his mind, Cisco returned to Barry, picked a spot he told himself would be remarkably easy, and in one long piece shaved the hair from his pale skin.

He was too quick about it though, and it nicked Barry’s jaw. The speedster winced as the couple droplets of blood started to seep onto his skin where the cut had been made.

Cisco barely had time to gasp before Iris jumped between them.

“Give it to me,” she demanded. Cisco abandoned resistance and handed it over. “Now go,” she instructed, not even bothering to look at him.

Cisco’s shoulders slumped, feeling dejected.

“Please,” she added as gently as she could manage. It isn’t easy. “I’ll call you if I need you.”

He nodded and eventually found his way to the corridor outside the room.

Not far away, Joe leaned against the wall, perking up slightly when he saw Cisco coming around the bend. Raised eyebrows was all it took for Cisco to explain the recent events without underscoring how he had been unequal to the simple task of shaving his best friend’s face.

Joe chuckled though and nodded.

“’I think Iris got her death stare from me,” he said, to which Cisco raised his own eyebrows. “I taught Barry how to shave, but Iris had watched me shaving for years. She’d even shaved me herself a few times when the two of them got into high school, whenever I had a particularly bad case and didn’t want to face the world the next morning. I think she wanted to shave Barry at some point, but he always refused. I think he must’ve worried what she’d think of him if he needed help with something as simple as that.” He shrugged. “But I think she just wanted to.”

“Huh.” Cisco contemplated that.

“Now, I don’t know if she ever shaved him before he…you know, left, but…that might have something to do with it.”

He glanced over at Cisco who looked deep in thought.

“She knows what she’s doing, Cisco.” His expression changed to one of deep amusement. “More than you do, apparently.”
His mouth opened and closed, but no words came out.

Joe laughed and pushed himself off the wall, heading down the corridor to where the others were waiting.

“Now wait just a minute,” Cisco tried, but his voice was lost as they grew farther and farther away.

Soon the only sound Iris could hear was her pounding heart and Barry’s steady breathing.

She pressed her finger to the small cut along his jaw, wiping the specks of blood from his skin. It didn’t so much as agitate, since his skin had already healed itself. She smiled softly.

“Must be nice to heal so quickly,” she remarked, cleaning the shaver swiftly before bringing it to his face again.

He appeared to tense beneath where her hand hovered, so she relaxed her arm, lowering the device to her side a bit.

“It’s okay,” she said. “It won’t hurt when I do it.” She ran her fingers lightly through his hair. “I promise.”

He relaxed now too, and she returned to the task at hand. She wondered how much he understood her, the way he reacted to her words and her movements just now. She also wondered if some part of him recognized her. The things he said made no sense. They were all backward and confusing. Not to mention all those symbols he wrote that looked like an ancient language she’d never seen before. The speed force had done something to him. She didn’t want to think about how long it would take to undo that, if it even could be undone.

Don’t think that way, Iris, she thought to herself as she cleaned off the razor again. You brought his body back. Now you just need to bring his mind.

She licked her lips and gently set the razor to his skin again, dragging it down the side with extreme precision.

“You know, these six months have been awful,” she said aloud, deciding that if the Barry she loved couldn’t talk to her, the very least she could do was talk to him. “Not Flash-wise, I mean. Or…Kid Flash or Vibe-wise either. The guys still haven’t decided on a team name.” She attempted to laugh lightly, but it came out strangled. “We’ve been doing all right on that front,” she said softly. “And I…I’ve been keeping it together. Mostly.”

Barry turned his head, presumably to grant her more access to that side of his face. She was surprised, but he still said nothing.

“It’s worse than when you were in a coma,” she admitted, focusing whole-heartedly on shaving his face, not even glancing into eyes that might or might not be looking at her. “At least then I could come visit you. I could talk to you the way I’m talking to you now. You wouldn’t be expected to respond, but you could just…be.” She sighed shakily. “I could touch you.”

She felt fingers wrap around her elbow lightly and her breath hitched.

“Barry.”

She looked into his eyes swiftly and found them staring back at hers with a warmth she hadn’t seen before.
“Barry?” she asked again, abandoning the warning to not hope for too much.

His hand dropped back to his side. His eyes flickered red and then dulled. He turned away, staring at the wall with no particular interest, waiting for her to finish what she had started.

She choked back a sob, rested her hand in her lap until it stopped shaking, and then continued to shave him.

“I got so good at not crying,” she laughed through her tears when the razor his skin again. “Who would’ve thought all it would take was you coming back and not quite being you to change that?”

He didn’t react to her words this time, just stayed still, which she supposed she should be grateful for.

When she’d finished the one side and managed to successfully shave the underside of his chin there, she gently urged him turn his head in her direction, which he did. His eyes stared into hers then. There was no Barry in them, and for the moment no lightning either. It broke her, but it also brought her some relief, because here he was in front of her. She could touch him. She could talk to him. He wasn’t evaporated into the speed force. He was right here in front of her, even if he wasn’t all there.

There was a big part of her that wanted to scream at him for leaving her, for leaving all of them, for not giving them any specific instructions beyond protecting the city and being heroes before he vanished from their lives, presumably forever. But she didn’t want to startle him or cause him to bolt, which was a possibility in the state he was in now.

It was frustrating because that was only one side of what she wanted. The other part of her wanted to hold him and love him and kiss him and beg him to ravish her, because it’d be so long since he felt him touch her and felt him touch her like that.

*Just shave him, Iris.*

She shook her head, trying reel in her emotions. Then she picked up her chair and moved it to the other side of the bed. His eyes didn’t follow her and his head stayed facing the same direction as before. She needed to get the remainder of his hair shaven and apply the cooling gel she always used. She’d done as much as she could from that particular angle.

“I love you, Barry,” she said on a sigh, letting her hands linger on his skin after she’d rubbed in the gel.

He turned to face her then, a flicker of Barry in his eyes, but she knew not to hope this time. Still, she couldn’t help but lean in close and press a kiss to his unmoving lips. She pulled back to see him the same as he’d been before, and tears filled her eyes.

She backed away from his bedside, swallowing hard, trying not to break down as his gaze followed her in her deliberately normally-paced walk to the doorway.

And just before she left, a beat between the heels she was taking gradually slower steps with, she heard the ragged whisper.

“Thank you.”

She clutched at the wall she was nearing to steady herself and looked back at him, his eyes still on her. She told herself to breathe, to not jump to conclusions, to just accept.

She licked her lips and nodded subtly.
“You’re welcome, Barry” she said, and left the room.
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

4.02

Inspired by Grant's answer to the 'How does Barry feel about Iris taking over as the leader of Team Flash? Will he step back up and take over?' question asked at SDCC:

"I think he just naturally just kind of steps up. I think he’s a little oblivious to the dynamic at first, to be honest. He’ll put his foot in his mouth a couple of times, but I don’t think he’s being hardheaded about, ‘You’re not the leader. I’m the leader.’ It’s more like, ‘Oh, this is the dynamic now.’ So, we definitely in the first and second episodes see him adjusting to the new dynamic. But, he’s cool with it. I think we really are going to see a more mature, open Barry than we’ve seen. He’s not going to be quite as hardheaded and stubborn with his friends."

Chapter Notes

With this spoiler fic I usually make a big effort to post each installment before the episode they're supposed to have fit into airs. In fact, this is the first chapter that hasn't happened with. Obvs I was inspired for this before the season even started, so nothing that happened in the actual ep should be assumed going into this - just the quote I referenced above and Iris' dynamic outfit from the episode stills, since I do think they were starting to surface around that time.

Enjoy!

*Many thanks to sendtherain as per usual for beta'ing. :)

Iris set the keys to the loft on the table and walked into the kitchen to grab herself a glass of water as Barry shrugged out of his jacket and hung it next to hers on the coat rack. She glanced over her shoulder to smile at him as she opened the cupboard to retrieve a glass and head over to the fridge to obtain some of the rejuvenating beverage she’d been craving.

“Long day, huh?” he asked, propping himself against the counter.

“Hmm?” She turned to look at him again, accidentally forgetting she was still pressing against the water lever until the glass was overflowing and a puddle formed on the floor. “Oh, my God!”

She stepped back, but before she could think to even grab a towel, the whole spot had been cleaned up by her fiancé and he’d slung the towel over his shoulder. The cocky smile on his face when she looked at him was warranted, she had to admit.

“You just think you’re so slick, don’t you?”

He shrugged innocently. “Just trying to help my fiancée out.”
She rolled her eyes, but she was helpless to prevent the warmth spreading through her.

_Fiancée_. When he said that word aloud, it just...did things to her. And it’d been so long since she’d heard it pass between his lips. So long since she’d heard anything pass between...

“Hey, Iris...” She looked up at him, suddenly aware she’d sunk into the reality of the last six months. “You okay?”

His cocky demeanor was gone. He was all concern and love, eager to comfort her in any way he could.

“Yeah. Yeah, of course.” She crossed the small space to give him a peck on the lips. “You’re not just trying to help me out, by the way,” she said, snatching the towel from his shoulder and hanging it over the handle on the oven.

“I’m not?” he asked, easily slipping back into the teasing mood he’d retreated from. “What am I doing then?”

She glanced at him over her shoulder then turned around completely, crossing her arms.

“You’re being a show-off,” she said pointedly. “You’re happy to have your powers back, so you’re doing everything you can think of to use them.”

His jaw dropped, but the glint in his eyes told her he was on the verge of laughter.

“But that I minded in this instance, obviously.”

He smiled smugly. “Glad to be of some assistance to the new leader of Team Flash.”

He was teasing. It was obvious he was teasing. But the subject was one of the things she’d been worried about should he return – or be rescued somehow – from the speed force.

Barry was the Flash. He would always be the Flash. No one could take the scarlet suit from Barry Allen and pretend to be him. She brushed aside the fact that Wally had done exactly that a few days ago. _Desperate times_. He would’ve never done it if Barry had been in this dimension.

But Barry had been more than the speedster in a red suit running around Central City saving people. For the past two years he had been the leader of Team Flash. Sure, he relied on Cisco and Caitlin and whatever version of Wells was in STAR Labs at the time to tell him what to do if he was in the field and couldn’t think of a solution, but that wasn’t quite the same thing. Everyone looked to him to make the big decisions. They looked to him as their leader. Now they looked to her.

She didn’t know what he thought of that situation. She knew he was adjusting to it, not arguing against it, but she didn’t know how he felt. Was he okay with it? Did he assume that in time the role would automatically shift back to him? After all, there needed to be a leader in his absence, but he wasn’t absent anymore, so shouldn’t he immediately get his role back?

Every time someone on the referred to her as “boss”, she looked to Barry to see how he received it. Or when she gave instructions to everyone, including him, she wondered if inside his head he was taking the orders grudgingly.

But he never said anything. He followed orders. He didn’t interject. And when he was wrong, he accepted the right solution – sometimes right away, sometimes the hard way, but he always did accept them. He didn’t get mad at her ever or anyone else. And he was so darn positive all the
time that she often berated herself for being insecure about the situation to begin with. But now she realized that even if he maybe was okay and didn’t need to talk about it, she did.

