

One Hit West

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/22105372) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/22105372>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	F/M
Fandom:	The Flash (TV 2014)
Relationship:	Barry Allen/Iris West
Characters:	Barry Allen , Iris West , Joe West , Wally West , Eddie Thawne , Bart Allen , Nora Allen , Henry Allen , Caitlin Snow , Cisco Ramon , Anissa Pierce , Jennifer Pierce , Francine West
Additional Tags:	Endgame Barry Allen/Iris West , hitwoman
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2020-01-03 Updated: 2021-01-20 Words: 16,107 Chapters: 5/?

One Hit West

by [ShippersAnonymous](#)

Summary

Danger at every turn, a darkness threatening to consume her, a secret she's trying to keep, a life she's trying to protect.

Iris West is the best at what she does. She knows her way around the shadows and is unstoppable with a gun. But when her old flame, Barry Allen, suddenly makes his way into her family's hit list she's forced to go against her nature to save the man she once loved. The man she still loves.

When you kill for a living, death is bound to follow where you go but how do you fight against the one thing you've been trained to do?

How do you keep yourself from being tempted by the past?

How do you protect the ones you love when the greatest danger in their lives is you?

[ON HOLD UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE]

Notes

Ta da!

A little danger, a little sexy, a little dramatic irony, a little secret. This fic is the result of me binge watching the entire Underworld and Resident Evil collections in the space of a few days. 😊❤️ What can I say? I love seeing powerful women kick butt! I should have posted this on Thursday but life happened so I'm really sorry about that! 🙏

Hope yall like this one! 😊❤️

Cliffhanger warnings apply ❤️

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

[Iris]

Bang!

The loud and familiar sound of the gun going off echoes through the abandoned warehouse and the, now, dead man's blood splatters onto her black leather coat. She stares down at him unmoved, her face set in an expression of cold indifference. A heavy silence ensues as she simply looks into her victims cold blue eyes, a piece of her own dwindling humanity slipping out of her with every passing second. The lifeless orbs stare back at her, frozen with that special brand of fear that she's seen on many a hit. The fear that consumes each soul at the very last second, just before she pulls her trigger. The realisation that those are the last breaths they'll ever take.

That hers are the last eyes they'll ever see.

Satisfied that her job has been done, Iris lifts her booted foot from the corpse's neck. The lifeless head bobs to the side and blood trickles from the bullet wound in the center like a spot of dark red paint on a fleshy canvas. She replaces her gun in its holster as she walks away from the cooling body.

"Seriously?" Eddie asks as she steps outside the abandoned building into the brisk night air. She turns her head towards him and disdainfully regards his cool stance. With his back and a foot propped against the wall and his arms casually crossed over his chest he oozes a carelessness that has become a Hitfamily trademark. She doesn't validate his remark with the expected 'what?', but instead stares him down and waits for the elaboration that, she has no doubt, will follow.

"You could have put a silencer on that thing." He explains and she simply rolls her eyes and huffs out exasperated. With a turn of her heel she begins her walk back up to her car, her unwanted partner following closely behind her.

"So that's it? You're just gonna ignore me? You know just cause you're the bosses daughter Iri-"

The click of the gun engaging shuts him up and before he can blink he's staring down the barrel of her still warm weapon.

“Listen Thawne, this was a one woman hit that I could have done in my sleep and the only reason why you’re here is cause between dealing with you and dealing with my dad you’re easier to kill. That being said...”

She steps closer to him and pulls him to her by his collar. Her gun rests beneath his raised chin and she can practically smell the fright rolling off him in tiny beads of sweat.

“... If you ever try to tell me how to do my job again, I’ll make it a point to show you just how well I know what I’m doing and the last thing you’ll see on this earth is how good I am at pulling the trigger. Incase you haven’t heard, I never miss. You get the picture?” His Adam’s apple bobs as he swallows the fearful lump forming in his throat and he nods, too afraid of saying the wrong thing and ending up like the corpse that lies bleeding in the warehouse a few feet away.

“Good. And when we’re out on a hit, it’s West. Now get out of my sight before I have to call two bodies in. I don’t need the extra paper work.” She spits shoving him away as she let’s go.

“Yes, Ma’am.” He shakes out before, scrambling to his feet and making a hasty retreat. She disengages her gun and replaces it in her holster as she tries to push down her annoyance. You’d think that with a success rate as high as hers her father would stop trying to send her out with baby sitters. Alas she’s done this tango long enough to know that there’s no use fighting with Father West. All she can hope for is a co-hitman that doesn’t actually have a thirst for blood and let’s her do her own thing. A wind blows through her tensed body, swaying her coat and ponytail synchronically in the air. A dog barks in the distance, the only sign of life in the dark and deserted place. Iris takes a moment to breathe as she feels the adrenaline begin to leave her body.