“Barry, about that…” she hedged cautiously. The smile dropped from his face again, and his brows furrowed. “What?”

She took a deep breath. “Are you…okay with it?”

“With what? You being team leader?”

She nodded slowly and bit her bottom lip. “It’s an adjustment,” he admitted, and her heart nearly stopped. “But I told you I was proud of you for stepping up. I still am.”

“But now that you’re back…”

He crossed the small space between them and gripped her shoulders. “Now that I’m back, I can see how perfect you are in this role. I’m not gonna take that from you.” He pressed a kiss to her forehead. “I love you.”

“I love you, too.” Her smile was forced. “You don’t believe me.”

She sighed and ran a hand through her hair. “I want to, Barry, I do. It’s just that…”

“What?”

“Well, you were team leader. And you were good at it.”

“Because you were giving me pep talks 90% of the time.”

“Everyone needs some encouragement, Barry. It’s called being human.”

“I know that. But it’s not as if everyone is ignoring what I have to say just because they take their orders from you now. You especially don’t shut me down. I trust you. Plus, everything major I’ve been through, I got through it because of you. You being team leader is an adjustment, but it’s not a bad adjustment. Trust me on that.”

She swallowed and nodded. “Okay.”

“Okay.”

He smiled, pressed a kiss to the top of her head, and went to relax in the living room. Iris blew the hair out of her face and turned around to finish her glass of water before joining him.

…

The following evening Barry sat on the couch, waiting for Iris to join him as had been their
routine ever since he’d come out of the speed force. It was a routine he was very fond of, since it involved cuddles, take out, and inevitably sex. He was especially fond of the latter.

But tonight, when he watched Iris going through their mail in the kitchen, he couldn’t stop thinking about their conversation from the previous evening. He hadn’t really taken the time to understand what not being team leader looked like for him, but so far he hadn’t had a problem with how things were going.

The team was giving him a little bit of a hard time with how he operated, but in all fairness, things had changed in Central City over the last six months – construction, for instance. He was giddy, super excited to get back out there as the Flash. So sometimes he didn’t think things through all the way. He was sure though that in time they’d all find their groove again with him back on the team. He didn’t feel threatened by Iris taking on the role as team leader. He just wished she didn’t have to worry that way deep down he did.

His own worry about it started to filter out of his mind though as his eyes started to drift over her body. From the adorable silky short haircut she sported – which he had told her he loved straight off – to the cropped sweater top and sexy long pencil skirt that displayed her curves in the most attractive way, she was a vision. Coupled with some fancy strappy heels, he found himself unable to think of much else other than how to get her out of those clothes as soon as possible. He could already feel the front of his pants tightening as a telltale sign.

And that was when the idea occurred to him.

He couldn’t believe he hadn’t thought of it sooner. After all, it was a way to encourage confidence in her regarding the position of team leader. All day long with the team she exuded confidence in waves, but yesterday after they’d gotten home, she seemed to rid herself of it as if it had been a heavy suit of armor she couldn’t wait to take off. That stopped tonight. He was going to be her suit of armor in a way that was going to make her forget all about her need for one, because she would be bursting with confidence in every aspect of this role.

In a heartbeat he was behind her at the counter, causing her to gasp and then relax into the warmth of him, not yet aware of the bulge hardening beneath his pants.

“Hey, babe, I’m coming, I swear. There are just a few more bills I have to sort through and then I’ll be right over.”

His hands covered hers, his bulge now pressed firmly against her ass, causing a quiet gasp to emerge from her. His lips pressed to the shell of her ear as he watched her breasts rise and fall.

“Later,” he whispered hotly against her skin. Then he drew his hands slowly up her arms, bringing one to rest on her chin to turn it towards him and whispered into her mouth. “Do it later.”

Iris succumbed to the intoxicating kiss, spinning around in his arms a moment later and throwing herself into the embrace. At first it genuinely took Barry off-guard, and he almost tripped over his own feet. The opposite counter stopped him first though, and then the wall. His jacket and pants were off, Iris stroking his cock through his underwear, and her skirt, shirt and shoes had been shed as well, the pretty strapless bra the only thing separating her breasts from the toned skin of his chest and torso.

“I love you, Barry,” she whispered into his mouth over and over.

It dazzled him to the point that he almost forgot the reason he’d instigated the seduction now instead of after dinner. And it wasn’t just because his fiancée looked more delicious than any food he could think of at the moment. He wanted her to…
The light bulb turned on again. *There it is.*

“Upstairs,” he murmured, but she shook her head.

“No. Here.”

*Hell.*

He thought he was thirsty for her ever since coming out of the speed force, but Iris was just as eager. She might play coy and defensive when she was in one of her moods but introduce it just a little and she was set off like a wildfire.

Who was he to argue though?

Faster than she could probably think, Barry lit the fireplace, fitted a condom to his cock and lowered Iris to the carpet in front of the roaring fire.

“All we’re missing is champagne,” she chuckled lightly, which of course resulted in him quickly running off and retrieving a bottle of their finest champagne and two glasses – which he placed at a safe distance, so they wouldn’t break. *Better safe than sorry.* “I should’ve known,” she corrected, amused, even as she sifted her fingers through his hair and pulled him down for another kiss.

*This is going to be harder than I thought.*

But he refused to abandon the cause at this point. He lowered his hand down her body and dipped his fingers into her panties. Quickly finding her clit and vibrating his fingers against it in rapidly-moving circles, Barry in addition rid Iris of her bra and latched onto one nipple, swirling his tongue around it madly.

“Ohhh, my God, Barry.”

She clutched at him, and he moved against her as if he was about to thrust into her, but of course he wasn’t. He never removed her panties or removed his fingers from inside her. The delay almost made her scream. He could feel the impending release floating near the surface and thoroughly enjoyed bringing her to the edge. Then, when she was almost there, he abruptly stopped.

Iris’ eyes flashed open, watching in shock as he lifted his head from her breast, removed his hand from her panties and moaned while sucking the fingers that had been inside her.

“Mmm, tasty.” He smiled a devilish grin that showed all his pearly whites.

But then he braced his hands on either side of her and pushed himself completely off her – and waited.

“What are you doing?” she finally asked, wide-eyed.

“Waiting.”

“For what?”

His low laugh was husky and intoxicatingly sexy.

“My orders.”

“Excuse me?”
“I’m waiting for my orders, boss.”

Horror passed over her face, and he worried for a moment that it was more due to her insecurity of what he thought of her as boss than to telling him how to sexually satisfy her.

He refused to be thwarted though. So, to reassure her, he lowered his head to meet her lips in a sweet kiss, then whispered hotly against her mouth.

“If you’re going to be the boss at work, you have to be one at home too.”

He lifted his head to find a look of shock on her face that gave him an unholy amount of satisfaction.

“You can’t be serious.”

He smirked.

“Boss me around, Iris West. You certainly have no trouble doing it for Flash-related matters.”

She scoffed, then sobered.

“Is this your way of telling me—”

“This is me saying,” he interjected, “that I am not going to so much as touch you again or sexually satisfy you in any way unless you tell me exactly what you want me to do exactly where you want me to do it.”

A strangled breath escaped her, then, “You’re serious?” She swallowed hard.

“100%.”

Iris licked her lips, clearly debating whether to call his bluff or not and the many ways which she could interpret his threat. Finally, she looked up at him, a tremulous curiosity in her eyes.

Her lips parted, and she said, “Kiss my neck.”

He smiled slowly and did as he was told, lowering his head, doing as he was told, which ranged from a variety of instructions ranging from “up” and “down” to “lower” and “suck”, and his personal favorite, “harder.”

“Squeeze my breast – the one from before,” she requested. “Lick the nipple, bite it. Now do the other one. Suck them. Kiss down my stomach. Grab my hips. Kiss the line above my waistband. Pull my panties off with your teeth.”

Barry was going crazy.

She took her time with each order, but he still felt like he could barely keep up. And he didn’t expect her to take to ordering him around so easily. Of course, he wasn’t going to complain. It had been his idea after all, and she tasted fantastic.

But his cock was throbbing. He ached to get inside her, to feel her all around him. He could eat her out all day, and he knew he’d be satisfied doing so because she looked amazing when thoroughly satisfied by oral.

Still, when the words, “Fuck me,” escaped her lips following her amazing vibrating tongue-induced climax, Barry did not demand she describe what exactly she wanted. He knew what she wanted, because he had given it to her plenty of times, and God help him, he needed it badly.
So, he moved back up her body, hooked her knees over his elbows and thrust into her – fast, no resistance, sweat dripping over them both. And she was ready. She was more than ready, just moments after her first climax. When she reached for him he released his grip on her knees to join their lips together in a steamy kiss – tongues sliding against each other, lips bruising, swelling, and still needing more. Eventually he had to break away to press his forehead into the carpet as she wrapped her arms around him and pleaded, “Oh, God, Barry, faster.”

And he went faster. And he came. And it was fantastic.

Seconds ticked away, the only audible sound being their labored breathing and the crackling of the fire. Inevitably, Barry rolled off her, snatched a blanket from the nearby couch and covered them with it. He snuggled close to her and wrapped his arm around her, pressing a kiss to her nose before his breathing slowly started to even out.

“I guess it’s not so bad being team leader,” Iris said, smiling.

He smiled in return.

“Hey, Iris?”

“Yeah?”

“For the record, you are sexy as hell when telling me what to do.”

She bit her bottom lip to try to suppress her smile, but it was impossible.

“You maybe want to do it again sometime?”

His eyes opened, and he lifted his head to look down at her, brushing away the sweaty locks still sticking to her face. He leaned down and kissed her.

“Absolutely.”

Wriggling in excitement, Iris kissed him again and again and again.

“Maybe in the shower next time,” she suggested.

His eyes widened, pools of desire dictating everything he was feeling inside him.

He could not wait.
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

5.01

Inspired by early filming pics of season 5 where Barry is wearing his season 1 suit. This chap is about how Iris is affected by the change in suit and why the red emblem is used instead of the white one.

Chapter Notes

Wow, it's been a while since anything remotely spoilery inspired me enough to write a fic about it, but here we are! I have one more coming after this that relates a lot more to SDCC content and the promo that was released then. It'll be longer than this one, but this was just an idea I had after seeing those original filming pics. Enjoy!

*Many thanks to sendtherain for beta'ing. :D

Iris tried not to stare when Barry returned from the robbery he’d interrupted. Amidst all the confusion and uncertainty of their daughter coming from the future for a visit and being stuck in their time, there were still lesser-scale problems to be addressed in the city. Burglaries, kidnappings, bomb threats, speeding cars even. And they were a welcome distraction to the issue at hand.

There was just one problem with addressing them.

“Go!” Cisco had said as soon as his alert had gone off.

And Barry was about to go. In fact, he got a full block away before returning. Cisco was about to demand an explanation when Barry standing before them gesturing to his torn-up suit answered any question he might have asked.

“Oh, right.” Cisco deflated. “Well-”

“My old suit,” Barry said, lighting up at the brilliant suggestion. “Do we still have it?”

“Do we still have it,” Cisco repeated. Iris could feel the irritation growing in him. As if he would ever throw away one of Barry’s suits, especially when it was still fully functioning.

“It’s in the speed lab,” she answered for her husband, since Cisco clearly had forgotten there was a robbery in progress that allowed for no delay.

“Great!” Barry said and then he was gone, his ripped suit on the mannequin in the cortex and the other one no doubt on his person as he fled the building to save the day.

He returned minutes later of course, the burglar in custody at CCPD where he belonged, and
while the suit was still on him, after some brief conversation, recapping what had gone down, Barry changed back into regular clothes in a flash and eventually made his way out. He had a day job again, and he’d come to use it as a distraction for dealing with Nora. He called out a goodbye to the rest of them and was gone. Eventually everyone else left too, no criminals or pressing problems for the day. Nora headed out too, no doubt to track her father down as she’d done on previous days. Unlike those instances, though, Iris made no attempt to stop her and try once again to reconnect.

She was still too busy thinking about the old suit Barry had gone out in. Swallowing hard, she made her way down to the speed lab where it had been haphazardly tossed aside – *Cisco won’t like that*, she mused. She straightened it out, placed it on its own stand and looked at it.

She stared at it for what felt like hours, her heart pounding loudly in her chest.

*It’s just a suit, Iris. Pull yourself together.*

But she couldn’t. For two years Barry had worn that suit. He’d had many victories in that suit. He’d beaten two villains in that suit, three if the white emblem was replaced with the red one.

But all she could think about was those six, long months it had hung in the cortex when Barry was in the speed force. She’d see it every day when she came in. It was a constant reminder that Barry was gone, and that there was a good chance he was never coming back. The memories would flood through her. She couldn’t help thinking it would’ve been better if he had walked into the speed force with it on, so she wouldn’t have to think about it every time she looked in that direction.

Of course, she’d thought of him anyway, of what had happened, what couldn’t be undone, that the love of her life was lost in time and space, away from her. So far away from her she lost her faith and hardened herself so she wouldn’t feel. The loss of him was so devastating after a while, drowning herself in it became too much. She had to make it stop.

And she had.

Then he came back. He wore a new suit that signified new beginnings, and she could finally breathe again.

But now here he was wearing it again. He might be wearing it for a while until Cisco created a new one.

Could she really live with this reminder every day again? Of how awful it had been for six full months until he returned to her? When she saw it hanging there without him inside it, even if he was standing right in front of her alive, healthy, breathing, sane…would it drive her crazy?

Footsteps sounded behind her, but there was no jolt from her, no pulling her from her racing thoughts.

“Hey, Iris, do you think maybe…” But his voice stopped.

She became aware of him as he slowed down and walked up behind her. She nearly jumped out of her skin when he placed his hands on her arms.

“Hey, are you okay?” he asked, concern flooding his voice.

She shook her head. She couldn’t lie to him. And when he came around to look at her face and saw the tears soaking her skin, his grip tightened on her arms as he lowered himself to look her in the eyes.
“Iris, what’s wrong? Talk to me. Tell me what’s going on. Did something happen?” he asked frantically.

That made her cry harder, and she fell into his arms, sobbing into his shirt. How many times during those six months had she wished Barry had been there to hold her, to tell her it would be okay, that he was right there beside her and they were going to get through this.

“Iris…” His voice broke as he held her close, rubbing her back.

He pressed a kiss to the top of her head, and a warmth flowered inside her.

“Tell me what’s wrong. Please,” he added softly.

She sighed shakily, the tears finally subsiding.

“It’s just…” She pulled back and wiped away at her tears. He caught the new ones trickling down. “It’s a reminder.” She sniffled. “Of when you were gone.”

“What is?” His brows furrowed. Then he turned around to look at what she’d been staring at when he’d walked in. He looked back at her, eyes wide. “The suit?”

She nodded.

“That suit hung in the cortex every day you were in the speed force, Barry.” She looked up at him, eyes red from crying. “Every day I had to see it and be reminded that you were gone, that you weren’t here, and you might never be again.” Her voice cracked.

“Oh, Iris.” He pulled her into his arms again, holding her tighter than before, and rocking her slightly. “I’m right here.”

“I know.” She nodded against him. “And I know you wore that suit for two years, so six measly months of you not wearing it shouldn’t bother me but-”

“No.” He pulled back and fixed his eyes on her again. “Iris, look at me.”

Reluctantly, she met his gaze.

“When I went to the future, and I saw myself in a future where you died?” He shook his head. “My future self was a mess. And you know what he was fixated on?” She shook her head. “That picture of you and me that you had facedown in a frame in our loft while I was gone.”

She gasped quietly.

“So, I get it, Iris,” he said reassuringly. “I get how…hard it must be to look at.”

Her shoulders slumped, relief coursing through her.

“Thanks, Barry.”

He nodded, then turned around.

“To anyone else, it’s just a suit, but to you, it’s a painful memory.”

She swallowed hard. “Yeah…” fell past her ruby lips, an almost silent whisper.

“So why don’t we do something about that?” he asked, looking back at her.
Her brows furrowed, and she frowned. “Like what?”

“Like…” He walked over to the suit and twisted the emblem so it came off.

“Barry, what-”

He dropped the emblem in a nearby box, then dug around until he found what he was apparently looking for.

Iris watched, curiosity getting the better of her, as he placed a new emblem on the suit.

When he stepped back, she saw what it was and felt a peace washing over her. It was so simple and yet so perfect. It soothed her in so many ways, reminded her of good things, of the beginning.

“There’s your first emblem,” she whispered.

He nodded, returning to her.

“Mhmm,” he agreed. “It’s red, not white, which doesn’t make it that much different, but I figure-”

“It’s perfect,” she said, wrapping her hands around his arm and turning him to her till he looked down at her. “Thank you, Barry.” She tilted her head up for his kiss, which he readily granted.

“I love you, Iris,” he said, cupping her face with his other hand. “And I’m not going anywhere. Never again. You hear me?”

She nodded, closing her eyes as his fingers threaded through her hair and he pulled her in for another kiss.

“I love you, Barry,” she breathed into a kiss.

His lips moved against hers, soft like velvet, warm and encouraging and eager. She moaned into him, pressed herself against him and pulled him to her so they were touching as much as they could be while standing, while fully clothed.

They kissed for a long while. No one interrupted them. And when Iris finally opened her eyes to see the red emblem on the old suit, she didn’t cry. She breathed.
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

5.01

Inspired by the early s5 promos. In this chap, Nora tells Barry about his future, and he shares the news with Iris.

Chapter Notes

Grab some tissues. This is an idea I have of how I think the why-is-nora-here-from-the-future scenes could play out.

*Many thanks to sendtherain for beta'ing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“I can’t believe that’s our daughter up there.”

Iris’ enthusiasm didn’t bug him, per se.

“She could Marty McFly herself out of existence.”

He had to admit there was just something about Nora that erased any doubt from his mind. She was definitely their daughter.

“She should be with her parents thirty years from now, not us, now.”

But they’d had plenty of experience of being betrayed by a supposed ally before. And even if she hadn’t betrayed them yet, just her being there felt like a betrayal of a different kind. He couldn’t imagine why she would’ve even contemplated time travel or changing the past or future if he’d been the one to raise her. That would’ve been his first lesson to her as a speedster. He didn’t want his daughter to learn it the hard way, like him.

“I’ll be right back,” he murmured to Iris before leaving the room to go find Nora.

The question of why circled over and over in his mind. As dangerous as it was to know the future, in some cases it felt necessary to prevent some disasters, or at least to be prepared for them. That had certainly been the case with Savitar. There would have been no hope of saving Iris if he hadn’t known it was going to happen ahead of time. They would’ve been completely blindsided.

In regard to Nora, though, only one possible motive made sense, and he didn’t like the possibility of it. It meant everything he’d done, all that he’d accomplished, marrying Iris, building a life together, would all be for nothing…if that headline came true.

“Nora?”
She took a while turning around, setting down the object in her hands as she did so.

“Hey!” She smiled brightly – _too brightly_. “I was just looking around, seeing what’s what.” She bounced up on her toes. “This place is really something. Way different than from my time.”

“Nora.”

She met his eyes, saw the seriousness in his gaze and immediately sobered up.

“There’s something you’re not telling us,” he started carefully. “About why you’re here, why you tried to…change the future. Right?”

“Well, yeah, I-I told you. The future really sucks. I wanted to…amend that. I did it one too many times apparently and poof! Here I am.” She laughed nervously. It was short-lived.

“Nora…”

“My poker face is that bad, huh?” She swallowed hard.

“I need to know,” he said. “What happens to me?”

She didn’t say anything at first, looked away, probably contemplating how wise it was to answer this likely life-changing question truthfully.

“I…I don’t know if I should-”

“Please.”

She took a breath and nodded once, then walked the length of the room and out of it, confusing him.

“Nora-”

“Follow me.”

He did, followed her down the long winding hall until they were right in front of the time vault. She pressed her hand to the hidden key and the opening revealed itself. They walked inside.

Without hesitation, she walked up to Gideon’s stand and waved her hand over it, revealing the 2024 newspaper heading.

“You know about this?” she asked, turning to Barry.

“Yeah, I first saw it three years ago, give or take.”

“Then you know that you disappear.”

He shrugged, feeling sheepish as he slid his hands into his pockets. He knew. He’d only really paid attention to the byline since he first saw it. It was so jarring, so much more jarring at the time than him simply disappearing. He’d disappeared so many times. He always came back.

“You came back to me.”

“Always.”

“You don’t come back,” Nora said, her voice breaking.
His gaze fixed on hers. “What?”

She took a breath and stepped away from the projected image, facing him.

“2024 is the year I was born. There was a crisis…you went to rescue all of us, and you did, but there was an explosion, presumably a portal opened, and…you disappeared.”

“And I…I never…”

“I wouldn’t be here if you had come back,” she said very quietly.

Shaken to his very core, Barry nearly stumbled backwards. A chill whipped down his spine. A heaviness settled over him, nearly pushing him to the floor.

For her part, Nora didn’t move. It was hard enough to talk about – think about. It made her recall her entire life that he wasn’t there for. She couldn’t imagine what he must be feeling in that moment, but she was barely holding herself together. She couldn’t console him. She needed someone to console her.

Her mom had done that most of her life. But things weren’t good between them anymore, and despite her trying to differentiate the mother of her present from the Iris of 2018, she couldn’t. She wouldn’t go to her for consolation. Even if she wanted to, she knew she couldn’t console her, not after Barry told her what had her fighting to stand without falling.

“I…”

She nodded, holding back tears. “Go. It’s okay. I understand.”

He was gone in a flash, leaving her alone with that front page visual, dictating her father’s future, an immovable, undeniable, historical event stamped in time. Nothing she did had changed it, and now she’d done more harm than good.