It’s time to go.

She walks the rest of the steep way up to her black car, stopping briefly to relieve herself of her stained coat and dispensing it in the trunk before stepping into the drivers seat. With a push of the start button, the machine roars to life. Iris buckles up and takes off, speeding away in the direction of the city. One hand holds the steering wheel and the other’s fingers dance over the keypad from the monitor in the dashboard with a ritualistic ease. She calls the main office and waits for the prerecorded prompt. Instead of a robotic voice, a chime cries through the speakers, announcing that she has an incoming call. She glances at the screen for a moment, the number is unlisted. Suspiciously she reaches up to her Bluetooth ear piece and answers.

“Hello?”

“Iris it’s me,” her brothers voice responds on the other end and an annoyance creases her brow.

“Wallace what the hell?” she demands, her eyes never leaving the road, her voice never faltering despite the nervous hammering of her heart.

“Listen you can scold me later but there’s no time for that now. You need to get to the Golden Gate Casino pronto,” the urgency in his voice is unmistakable and Iris feels herself begin to worry.

“Why?”

“Dad got a request for a hit an hour ago and you need to stop him,” he whispers.

“Wait dad’s actually going on a hit himself. Boy must be some important client,” she observes, still confused as to why her brother would send her on a literal suicide mission.

“It’s not the client that’s important, it’s the target. He has a, uh, personal score to even out.”

“Now I know you’re joking. That’s against our oath, and dad would never do that. No matter how much a person pisse-”

“It’s Barry.” Wally blurts out and the shock is enough to make her skied to a stop.

“What?” she asks feeling her lungs begin to collapse.

“The target is Barry Allen.” He clarifies.

Her skin irrupts in goosebumps at the mention of his name. It’s been so long since she last heard it said out loud, six years to be exact. A thin layer of tears gloss over her wide eyes and the sound of angered hoots is drowned out by the roar of her heart beat as memories flood her mind.

“Why Iris? Just, just tell me why? Did I do something wrong?” he begged, his voice tremulous from the effort of holding in his sobs.

“No Barry, you were perfect in every way it’s just-”

“Then why are you doing this? Don’t...” he paused, trying to find the stomach to ask what he was about to ask.

“Don’t you love me anymore?” the question came out as a whisper but Barry couldn’t bare to wait for the answer. Instead, he pulled her into his arms and she allowed herself a moment of weakness, savoring the warmth of his arms one last time.

“Don’t do this to us. Don’t- don’t do this to me.” He whispered. She pulled away enough to look up into his saddened gaze, trying her best to hold back her own tears.

She couldn’t cry. She didn’t deserve to cry. Not with all the heartache she was no doubt causing him.

“I can’t lose you,” he begged tightening his hold on her as if he could just trap her there and keep her in his embrace forever.

“It’s for the best Barry. You, have to let me go.” She said softly though it mostly seemed like she was trying to convince herself of that.

“Iris,” he whispered her name like a cry of agony, the longing hanging from each syllable. Hurt punctuating every letter. Without thinking she kissed him, long and hard, expressing in that moment her own pain. Her own love. Her goodbye.

They broke apart and she connected her forehead to his. She kept her eyes closed but she could feel his tears dripping onto her hand like rain on a pavement.

“I love you Barry. And... a part of me knows that I always will. But I can’t be with you any longer. This- this is goodbye.” She whispered and before she gave in to her wailing heart she pushed out of his embrace and ran. She ran and never looked back. Not when he screamed out her name like he was being torn apart limb for limb the further away she got from him. Not when his footsteps no longer echoed behind her. Not when she got home and finally let herself cry. Not ever. She would never stop running.

She couldn’t ever stop.

“Iris!” her brother cuts through her thoughts and she comes to, her cheeks wet with tears she thought she’d never shed again. She dabs away at them quickly and closes her eyes, shifting her mindset back to the present.

“How close is he?” her voice was firm like a concrete wall.

“I’m not sure I had to sneak out of the office to give you the heads up but judging by the time dad left he should be there in the next 45 minutes.” He informs. Mechanically, Iris starts up the car, both her hands gripping the wheel with such force that her knuckles pale.

“I’m closer, I can make it in twenty. Get rid of your burner and be careful when you sneak back in.” She warns her foot flattening against the gas as she passes her third red light.