Standing alone in that room, she began to rub her arms, now dotted with goosebumps. She was so cold.

…

He found her where he’d left her and suddenly didn’t know if he could go through with it.

It would crush her, more than it was crushing him. He was already devastated by how much he would lose, but she had a whole future without him, without them. It would be like learning about her impending murder by Savitar all over again, except this time their roles would be reversed.

“Iris,” he said softly, and she turned to face him.

“Hey,” she said, smiling, coming to him. “Where did you run off to?”

“I…went to find Nora.”

Her eyes widened. “Oh.”

“I…” He sighed shakily.

“Barry, what is it? What’s wrong?”

He held in his tears. He would not cry in front of her. Certainly not when she would inevitably cry in front of him. He had to be strong for her.
“I asked Nora about my future,” he said.

“Barry—”

“I had to know, Iris.” She swallowed and nodded. “I couldn’t think of any other reason she’d be so…reckless.” He took a breath. “Not if I had been there to raise her.”

Eyes filled with tears, as he’d known they would be, Iris looked up at him fearfully.

“Is it…?”

He nodded. “I disappear, Iris. I disappear in the crisis.”

“And…do you die?”

“I don’t know.” He shook his head.

Her brows furrowed. “What do you mean you don’t…know?”

“I mean, maybe I do die or maybe I just get…”

“Lost in time?”

Waves of memories and feelings of loss, anguish, despair, washed over Iris. Those nine months when he’d been in a coma, those six months when he’d been in the speed force…and then she imagined decades of that.

“Barry—”

She clutched his arms, and he wrapped his around her. She started sobbing without warning, and he held her to him. He had no idea what to say, no words that would soothe her, no promise to undo the outcome of that headline. Too many times he’d messed with time, but one thing had gone unchanged through all of it – through his first accidental run back in time a day, through his deliberate run back a year, through time remnants and Flashpoint and Savitar. One thing had never changed.

FLASH VANISHES IN CRISIS

He was destined to disappear on April 24, 2024 – and to never come back, leaving his wife in shambles and his daughter recklessly running through time trying to undo something that could never be undone.

Hidden in the doorway, Nora watched her parents holding each other as her mother sobbed in her father’s arms. She’d seen her mother cry so few times. She was always so strong, so practical, so cautious about everything. But here Nora saw she hadn’t always been that way. Not with Barry.

Tears started to fall from her eyes, and only one thought, resounding and loud as ever resounded in her mind.

This is all my fault.
If I got any of the quotes from the promos wrong, please let me know so I can fix them!
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

5.02

Inspired by Grant and Candice’s commentary from SDCC 2018 on how Barry and Iris process Nora being there in a negative way (i.e. Barry feeling like Nora being there is taking yet another thing away from him and Iris feeling jealous by Barry & Nora's bond and Nora's clear distancing of her). This chap shows them isolating themselves to internalize their feelings and then wordlessly finding comfort in each other.

Chapter Notes

So, you thought last chap was angsty? Grab your tissues.

*Many thanks to sendtherain for beta’ing.

Nora was reluctant to leave, Barry could tell, but reminding her that he would see her the next day at STAR Labs and probably CCPD seemed to be enough to get her out the door. She’d planned on crashing with Cisco tonight anyway, so it wasn’t as if he was kicking her out on the street. Still on edge about how affectionate his daughter was towards him, Barry exhaled a sigh of relief when he shut the door behind her.

He turned to face Iris, who had a forced smile on her face, and he knew she was feeling the opposite. He knew he should console her too, but he found it difficult in this particular case. Maybe a run around the city would clear his mind enough to be of comfort to his wife.

“I’m gonna patrol the city one more time before settling in,” he said, gesturing towards the door.

“Oh, sure,” she said, meeting his eyes, trying her best to act as if nothing was wrong.

“I would’ve earlier, but with Nora being here I-”

“I understand, Barry,” she assured him. “I’ll see you in a bit.”

She turned away from him to head for the living room couch. He should have stopped her. He almost did, almost stopped and consoled her in whatever way he could – whether that was cuddling or sex or cooking. She was a fan of all three, same as him.

But he needed to get out of his own head. And to do that, he needed to run.

…

Silence descended with both her husband and her daughter from the future absent from the loft. Iris plopped herself on the couch, grabbed the remote to turn on the TV, and didn’t move a
Swallowing hard, she told herself not to cry. There was no reason to cry. Things were under control. Well, maybe not under control, because since when was everything totally good on team Flash? But surely there wasn’t any reason to be sad.

*Isn’t there, though, Iris?*

She sighed, and her bottom lip started to tremble.

She just didn’t understand it. Why was there this distance between her and her daughter? She couldn’t remember having done anything wrong, and Nora gave no explanation. But from the moment she met her, she felt Nora pulling away from her, unwilling to get close.

For Iris, it was a dream come true to get to meet her daughter from the future. It meant that despite everything, things had worked out. She and Barry were still together, they’d had at least one child – one beautiful, smart, funny, adorable child – that was not only the spitting image of both of them but also so much like Barry, Iris found herself falling in love all over again.

Sure, she’d been suspicious initially; they all had. But for most of the team that had faded away. Not for Barry though; not entirely. Which did not go unnoticed by Iris, especially given the fact that Nora seemed to be chasing after his attention and affection more than anybody. Iris understood Barry’s hesitancy, and certainly she was happy for his sake that that his daughter adored him, but it hurt her so badly that Nora presumably wanted nothing to do with her.

The only possibility seemed to be that in the future she and her daughter were not on good terms. That was hardly her fault now though, was it? It wasn’t fair for it to be held against her when she hadn’t even done anything yet.

That ‘yet’ was difficult to swallow on its own though, because…what did that mean? What was so bad that Nora wanted nothing to do with even a younger version of her mother? Had she done something so unforgiveable that they were estranged? Had she ended up…like her own mother? Using drugs? Abandoning her child? Had Barry raised their daughter alone, and that’s why Nora was so fond of her father?

It made Iris’ heart ache.

She didn’t want to take it out on Barry; she wouldn’t. It was hardly his fault that their daughter was distancing herself from her mother. He was trying to create distance from his daughter; or, as much as he could without coming across mean.

It was so, so complicated, the dynamic between the three of them.

She wished she could convince Barry to let himself love his daughter, no matter what the future brought, even at the cost of more distance between herself and Nora. But that distance was killing her too. She wanted so much to just get to know her daughter, everything about her, her likes and dislikes, what made her sad and happy, what lessons she’d learned, the mistakes she’d made and how they’d been fixed.

But Nora wouldn’t let her in, and Barry was so busy preventing Nora from getting too close to him, that he didn’t see Iris in pain. Or maybe he did and just didn’t know how to help. Maybe he didn’t want to burden her with his own feelings, because he knew they would hurt. Maybe he thought she’d be bitter, because how could it be so upsetting to have your own flesh and blood love you too much?

Iris curled herself up in a ball in the corner of the couch, set the remote down and buried her face
into the nearest pillow. She let herself cry. No one was around to hear her.

…

The city was a blur of colors around him as he sped through, street by street, hardly checking to see if there was crime on any corner. He felt tears sting his eyes and tried to shut his thoughts down, tried to focus. It was pointless venture, because wasn’t thinking about how his emotions were exploding inside him what he had come out here to do?

That’s not what you told Iris.

He ignored that too.

All he could see in his mind was Nora’s smiling face whenever she was around him. She wanted to be at CCPD with him. She wanted to be at STAR Labs with him. She wanted to be on the street fighting crime as XS with him. She wanted to be at the loft with him. She was like the pesky little sister he never had, wanting to follow him wherever he went, be involved with whatever he was doing. And he knew he was wrong to be annoyed by how she’d quite literally become his shadow. He knew that. Because she wasn’t his pesky little sister. She was his daughter from the future, and she needed his help.

But all he could think was how much her presence had stolen from him, how much it was going to steal, and how his heart would ache from her absence when she left if he allowed himself to let her in.

For almost as long as he’d envisioned marrying Iris, he’d envisioned what their future would look like after they’d said their I do’s. That future had involved children for him. A boy and a girl preferably, maybe more. He didn’t want to think too far ahead as to what they would look like. He wanted that to be a surprise. He wanted other things to be a surprise too. Would the child be a metahuman with superspeed? A metahuman with a different power? Or simply a normal human being without the weight and scare that came with abilities?

He wanted to find out Iris was pregnant and be surprised. He wanted to go with her to the doctor to see the ultrasound. He wanted them to discuss names and both genuinely be on the fence until their baby was born. They would look into his or her eyes and just know what to name them. It would be so clear.

Well, that was taken away from them now. Their daughter’s name would be Nora. End of discussion. And if they changed it, it might change everything about the daughter they were getting to know now. He’d never want to erase the essence of who she was.

Despite his best efforts, he was warming up to her. She reminded him of himself when he’d first gotten his powers. She was bubbly, full of energy, and she adored him. It was hard to steer away from that or to want to. The only way he found himself able to was if he didn’t think of her as his daughter but instead as another speedster who just needed his aid.

Nora – the name – made sense. It really did. It was obviously in honor of his mother. Maybe Iris had suggested it because he’d been afraid to push a family name onto their firstborn that didn’t belong to Iris. It warmed his heart to think of his mother being present in their lives through their daughter, to say her name countless times and have it not be in past tense, referencing the devoted, loving mother he’d had who’d been murdered when he was only eleven.

But it was also out of his hands, out of their hands. ‘Nora’ was no longer an option, it was a fact. There was no sweet journey to choosing it, no grand gesture from his wife to remember his mother through their daughter. That whole process was stolen from them, every memory, every
thought, every word.

Now the facts were this: Nora, their daughter, arrived from the future and told them her name. That could not be undone. Their daughter’s name would be Nora because that’s what she had told them it was. Even changing something as small as a name might change something vitally important. Every detail was precious. And that precious detail was now out of their hands.

Sometimes he hated being a speedster. Sometimes he wished their lives were normal. That things were the way they had been in the Flashpoint timeline he’d created and then undone. Maybe they hadn’t been best friends their entire lives, but the way they met was simple and sweet. His parents were alive. Wally was the Flash – or Kid Flash. The idea of losing his speed, his identity, in the timeline he was most familiar with was too jarring to live with inevitably, but the time he’d spent there had been so refreshing. Every so often he wished he could go back to that peace, that normalcy. Life would be so much simpler then.

And what if he did forego all the things he couldn’t have before Nora’s birth? What if he let go of all his frustration and bitterness then? What if something happened to his daughter now, just being here? What if he let himself love her, spend time with her, be protective over her? She would leave eventually. She would go back to her time. And when she had finally grown up, maybe she wouldn’t be the person he’d come to love now. He’d still love her of course, because she was his daughter. But would he yearn for the first version of her he’d met?

Of course, he could apply that to the various versions of everyone he knew, since they’d all differed slightly in the various timelines he created. For the most part those closest to him were near exact copies of the people he knew in the first timeline he’d lived in for the first twenty-five years of his life. So much so that if the person from then and the person now were to stand side by side, he probably wouldn’t be able to tell the difference.

Still, he didn’t want to have to lose any memories from his daughter. He didn’t want to have to adjust to a new version of her or long for her to be something different than he remembered. He just wanted her.

And already he felt like he’d lost her, like he didn’t have her, even though she was standing in front of him every day demanding to be heard and hanging onto his every word.

And then there was Iris and how much she wanted everything Nora was trying to give him. It was such a painful push and pull between the three of them he worried that eventually it would cause a rift between him and Iris, which of course was the last thing he wanted.

He came to a stop suddenly and took in his surroundings, realizing he’d been running for miles with no real idea of where he was. He looked up the building just across the street from him though and realized he was exactly where he needed to be. With a deep breath and a tremulous smile, he ran up.

... 

Half-awake, half-asleep, tears drenching the pillow, Iris wasn’t even aware of Barry’s presence when he re-entered the loft. The soft swish of him closing the door and the quiet clunk of him pushing off his shoes were distant sounds that didn’t register.

But then he was in front of the couch looking down at her, and she could feel the worry emanating off him.

“ Iris?” he asked, his voice raspy.
She dragged up her limited energy from somewhere and tilted her head up to look at him. She didn’t say a word, her tear-stained cheeks and pint-tinted eyes telling her story.

He crouched beside the couch, watching her intently.

“Are you okay?” he asked.

She licked her lips and lifted her face away from the pillow.

“Are you?”

Mouth closed, he sighed, allowing the pain he’d been holding back to shine through his own vision.

“Not really,” he said and stood back to his feet.

Wordlessly, she scooted forward till she was in the middle of the couch, and he slid in behind her, pulling her close once he was settled. He wrapped his arms around her and pressed a kiss to her head.

“I love you. You know that, right?”

She let the words wash over her and relaxed against his chest, closing her eyes and relishing in the feel of him surrounding her.

“I know,” she said.

Feeling around, she grabbed for one of his hands and kissed the back of it. Intertwining their fingers, she laid it back on her stomach and relaxed again, feeling more at peace than she had in a while.

“I love you, too.”
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

5.01

Inspired by the look on Barry's face at the end of the 5.01/02 promo after Nora tells him about the future in the time vault.

Chapter Notes

Apparently I'm inspired for angst right now. lol. Grab the tissues and enjoy! I wrote this before the premiere aired, so that's why a few details are different (i.e. Nora being born in 2024 instead of a few years before) in addition to the overall events.

*Many thanks to sendtherain for beta'ing.

“I’m sorry. I guess things don’t always go the way you planned.”

He stared back at her – his daughter, from the future – and felt the tears start to spill down his cheeks. Not for her specifically, though he knew somewhere in the back of his mind that she was in need of comfort. She’d lived with this truth for her entire life. It was such a painful burden that she’d come back in time to attempt saving him, same as he’d done with his mother.

But he was just finding out about it now, that his entire life would go up in smoke in less than six years, that he’d leave Iris alone with a child. There would be no coming back to them. There’d be no being the Flash. His life as he knew it would be over.

The more he thought about it, the more his emotions built up, threatening to explode. He was managing to stay calm, quiet, in front of Nora. The tears staining his cheeks were slow, limited, only two or three from what he could register. They weren’t a side effect of an explosion of devastation, of hyperventilating, fighting to catch his breath, of yelling and screaming and throwing things, of wanting to throw himself off a cliff to just end it all right now.

No. Don’t do that. Iris would be devastated. Nora would be devastated. Treasure the time you have left.

The time he had left?

He could…he could not believe that it was all ending this way. He could not-

He ran.

He couldn’t do this in front of Nora, and he couldn’t contain himself any longer. So, he ran. The speed inside of him was bursting to be released, to be some sort of channel to vent his frustrations. Though frustration hardly seemed like the appropriate word. This was…a total unleashing of years’ worth of agony and heartbreak and failure.
He finally had everything he ever wanted, and he was going to lose it. He was going to lose himself. He was going to die a tragic death, a martyr’s death. He was going to be remembered forever, immortalized as a legacy in the Flash museum of the future.

But that hardly mattered if he lost what was most important to him.

Had this always been his fate? For his parents to be murdered? For him to become the Flash? For him to finally achieve the happiness he’d been longing for and then lose it in his quest to save the universe?

Why couldn’t a time remnant do it? Hell, he’d go above and beyond to bring that man into the fold if he succeeded, to ensure another Savitar wasn’t born.

He just…he couldn’t believe he was actually…

He came to a skidding halt what felt like hours, but was probably only minutes, later. He found himself in the middle of nowhere, out in the country anymore, definitely not in Central City, maybe not even in the state. All he could see for miles was flat lands of endless corn fields. There were some trees in the distance and a scarecrow that had two crows perched on it, one on each arm.

*So much for scaring the crows off,* he thought, briefly amused by something not concerning him and his current predicament.

He felt something buzzing on his side and quickly changed out of his Flash suit. He couldn’t see anyone nearby, and at the moment he wasn’t running. There was no need to have it on.

He had three texts and two calls from Iris.

_Maybe I have been gone hours,* he mused.

**Hey, you ok?**

_Nora’s worried about you. Did something happen?*

**Barry, you’re really starting to worry me. Plz call me back.**

He looked at the time stamps between each of them and saw that it had been about forty-five minutes. She probably hadn’t tried to contact him immediately when he left.

_Maybe it had been an hour.*

He sighed. Time seemed irrelevant right now.

A name flashed across the screen: **Joe West.**

He didn’t want to talk to anyone right now, but he figured he better inform someone he hadn’t gone on a suicide mission. Then they could all rest easy until he had settled enough to come back to Central City until he felt calm enough to tell everyone the truth, or maybe pretend there was no truth to tell until he could force the words of that future reality past his lips. Maybe Nora would do it for him. It was wrong that, as her father, he couldn’t step up and do it himself. But the news was too fresh. Every bone in his body ached for it not to be true.

“Hey, Joe,” he said with a raspy voice. He cursed himself for that.
“Hey, Bear.” He could practically hear his eyebrows furrowing over the phone. “We’re all kind of worried about you over here. Everything okay?”

“Yeah, yeah, I’m fine,” he assured, sounding anything but fine. “I just needed to go on a run is all.”

“Okay, well…according to Cisco’s tracker here…you’ve been around the world twice and are currently three states over.”

Dear God.

Maybe it had been hours.


“No, no, you’re not needed,” Joe said. “Not in that way at least,” he corrected. “Have you talked to Iris? She’s really worried. Nora too. In fact, everybody here is.”

Barry sighed. “No, I haven’t talked to Iris. I…can’t talk to her right now.”

Joe’s voice dropped. “Barry, what is going on?” he demanded, firm, no-nonsense.

“I…can’t.”

He was feeling fidgety again, anxious, with the need to run. He wanted to hang up and throw the phone into a cornfield where he’d never find it and scream at the top of his lungs about how unfair life was right now.

“Bear-”

“Tell everyone I’m okay, Joe,” he cut him off. “I’ll talk to you later.” He hung up.

On the other end, Joe looked at the circle of eager, anxious faces surrounding him.

“Well?” Cisco prompted.

“Is he okay?” Iris asked, her bottom lip trembling.

Nora wouldn’t look at him, and she walked out of the room before he could answer.

“I don’t think he is,” Joe finally said.

Caitlin’s eyes widened. “Is his life being threaten-”

“No, no, not like that.” He waved that off. “He’s in a lot of pain though.” Everyone exchanged glances. “Emotional pain,” he clarified.

Everyone still looked worried, but at least they appeared to believe him when he said Barry’s life wasn’t in danger.

He took a deep breath.

“When he comes back, I need to talk to him first.”
“But Dad—”

“He said he’ll back before dark. I need you to stay here while I wait for him at your loft,” he said, the demand still in his voice.

Normally Iris wasn’t one to take orders, not even from her father. But something about the way he looked at her and spoke to her told her that maybe this was one of those times when she should.

She nodded a little. “Okay.”

He looked in the direction Nora has gone and excused himself. He went down one hall and then the next, but there was no sign of her. It was just as well, he figured. She likely wouldn’t have told him the truth even if he asked it of her. Besides, she was technically his granddaughter. He didn’t want to burden her with sharing whatever had driven Barry away if she wasn’t ready to talk about it.

He left STAR Labs and headed to Barry and Iris’ loft.

…

The sun was just starting to set when Barry walked through the front door hours later.

He was quiet the way he did it, turning the key in the lock slowly and silently closing the door behind him once inside. He slipped off his shoes and walked into the living room, hoping Iris was maybe upstairs working on an article. Though he’d be lying if he said he didn’t crave a worried hug from her right now. He ached for her touch around him and to be able to hold her close in return.

It was selfish, but he wanted to do it without having to tell her what he’d learned today. He wanted comfort from her without having to comfort her much in return. It was instinct to comfort her, and he certainly wouldn’t be opposed if the need was there, but he was just so broken. Even after all his running, he felt barely able to hold himself up. And not because he was physically drained.

It wasn’t Iris he came across when he walked into the room, though.

It was Joe, halfway through a beer, sitting at the kitchen table.

“Joe.”

The older man looked up at him, unsurprised.

“Welcome home, Barry.”

He sighed, hearing the disappointment in the man’s voice.

“Look, Joe, I know you’re mad.”

“I’m not mad.”

“You’re disappointed.” He nodded along. He’d heard that line enough growing up.

“Just that you won’t confide in me.”

Barry lifted his eyes to meet his gaze. Joe pointedly glanced at the chair across from him, and reluctantly Barry took a seat.
“It’s…complicated, Joe,” he said on another sigh.

“Complicated enough that you won’t tell your wife.”

“It’s not that I don’t want to tell her.” Liar.

“Barry, there are only two kinds of confessions – well, I suppose three – that you’ve kept from Iris in your life.” He held up his hand to tick them off on his fingers. “One, when you were afraid of rejection. Two, when something threatened her safety. Or three, when I ordered you not to tell her. I know it definitely isn’t the last one, because even I don’t know what this is.”

“Joe, please.” Tears filled his eyes again. He couldn’t look at him.

Joe reached forward and laid his hand over his.

“Barry, talk to me.”

“It’s bad, Joe,” he said, the tears sinking into his voice as he sniffled. “It’s so bad, I…” He looked away, pulling his back to run down his face. “It’s so-”

“Tell me.”

Barry got up and started to pace.

“It’s just…everything. Everything I’ve had to deal with in my life…my mom being murdered, my dad being murdered, Thawne, Zoom, Savitar, Devoe, having to go into the speed force for six months… In the end it was always worth it because I had Iris, and I have you and the whole team, and I get to save the city on a daily basis. I get to be a CSI. I have so much love and support that all the stuff that nearly kills me only makes me stronger.”

“That’s a good thing, I thought,” Joe said.