“I’ll be fine don’t worry. Keep me posted.” He responds.

“Wally wait!” She calls out before he hangs up.

“What is it?” he asks.

“Could you call Nissa for me? Let her know what happened and check that everything’s OK? If you can’t reach her try Jen. She usually sleeps over on weekends,” Iris asks.

“Sure thing sis. Consider it done.” He says sternly and Iris breathes a momentary sigh of relief.

“Thanks Wally,” She says softly, shedding her murderous demeanour for just a second.

“Anytime. Oh and sis?”

“Yeah?”

“Be careful.”

“Always.”

Iris comes to a violent stop in one of the parking slots towards the outskirts of the parking lot where no one ever parks. A brief glance at her watch tells her she has 25 minutes to get in, find him and get him out. With no time to lose she grabs her duffle bag from the trunk and squeezes into her back seat for a quick change of outfits. This will go a lot smoother if she

can draw as little attention to herself as possible. Thanking her organised nature for keeping a classy yet flexible short jumpsuit in her car she slips on her heels, touches up her make up and walks towards the entrance with 15 minutes to spare. Her high ponytail sways with her hips as she clicks her way up the stairs, her senses on high alert.

To get to the gaming lounge she needs to pass through the metal detectors but the Golden Gate has been the setting for many a rendezvous with targets and clients so she barely breaks a sweat as she reaches the front of the line. Calmly, she removes the red emerald ring that rests on her ring finger, a symbol of who she is, and places it on a tray along with her clutch and her earrings. Upon seeing the ring the security guard nods his head in understanding and discreetly brushes his pass over the scanner embedded into the metal detector. It flashes green and she walks in with out a single beep. She nods back in appreciation and retrieves her belongings before stepping into a broad, red-carpeted hallway.

Her pistol safely hidden in her clutch.

A clock on the wall tells her she lost five minutes in the line so she picks up her pace. As she nears the top of the stairs that will lead her down to the gambling area she forces all thoughts away from her mind and tries to prepare herself to see him again. The only man she's ever loved. The worst heartbreak she's ever caused.

At the top of the stairway she scans the room, looking for any remote sign of familiarity and there, in the corner, seated at one of the roulette tables, she finds him. For a second her heart stops and she forgets how to breathe. His back is to her but just the sight of his glistening brown-black hair, strands that once upon a lifetime she used to contently comb her fingers through, was enough to spike her nerve levels. Memories try to push their way back into her mind but she forces them down, fully aware that time is not on their side.

My side.

She scolds herself.

There is no "us".

Taking a deep breath to compose herself she hurries down the stairs, without drawing any attention to herself, and worms her way to him. Just before she reaches him she takes a second to straighten out her outfit and plasters on her most seductive expression.

"Mind if I join you Mr. Allen?" She whispers into his ear and the chip that he had been nervously fiddling with slips from his finger, clattering on to the table.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

So I was supposed to post Au on Wednesday but after that spectacular episode my One Hit West creative juices were flowing so here we go dears.

Hope you all enjoy it!
XOXO

Cliffhanger warnings apply ♥

[Barry]

“Mind if I join you Mr. Allen?”

Her breath caresses his ear and Barry freezes mid twiddle. The chip he had been playing with slips from his grasp and clatters onto the table just as the ball bounces into its final destination on the wheel. The crowd around cheers, celebrating yet another of his victories but Barry is much too shocked to react.

“What luck,” She mewls, settling down on the chair beside him. The ghostly voice of affairs past sends shivers down his spine and he suddenly loses track of where he is. As he looks over at the lean legs crossed beside him he swallows down the knot forming in his throat, a distant memory fluttering to the surface.

Those same legs wrapped around his naked body as he looked up into brown cesspool eyes that burned with a lust filled glow. His surroundings grow hot as his body comes to life with the memory of the silk smoothness of her skin. The gentle teasing of her touch. The searing hunger of her kiss.

Barry tries, to no avail, to find the courage to look up at her face as a subtle pang begins to prick at his heart. It burns from a distance hurting more and more the closer it gets. Just before it breaks through and consumes him completely, she rests her dainty hand over his heart and the burn seems to die out, replaced with a fire of a different kind. Somehow it doesn't come as a surprise that after all this time his body still has this strong a reaction to her. He's been faithful to her despite the fact that they are no longer an item. He can't bring himself to find love in another woman's arms. To lose himself in eyes that aren't hers. To explore the secrets of a body that doesn't belong to her. Heartache or not, he loves her and the distance has only made his heart (and other body parts) grow fonder.