“It is.” He nods. “It is…”

He walked across the room, not speaking, thinking, dwelling on everything he’d learned today and then very suddenly he grabbed an object off the nearby table and hurled it across the room, sending it through the window with a loud smash.

Joe watched with wide eyes, not moving, as Barry stared through the hole he created, breathing heavily. Then he grabbed another object and another and repeated the process. When Joe realized it wasn’t going to stop any time soon and someone might actually get hurt, he went to Barry and forced him to hand over the next object.

“Okay, okay, Barry, you need to- you need to sit down. Tell me what happened. Tell me what-”

Barry broke down, first in Joe’s arms and then he slipped to the floor. Joe went with him to not lose the embrace entirely. He was sobbing so hard, the tears flowing down his cheeks, soaking his neck and Joe’s shirt. He was breathing heavily, fighting to catch his breath, shaking terribly, thrashing about when he couldn’t stand being still anymore. Still, Joe held tight, grateful that Barry didn’t resort to fazing his way through the embrace. His cries turned louder to shrieks. He couldn’t get a hold of himself. He couldn’t calm down. For nearly half an hour he stayed that way, crying in absolute devastation in Joe’s arms.

When he had finally quieted enough to relax in the embrace, nuzzling close, his breathing somewhat returned to normal, Joe dared to ask the question again.
“Barry…” He rubbed his back soothingly as he talked. “What did Nora say to you?”

Barry’s eyes flickered open, and he sighed shakily.

“She didn’t tell me,” he finally said. “She…she showed me.”

His brows furrowed. “What did she show you?”

“The newspaper…from the future. The one where I disappear.”

He remembered. “What about it?”

“I don’t come back.”

“What are you-”

“I disappear to save everybody, and I don’t come back.”

That silenced Joe, shaking him up almost as badly as it had Barry. He forced himself to push the emotions down though, for Barry’s sake.

“I leave Iris alone, pregnant, and for as long as Nora’s been alive…twenty-five years…I’m gone.”

He tilted his head to look up at Joe. “You tell me how I can tell Iris that I abandon her and our child when the city needed saving, and I never come back to her.”

Joe didn’t know what to say to that. He held Barry more tightly in his arms, setting his chin on the top of his head.

“I don’t know, Bear,” he finally said. Barry sighed shakily beneath him. “But eventually you will have to.”

He nodded, resigned. “I know.”

“Especially with all those holes you created in your windows.”

Barry managed to chuckle at that. “Yeah…”

“Hopefully you didn’t injure any passersby. That definitely wouldn’t be good publicity for the Flash.”

He groaned. “Joe.”

He smiled softly, stroking his arm in his grasp.

“Your secret’s safe with me, Bear.”

Barry sighed in relief.

“But soon, you’ve got to tell her.”

“I know.”

“Maybe not tonight, but…tomorrow?”

Tomorrow felt too soon. Barry was already starting to panic.

“But the day after,” Joe allowed. “But no later, Barry. She deserves to know.”
He nodded. “All right,” he promised. “No later than that.”

...  
The glass window was fixed up in a jiffy, so by the time Iris had returned home there was no sign of any vandalism. Even the objects Barry had thrown out the window were placed back in their respective spots without much damage.

“Oh my God, Barry!”

She ran to him the moment she saw him, dropping her purse and keys instantly. As weary as he was, he took her into his arms and held her tight, tighter than he thought possible. She pushed herself into his body as close as she could manage.

“What happened?” She pulled back to look at him, holding his face in her hands. “My dad said you were a mess, and you didn’t answer any of my texts. What’s going on?”

The truth hammered away inside him, threatening to send her into the devastation he’d been trying to rid himself of all day.

“Iris, I…” He sighed. “I’m really tired. Can we just…go to bed tonight?”

He saw the fight in her eyes, the hurt that he wouldn’t confide in her and the rage that he was doing it again, just like he had for several big things in the past. But he also saw in her eyes that for the immediate future, things were okay. He was safe in front of her. No permanent damage had been done. And what he needed from her most right now was her company, her touch to comfort him, her words to soothe him, and the assurance that she wouldn’t leave him like this.

“Sure, Bear,” she finally said. “For tonight.”

He nodded, accepting the inevitability of tomorrow or the next day. He was grateful she allowed this compromise.

She went up on her tip-toes and pressed her lips to his. He inhaled her scent and returned the kiss, telling himself to stay in check. He was so tired, but he was also desperate to forget. Few things helped him forget better than making love to his wife.

“Iris.”

She pulled back slowly, her lips a little swollen from their escalated kisses.

“Maybe we should take a shower first,” she said, rubbing his shoulders. “It might help you relax.”

We.

He swallowed hard, his eyes on hers, and nodded.

“Okay.”

He let her take his hand, lead him upstairs and to the bathroom. He let her strip them both, his eyes glazed over as he watched her, and step into the steaming hot water. He moaned at the feel of her hands running all over his wet skin and the kisses she pressed to his chest. Eventually he pulled her to him, giving her the same treatment and simply getting lost in the feel of her in his arms, how real she was and how much he needed her.

“I love you so much, Iris.” He sniffled, his breath catching in his throat. “You know I’d never
leave you unless I absolutely had to. You know that, right?”

“Barry…” She tipped her head up to look into his eyes, and her heart broke by the sight of tears streaming down his cheeks.

“And you know I’d do everything I could to come back to you until I couldn’t do it anymore, and I’d still keep fighting. I’d fight till my last breath.” His breaths were coming in ragged, and he wasn’t inhaling much.

“Barry.” She lay her hand over his heart to quiet him, to remind him to breathe, in and out, in and out. But she couldn’t help asking. “What are you not telling me?” she whispered.

And then he started full on crying, and she had to widen her stance to hold his weight. He cried loud and hard, and she knew she couldn’t demand any more answers from him tonight, even if what he’d revealed just now absolutely horrified her.

“It’s okay, Barry. Shh, it’s okay. I’m here. I’m here with you.”

She stroked his hair, his neck, down his back, nuzzled into him when his arms tightened around her waist.

“I’m here,” she whispered again, soothingly, repeatedly until she could feel him relaxing against her, until she felt him believe her.

Finally, she lifted her head and lifted his, pained to see his pink-tinted eyes.

“I love you, too, Barry. Always.”

He nodded and lowered his head for her kiss. He sighed contentedly and murmured her name.

After a while they finished and went to bed, Iris never leaving his side for long. She held him in her arms until he fell asleep, tracing lines over his skin, his face and his chest and his neck and his arms.

“What did she tell you?” she whispered into the dark, but he didn’t hear her.

She let herself relax, wrapped up in her husband, their limbs tangled together, and wished she knew the truth.

_Can you handle it though, Iris?_

She could handle Barry being the Flash and Savitar planning to murder her and succeeding in another timeline. But what Barry said tonight had scared her, even though it lacked specifics.

She wondered truly if she really wanted the truth. If Barry was this broken, despite her own strength, would she fare much differently?

She closed her eyes and made herself forget what was to come. Right now, they had each other. Right now, they were okay. And if history had proven anything, in the end they would be again.
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

5.04

Inspired by Candice Patton’s mention of Iris making pancakes in a future episode and the 5.04 flashtime promo showing snippets of that happening.

Chapter Notes

I know the ep has already aired, but hopefully you'll still enjoy this. I wrote it before watching the ep, and while I love the scene they went with, I still like mine better. Haha. Enjoy!

*Many thanks to sendtherain for beta'ing.

From the very first night Iris had been hesitant but hopeful about Nora staying at the loft. She wanted a connection with her daughter more than anything. Barry had told her what she wanted to hear, and she loved her husband for that, but still longed for substantial proof from their offspring that she would at the very least meet her halfway. Since daily interactions had yet to improve, Iris decided to try a different tactic: cooking.

Now, anyone who knew her knew she wasn’t a good cook. They didn’t flat out say it, but Iris knew it wasn’t her specialty. Because her family and friends loved her they responded to her cooking by complimenting her on something else or distracting her entirely, in Barry’s case usually sex.

But she knew she had to try. The thought that there were possibly no well-cooked meals for her and her daughter in the future due to Barry’s absence made her heart ache. Surely, she had not sunk so low as to resort to cereal and toast – well, cereal - for breakfast in the future.

Despite her lack of expertise in the area, Iris had always told herself that before she got married she would learn how to be a good cook. She’d been told the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach at a young age and never forgotten it. Of course, Barry fell for her long before she even contemplated trying to win him over, so that hadn’t been an issue. Her deadline for learning the skill then moved to before they had kids. What kind of mother would she be if she couldn’t cook amazing meals for her children?

Of course, that had been before their very adult child showed up on their doorstep less than a day after the team had defeated Devoe, leaving Iris no time to prepare to become even a decent cook. Sure, there had been a couple weeks before Nora physically moved in with them, but they’d been so busy and emotionally drained, and honestly Iris had kept to herself more, not wanting to squash Barry’s happiness over bonding with their daughter. But no longer.

Third day trying, she was going to make pancakes for her daughter and they would not be black
or taste like charcoal. She was not using a malfunctioning toaster. She was using pancake mix, a world-class stove, pristine pans and spatulas. This was going to work.

…

Upstairs in his and Iris’ bedroom, Barry awoke from the smell wafting up from downstairs. At first, he was intrigued, his mouth starting to water. Then there was a sharp sizzle and damn it! from his lovely wife, and he knew exactly what was happening.

“Not again,” he muttered worriedly but quickly pulled on some sweats and a sweatshirt and cautiously went down the steps so as not to startle her.

He waited for a few moments. Nora was out already. Surprisingly, she’d gotten up earlier than even him and went on a morning run. She’d probably be back soon, though. Iris had gotten up early ever since Nora had started saying with them, depriving Barry of morning sex and cuddles. He knew the reason behind it though and was determined to be supportive, which was easier said than done when the one tactic Iris was using to bond with their daughter was cooking.

“Do you need any help?” he asked, inching forward.

Iris flipped six small burnt pancakes, agitated at how quickly things had gone downhill.

“No!” she cried, reaching for the plate to put her first failed batch on as soon as they were ready.

“Maybe if you just turn the heat dow-”

“Barry, I don’t need-”

But in her exasperation, her elbow hit the bowl of pancake mix and sent it crashing to the ground. That is, if Barry hadn’t witnessed it tipping off the counter and caught it mid-air.

Iris could barely catch her breath she was so relieved. She stared at the bowl in his hands, momentarily spellbound and completely missing how some of the mix had flown up into his hair.

“Perks of marrying a speedster, I guess,” she marveled.

“Iris. Iris, the pancake- The pancakes, Iris!”

She turned to look back at her sizzling pan and found her pancakes even more burnt on the second side than they’d been on the first. Her shoulders slumped, and she set her spatula down, defeated.

“Hey, it’s…” Barry reached around her to turn the heat down half the height it had been at. “It’s okay, Iris. The heat was just a little high, so you weren’t flipping soon enough. They were done seconds after they hit the pan.”

Her bottom lip trembled, her eyes filling with tears.

“Iris?”

He set the bowl down, far enough from the edge of the counter that he wouldn’t be afraid of it falling again and pulled her to him.

“I can’t…I can’t even…I c-c-can’t even cook pancakes for her, Barry. What kind of a mother… I… Why can’t I just…”

“Hey, hey.” He pulled her into his arms and rocked her gently. “You’re an amazing mother, Iris. You’re doing the best you can. Nora’s just been glued to me because she hasn’t known me her
whole life.” He pulled away slowly and cupped her face, wiping away the tears that traveled down it. “Okay?”

She nodded, sniffing, but he knew she didn’t really believe him.

“Why don’t you let me help you?” he suggested gently.

She stiffened.

“You’ll still be doing it,” he insisted. “I’ll just be guiding you, assisting you. I’ll be like…your assistant chef.”

She snorted. “Barry Allen, assistant chef to failed cook, Iris West-Allen.”

“Hey, hey, none of that.” He turned her back to the counter, wrapping his hands around her arms to guide her. “Grab the bowl now.”

She sighed loudly but did as he said. Despite herself she felt a peace wash over her at the feel of him around her, helping her, his lips over her ear as he directed what she do next.

“Okay, set the bowl down,” he said after she’d thoroughly mixed it again. “Now turn the heat up – a little though, not a lot. Okay, stop there. Good. Now get the bowl. And pou- Good,” he praised, and her face lit up with a smile.

“Now what?” she asked.

“Now we wait.”

Her eyes widened, and she spun half around to face him.

“Not too long, though. Otherwise they’ll get-”

“Not too long,” he said, placing a finger over her lips. “Just…trust me, Iris, okay? We got this.”

He winked, sending a chill down her spine.

Oh, no.

This was not good. This was terrible.

Sexy chef was one of Barry Allen’s best looks. Without fail, it always made her weak in the knees.

Sexy ass chef helping her cook? Lord, it was a miracle she wasn’t undressed already.

“Oh, no.

This was not good. This was terrible.

Sexy chef was one of Barry Allen’s best looks. Without fail, it always made her weak in the knees.

Sexy ass chef helping her cook? Lord, it was a miracle she wasn’t undressed already.

“Okay, now flip. Flip, Iris!”

Her eyes widened, and she turned her attention back to the pan, flipping the pancakes one by one just in time before the light brown turned darker. She gasped at the success, ignoring Barry’s chuckle from behind her.

“I did it!”

He pressed a kiss to her neck.

“Yes, you did. Though you got distracted for a second there, didn’t you?”
She turned her head to look at him and raised an eyebrow.

“Are you going to deny it?” he teased, allowing his hand lazily resting on her torso to start drifting south.

“Barry, no.”

“You’re not?” He pouted, halting his hand. “Or you are?” It moved again, successfully dipping into her panties.

“Barry, Aaallen!” She stepped out of reach, then pointing her spatula at him with ferocity as he laughed. “Do not – do not even go there. We do not have time for this. Nora is going to be back any minute, and she cannot walk in on us doing-”

“Flip.”

“Wha-”

He glanced at the pan, and she hurriedly flipped the new set of pancakes on top of the burnt ones. She then poured some more of the mix onto the pan, and it started to sizzle again.

“See,” he said, pinning her to the counter after she turned around. “You got this.”

She shook her head at him. This dork who drove her crazy. That cocky smile on his face, that glint of amusement in his eye, the tip of his tongue darting out between his lips for no more than a second, telling her loud and clear what he wanted – her; right here, right now.

“Barry-”

His lips descended onto hers, and she melted into the kiss, unabashedly moaning. He kissed her again and again, and she forgot all about pancakes. Barry Allen’s mouth was much better, felt incredible, relaxed her in ways she hadn’t been for a while. She suddenly regretted shutting down sex the past few nights in favor of getting beauty sleep to prepare for successfully cooking breakfast.

“Flip,” he whispered into her ear sultrily.

“Hmm?”

“Flip!”


“Me and my sexiness told you when to flip. You’re welcome,” he said and pressed a kiss to her cheek before pulling away.

She stayed mad at him for all of two seconds – because he was right, and she was grateful to him, and he was sexy as hell and walking away from her, and she couldn’t have that.

“W-wait!”

He stopped and looked over his shoulder at her.

“Where are you going?” she demanded.

He shrugged. “Maybe on a run. I’m not sure yet.”
“B-but-”

“Flip.”

She flipped almost without looking and found she’d created another set of pancakes successfully.

“You don’t need me, Iris,” he said, his tone switching from flirtatious to appraising. “You’re doing a great job.”

Her heart warmed and suddenly her role of wife superseded her role of desperate-to-be-perfect mother.

“C’mere, Barry.” She smiled softly, and he returned it, walking back over to her.

In the next five minutes, two more batches of pancakes had been cooked up, none with even the hint of being burnt, and Barry and Iris were making out against the counter, ravenous for the time they’d lost.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa!”

They pulled apart instantly, making themselves as presentable as they could given their already half-undressed selves.

“Nora!” Barry announced cheerfully. “Come have breakfast! Your mother made pancakes.”

“Oh, great.” She forced a smile. “Just like the last two days…”

Iris swallowed the hurt that came with that tone. Maybe Nora wasn’t trying to be hurtful. It was certainly something anyone else could have said. But it hurt more coming from her.

“Even better,” Barry said. “Look.”

Reluctantly, Nora walked over to see the plate of delicious looking pancakes. Her eyes widened, and she turned to Iris.

“You made these?” She gawked.

Iris stomped the hurt down again, and Barry tensed beside her, setting his hands on her shoulders. His eyebrows narrowed angrily.

“Nora.”

She flushed. “I-I’m sorry, I just-” She cleared her throat and grabbed a couple. “Thank you. They look great.”

Iris held Barry’s hand and looked up at him, mouthing a ‘thank you’. He nodded and brushed it aside. No words were needed.

“Oh, schway, these are really good!” Nora declared, greedily eating up the pancakes she’d snatched.

Her parents turned to her, both critical of her reception.

“I mean it,” she said, swallowing her bite. “Thanks, Mom.”

Iris’ heart melted.
Barry pressed a kiss to his wife’s head and grabbed the plate of pancakes, in addition to other condiments and approached the table where his daughter was sitting.

“Want some butter and syrup with that or are you just going to inhale it speedster style?”

Nora paused, then laughed and smiled. Iris felt a twinge of jealousy, but she brushed it aside. Progress had been made.

“Speedster or not, it tastes better with both,” Iris said, confidently strutting over with a few more plates for the three of them. “Just…don’t eat the bottom ones. They’re from my trial phase.”

Nora glanced up at her, and for the briefest moment they smiled at each other. Barry caught it and smiled at Iris when she looked at him. He held his hand out to her, and she came to him, pressing a peck to his swollen lips.

“We’re finishing what was interrupted later,” he murmured into her ear.

She smiled brightly, giddy. “If you’re good,” she responded, and went to sit on the other side of the table.
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

5.05

Inspired by all spoilers for 5.05 indicating Barry & Iris go to a formal event. (i.e. bts pics, episode synopsis, flashtime promo)

Chapter Notes

Wrote this & had it beta’d quick as I could before the episode aired. I suspect most of you won’t read this until *after* you see the episode, but it satisfies me to know I got it up beforehand.

*Many thanks to sendtherain for beta’ing.

He’d lured her with the promise of him in a tux and followed it up by complimenting her on her choice in wardrobe, which absolutely took his breath away. But half an hour into the party, when Iris West-Allen thought no one was watching, the sadness that seemed to settle permanently on her beautiful face returned without warning.

His heart breaking, Barry approached his wife and snaked his arm around her waist.

“You okay?” he asked, watching her face for a glint of hope, something he could pull on to make her feel better.

“Hmm? Oh, yeah, the party’s…great.”

“Iris…”

“What?” She met his eyes. “Barry, no, really, it is.”

Obviously, he didn’t believe her, but he let it slide temporarily.

“Well, you know we aren’t just here to have a good time. There’s the meta to catch too. Supposedly he’ll be here.”

She pursed her lips. “Right.” She looked around the room. “So, how are we going to do that? I haven’t seen anything suspicious…”

“Maybe it’s in plain sight, and we just can’t see it. Or maybe we’re being a little too obvious by not…engaging.”

She blinked, then the strength she’d attempted to build up disappeared from her face. She sighed.

“Barry, I’m try-”
“Dance with me.”

It took her a minute – and him taking a step back to hold his hand out to her.

“Dance with me, Iris West-Allen.”

She took his hand reluctantly. “I don’t know how that’s going to help up find our meta, but okay-” She gasped as he pulled her onto the dance floor and into his arms. “Barry.” Her eyes glittered when she looked up into his eyes. She melted when she saw the love there.

“It’s been a while since we danced.”

“Too long,” she said breathily, allowing him to sway her to the classical music.

“We should do it more,” he said, then leaned down to whisper into her ear. “I’m really good at it.”

She rolled her eyes and smiled, biting her bottom lip.

“If you’re looking for me to boost your ego, I’m afraid you’ve picked the wrong night.”

He shook his head, smiling as he led her into a daring spin. She struggled to catch her breath.

“My ego is already boosted. You made it happen without even realizing it.”

She raised her eyebrows, amused. “Oh, yeah? How’s that?”

“Well, for starters, by looking like that.”

She smirked. Smooth.

“Yeah? What else?”

“Hmm. By having you on my arm when I walked in the room. I have to be the envy of every man here – and woman for that matter.”

“Such a charmer.” She shook her head.

“It’s just the truth,” he said. “You’re the most beautiful woman in the world, Iris.”

She met his eyes, her heart soaring again.

“I love you so much.”

She swallowed, the intensity in his eyes making her weak in the knees.

“I love you, too.”

He smiled and continued to dance with her, pulling her close so that she rested her head on his chest as he spun them into oblivion. It felt so good to have her so close, to take her away from the drama that was their daughter and even briefly the meta they were trying to track. In fact, he was so caught up in the moment, he almost missed when his wife’s hands moved from the middle of his back to dangerously close to his belt line.

His eyes widened, and he blushed.

“Iris?”
“Have you ever hooked up with someone at a fancy event and then come back to mingle like nothing happened?”

He felt hot and cold all over. A lump formed in his throat just as his pants tightened and his nether regions throbbed.

“No,” he managed, his voice raspy.

“Me either,” she said dreamily, letting her hand brush over his ass cheek before casually returning to his back so no one would notice. She felt the shudder that went through him, though. It would have been impossible not to.

“Iris.” He swallowed hard.

She came to a stop, and he did too. Then she pulled back and looked at him, heat in her eyes. No words were exchanged, but Barry understood the message loud and clear. He took her hand and led her off the dance floor, telling himself every step of the way that using his powers to speed them off somewhere was probably a very bad idea.

As soon as they were out of sight, Barry did whisk them upstairs to a dark room – a locked room, in fact. It was at the end of a hall, and hopefully out of the way of any hidden cameras if this place was stocked with them.