“Wanna get out of here?” she whispers into his ear and his heart nearly leaps out of his chest. The sound of her voice drips like water on his deserted body, reviving a part of him that died

in his youth. He thought he'd never hear her voice again and now he doesn't want it to go away. It's all he can do to close his eyes and nod. His nose recognises the scent of her perfume, further reactivating a part of him that has been dormant for almost six years. A kiss lands on his cheek, the feel of her soft lips on his skin resembling the feeling of returning home.

"Iris," her name rolls off his tongue for the first time in six years. It feels like singing to an old song he used to love.

"Come with me – Barry," She whispers and a chill runs through him at the sound of his name on her voice. He nods, unable to speak but just before he stands he feels a sharp pain on his cheek. His hand flies to his face instinctively and his fingers come back bloody.

"Shit," Iris curses under her breath before slipping off her heels and grabbing onto his hand.

"We need to go! Now!"

Before Barry can register what's happening her arm is interlocked with his and she's pulling him up from his seat.

"Wha-wha. What's going on?" he stutters as she holds him tightly and leans in to him.

"Get ready to run," She whispers but before he can ask her why she unearths a pistol from her clutch bag and fires one warning shot into the air. A stampede ensues and she yells:

"Run!"

Her hand finds his in the scuffle and they take off, heading for the exits.

"West!" A familiar voice behind them yells but Iris barely flinches as she leads them through the hysteric crowd. They make it into the parking lot and she looks around frantic then announces:

"I think we lost them." She zips her head towards him and demands:

"Where's your car?"

"Iris, what's going on?" he asks between breaths. His emotions are running from nervous to happy to scared shitless, all within the same space of time.

"Barry we have no time for this right now. Where is your car?!" She insists with urgency and he takes out his keys and presses one of the three buttons on the remote. The sound of a car alarm being deactivated rings out through the space and seconds later a red Audi in mint condition breaks in front of them. She eye's the vehicle in shock and a prideful grin spreads over Barry's lips as he opens the passenger's side door for her and says:

"After you."

The shock melts from her features and the rigid determination takes over so naturally that he finds it almost disconcerting. Quick as a humming bird, she snatches the keys from him and

walks around to the other side declaring:

“I’m driving.”

This time it’s Barry’s eyes that widen, though less in shock and more in fear.

“I – I’m not sure that’s s-such a good idea.” He advises but she gets in anyway and starts adjusting the seat.

“Iris, I really think you should let me...”

“Iris!” the same voice from before cuts his statement short and this time he recognises it all too well.

“Joe?” he asks dumbfounded, turning around to make sure his ears aren’t deceiving him. Low and behold Joe West is running towards them with a gun aimed straight at Barry’s head.

“Get in!” Iris yells as she starts the car and Barry obeys without hesitation. As soon as he slams his door shut she puts the car into drive and steps on the gas. She manoeuvres her way around the parking lot with the ease of a professional racer and Barry has to close his eyes to concentrate on not letting his heart jump out of his mouth. As soon as they reach the road she increases her velocity, meandering through the late night city traffic without breaking a sweat, the only sign of her effort being the crease of concentration on her brow.

Iris drives on like a speed demon till they turn off into the highway where she slows it down an insignificant notch.

“You can open your eyes now,” She says but Barry shakes his head in refusal.

“I’m not ready to look death in the eyes just yet.” He breathes out tremulously and she chuckles, almost disdainfully. Despite the stand-offish nature of the sound, it seems soft on his ears and excites him enough that he opens his eyes and stares at her, his fear completely forgotten.

“Hate to break it to yah Allen, but you just did.” She points out with an unconvincing smile.

“Um, yeah come to think of it... Why was your dad trying to kill me?” he asks, confusion making his voice climb a few octaves.

“I don’t know.” She responds curtly, the tension noticeable in her posture.

“But you knew that he was coming to kill me?” he asks the obvious.

“Yes.” Is her cold reply.

“Then how do you not know why?” he presses.

“I just don’t.” She responds, her tone still even.

“So...” he swallows, afraid of what he has to ask next.

“Why did you save me?”

Silence.

“I mean not that I’m not grateful or anything. But what if he had a motive? What if I were like a really bad guy and put a lot of people in danger?” he hurries to fill the sound gap, tripping over his words that sound unconvincing even to his own ears. Still, she doesn’t answer.

Iris keeps her eyes trained on the road ahead, her lips pressed into a thin line almost as if she’s containing herself. Trying to keep a restless secret in. Barry’s heart sinks. Hopeless as it may be, he still held on to a sliver of hope that a reunion was underway. That she would pull up someplace in the middle of no where and tell him that she made a mistake six years ago.