“That will never not be weird,” Iris said, needing a moment to adjust to literally being phased through a door.

“Sorry,” he said, though a lazily smile was etched onto his face.

She turned to look at him, fully recovered, and pushed the jacket off his shoulders.

“You really do look great in a tux,” she commented, starting to pull on his bowtie. “It’s a shame it has to come off.”

“I could say the same for your dress,” he said, wiggling his eyebrows.

Not a minute later, he’d spun her so her back was flush up against him. The gasp that escaped her only served to turn him on further. Slowly, he slid his hands into the open slit of her dress and cupped her breasts, squeezing them gently before pushing the dress off of her as well.

“Barry,” she moaned, leaning back into him as his hands returned to caress her soft skin, kneading every curve as he bent his head to kiss her neck.

“Be quiet now,” he said, whispering into her ear. “Someone might hear.”

She paid no heed to that, wrapping her hand around his neck and then turning back around to pull his lips down to hers. Clothes went fast after that, and soon Iris was walking backward across the room, taking her husband with her until they hit a desk. They both emitted a muffled groan, as well as another gasp from Iris when Barry set her bare ass on the cold wood.

“Don’t worry,” he said huskily, running his hands up and down her thighs. “I’ll warm you up.”

She didn’t doubt that. And Barry kept his word when mere minutes later he’d wrapped her legs around his waist and leaned over enough to sink his length into her, evoking a shudder from both of them.

“Barry-”
His hands wrapped around the other side of the desk as he thrust into her again and again, Iris holding on for dear life as she bit her lip hard in an effort to keep from moaning too loudly. She moved up against him though, trying to match his movements so she could give him the pleasure he was giving her. Then, he did moan, and it was loud. She swallowed most of the noise in a devastatingly passionate kiss, forcing his tongue to move along hers, to focus on something other than her core swallowing his erection.

“Faster,” she whispered when she finally parted from him.

He groaned. “Iris.”

“Not just like that,” she said, and he pulled back enough to look at her. “Faster than time.”

He took in her hooded eyes and knew what she meant. Time slowed and lightning swirled around them as he granted her wish. Aware now of the shift, Iris turned her head to see the second hand on the old wall clock had come to a sudden halt. She looked back at her husband, saw the lightning in his eyes, and knew an impossible sense of ecstasy just by seeing the control in him. She stroked the side of his face, pulling him down for another kiss, then whispered into his mouth.

“You can let go a little,” she encouraged. “Not a lot, but a li- Oh, my God.”

She held on tighter as his thrusts increased their pace, as her insides screamed with pleasure bordering on pain. She knew she should tell him to stop, to slow it down, but she couldn’t bring herself to. She was holding onto so much emotional pain, to focus solely on that blurred line of physical pain and pleasure was the best distraction. And when Barry came, so turned on and lost in his speed and how good she felt, Iris wasn’t far behind.

Breathing heavily, they slowly came out of flashtime. They lay there for a while, just trying to recover from the physical exertion.

“Did I hurt you?” he asked. Iris couldn’t tell if there was regret in his voice, but she knew there would be if she didn’t answer fast – and honestly.

“No,” she said.

“No?” he asked, pulling back enough to cradle her face in his hand.

“No.” She shook her head, then smiled a little. “It was intense for sure, but…the good kind.”

She lifted her head to kiss him. After a while, Barry brought them to their feet, and they got dressed.

“Think anyone will notice we were gone?” Iris asked, slipping on her high-heeled shoe.

“I don’t think so,” he said. “It’s not like we’re guests of honor or anything.” He went to her, offered her his arm, and she took it, smiling warmly up at him.

“Does my hair look okay?” she asked.

“You look beautiful, Iris,” he said, and they walked out into the hall.

Despite that, Iris spotted herself in a mirror halfway down the hall and scolded Barry for letting her almost walk back into the main ballroom with sex hair.

He shrugged. “I said you looked beautiful! I wasn’t lying!”
But he was smiling as she disappeared into the bathroom to adjust her appearance. Then he noticed, regrettably, that his jacket was inside out.
Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

5.09/Elseworlds Crossover

Inspired by spoilers for the Elseworlds Crossover regarding the Barry/Oliver switch. This chap is of Barry and Iris reuniting after reality is set right again.

Chapter Notes

I wrote this before I'd seen any of the crossover. On a re-read I think some of the dialogue may be a little cringey, but maybe it's just me being my own worst enemy. Lol. Enjoy! (Warning: Rated M for steamy content.) Written for Day 7 of my 25 Days of Westallen Fanfiction event.

*Many thanks to sendtherain for beta’ing.

He felt the lightning crackling through his veins again, lighting up his bloodstream, urging him to run. The feeling was a high that he hadn’t been able to achieve as the Green Arrow, no matter how fun that had been. And he wasn’t even running yet. Still, he held his hand up and vibrated it just to be sure. The mental command was a success, and he looked over at Oliver, who nodded, the subtest of smiles on his lips.

“Go. Run home to her.”

Barry nodded, his eyes flickering with red lightning before he sped away, his heart pounding his chest.

He thought back to Iris’ expression when his and Oliver’s identities were reversed. He never wanted to see her look at him that way again. Memories of their life together before the reality switch flooded his mind. He focused on that. He was fairly sure everything would be back to normal. She would remember him now. They all would. Maybe they wouldn’t even remember what had happened. And if reality was still reversed, he would fight for her to remember. To not just believe but to recognize him and their love for each other.

Given the date and time, he went to STAR Labs first. He found Cisco there working on a project.

“Hey, Barry,” he said nonchalantly. “I thought you were taking the day off.”

He didn’t remember. Or maybe he did. Barry wasn’t in the business of asking questions right now, except for one.

“Where’s Iris?”

His brows furrowed, confused.
“Um, she’s at your loft, I would gue-”

Barry sped away before Cisco could finish. Everything else could be talked about later. There was only thing he needed right now, and that was her.

He flung the door opened and closed when he arrived, grateful it was unlocked so he wouldn’t have to phase through it or break the door handle off first. He might not be strong like Oliver anymore, but super speed was its own strength. And if he was trying to get to Iris, everything else was collateral damage.

“Iris?” he called out immediately after stepping inside.

The slam of the door had Iris walking into view, her brows furrowed much like Cisco’s had been.

“Bear? What’s going on? Why did you-”

He rushed to her. “Iris,” he murmured, cupping her face in his hands and lowering his head to kiss her.

The instant tightening below his belt told him just how much he had missed her. God, he’d missed her. He hadn’t been gone from her presence that long, but it still felt like an eternity. And he knew she could sense that because he couldn’t stop kissing her and kept pulling her closer instead. His breathing was shallow and short, but he was desperate for her. He couldn’t get enough.

“Whoa-whoa, Barry, what’s going o-” she tried, but he kissed her again, silencing her, pushing her farther back into their loft. Then, without warning, he lifted her off her feet and high against him, wrapping her legs around his waist.

Iris was breathless. “Barry. What has gotten-” She gasped when he pushed everything off the table and settled her on the edge. “Into you,” she finished, staring at him, shattered by the intensity in eyes. The hunger and lust were stronger than she’d ever seen before. She could already feel how he was going to ravage her, and her toes curled in anticipation.

“Aren’t you going to tell me-” She swallowed hard when he peeled his shirt off and then lifted hers over her head. He unclasped her bra and tossed it to the wayside, instantly cupping one breast and latching his mouth onto the other.

“Oh, my God.”

She held his head to her, willing him to take his time. She started to lean back as he slipped his hands underneath her skirt to drag her panties down her legs. She decided to abandon searching for the cause. Morning sex was morning sex, and this morning was even more exciting than usual.

Barry shed his pants and boxers. He discarded Iris’ skirt, the last remaining piece, then lifted her body so that it was in the center of the table and climbed on top, hovering over her. He braced his hands on either side of her head, looking at her so intently that he thought he might burst. Here she was, this beautiful, glorious, goddess who loved him so much. She loved him. She recognized him. He was the love of her life, and she was the love of his, and with what time he had left, she was never going to forget that.

It felt like an eternity, but mere seconds later he lowered his mouth to hers in a rush. His tongue twisted with hers, the wet heat driving him mad. Iris’ dug her heels into his ass to pull him closer as she arched up against him. Her nails scraped his scalp and his back, and she moaned into their heated kisses.

Reluctantly, he dragged his lips from her mouth to her chin down her neck, pausing at the sweet
spot that nearly had her screaming when combined with his hands giving her breasts ample attention before slipping between her thighs and soaking in her core.

“Oh, my God, Barry.”

She could barely catch her breath, certainly not be before the first orgasm washed over her, making her top half jerk off the table while her legs tightened around him. She sank back down gradually, running her hand through her hair, trying to blink away the stars shimmering behind closed eyelids. She could still see them when she opened her eyes.

“That…was-”

“No,” he growled, which got her attention. He still sounded so desperate. He was nowhere near sated. “Not yet. I haven’t-”

“Oh, Bear, I wasn’t- Of course you-”

“No, Iris, you don’t understand. You-” He stopped and looked at her, meeting her concerned face. Then he thrust up into her, the first wave of satisfaction hitting him when he saw her eyes widen and her breath stolen again. “You forgot me.”

“What?” she rasped. She couldn’t think clearly, but she couldn’t remember ever forgetting him. How could she? How could she forget this?

“You don’t remember, but I do. You didn’t recognize me, but I recognized you. I loved you. I still love you.” With every statement he thrust back into her. It shook her entire world.

“I love you, too, Barry.” She made sure to keep her eyes fastened on his, so he would believe her. Whether he’d time-traveled again or some other bizarre thing had happened, it was over now. He had come home to her as he always said he would.

She clung to him, pulling him in for another kiss, one almost as desperate and needy as his had been. She moved against him, meeting each thrust with a rougher impact, driving him as crazy as she was driving him. He was shuddering against her even before he climaxed. She could feel the goosebumps rippling down his back and the beads of sweat dripping onto her neck from his face when he focused solely on pumping into her.

“Iris. Oh, God, Iris. I- I-“

And then, one hand still buried in his hair, she drew her nails up his back, waist to shoulder, and he exploded inside of her. Long and hard and heavy, Barry allowed himself to lower her onto the table. Iris held him so he wouldn’t extract himself too quickly.

“Iris,” he whispered, lying tangled with her on top of their kitchen table. “I missed you so much.”

How long had he been gone? She wondered. Had it been years? He still looked young, but she imagined the speed force had something to do with that.

He’d said something about an alternate reality though, and it sounded like it was one he had no control over. Something that had been done to him. Maybe it hadn’t been long at all. Maybe it just felt long. Like when she held her breath wondering if he was dead or not when he ran into a tornado made of lightning or was held in a death grip by a villain stronger than himself.

So, instead, even though it’d been no more than a half an hour since she thought she’d last seen him, she held him close, lazily stroking his skin, and whispered back.
“I missed you, too.”

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