That she still loves him.

It might seem pathetic but he’d hold her then. He’d take her into his arms and kiss her so deeply he’d take away every thought and memory of time having passed. It would be like she never left, like she’d always been right there. Because truth be told she never did.

She haunted his head and weighed down his heart every second of every day since she said goodbye. Every moment he had to himself was spent turning over the leaves of their relationship, searching (in vain) for some clue to explain her sudden and rash action. It still doesn’t make sense, and now here she is, an arm’s stretch away from him. Every answer he’s been searching for all this time imprisoned behind her sealed red lips.

He wants to push but he fears that might make her even more guarded than she already is so he simply sighs and leans back into his seat.

“Can you at least tell me where you’re taking me?” he asks dully.

“Freeland.” She answers, short but not so sweet.

“Wait what? That’s, that’s like a three hour drive away. Why so far? Why not Star City? Or, or Keystone?” he asks worried.

“None of those cities include a place I can keep you safe in and I can’t have you bunking with people you know,” She answers, her tone matter-of-fact.

“Why the hell not?” he asks confused.

“Because at the moment your life is in danger and the people in your life are probably the reason why.” She answers her tone still steady.

“The people in my life? Are we forgetting the part where your father is the one that wanted to splatter my brain matter on the casino parking lot floor?” he asks incredulous, growing frustrated with all the confusion. Without waiting for a response he adds:

“And, I know you. I mean, how do I know you’re not taking me straight to him? That you’re not driving me to my death right this second?”

He bites into the inside of his lip, drawing blood, as she suddenly comes to a halt in the middle of the road. To their luck, the highway is practically deserted. She turns on the hazard lights and shifts in her seat to face him, her glare murderous.

“Allen? Are you or are you not a genius?” She asks and he diverts his gaze as his cheeks heat up at the compliment hidden in her question.

“Well I wouldn’t say I’m a genius exactly...” he bashfully stumbles over his words and she cuts him off with a:

“Just answer the question!”

“Yes,” he answers wide eyed.

“So does your genius brain think that there is a rational explanation as to why I would waltz into a casino and cause a full on public panic to get you out of my dad’s range of fire just to drive you two towns away to him?” She asks, her attitude biting away at his ego.

“Well when you put it like that...” he hangs his head.

“Allen!”

“No, there is no rational explanation.”

“Now that, that’s out of the way let me tell you something about myself. I’m not an irrational person. I don’t have time to make irrational decisions. So please don’t ever question my actions again.” She instructs and he keeps his head down as a silent,

“I’m sorry,” escapes his lips.

Iris readjusts her seating position and puts the car back into drive, leaving Barry feeling like a little kid in the principals office. The barely there purr of the car’s engine is the only sound between them as they take on the open road. In an attempt to make small talk he asks:

“Why are you calling me Allen all of a sudden? I preferred it when you called me by my name.”

“That was just a strategy to get you out of there. I knew that, considering our history, if I approached you under the guise of friendship it would be easier to lure you to safety. But you’re aware of the danger you face now so there’s no need for me to be gentle or manipulative. Barry’s too personal and Bartholomew’s too long. So Allen it is.” She responds, once again shutting down his attempt at starting a conversation with her precise answers. All the while her face remains stern, not even a twitch to betray her inner most thoughts.

“Too personal?” he asks in disbelief and an incredulous scoff rattles his chest, only barely hiding the sting her alienating words have caused.

“Wow. Six years apart and suddenly we’re strangers, huh?” he asks.

“Six years is a long time. People change.” She responds, and he blinks unable to formulate words as the sting turns into a full blown stab in his heart. Suddenly, his greatest fear is confirmed.

She doesn't love me anymore.

The thought hits him like a slap to the face, crashing him back into reality. In to the pain he felt six years ago as he watched her run away from him.

“Nothing’s changed for me,” he whispers under his breath wondering if she heard it but too heartbroken to make sure. Instead he leans back and rests his head on the head rest, turning it so as to look at the rapidly changing scenery through the window. Silence takes over once more and this time he makes no attempt to fill it.

With no adrenaline left in his body, and the weight of his heavy heart seeming like an anchor trying to pull him under, Barry gives in to the physical exhaustion that seeps into his bones and drifts off too sleep.

...

“Barry? Barry, honey wake up you’re home.” She shakes him gently and he opens one groggy eye, then closes it again, a sleepy smile crossing his lips. Iris chuckles. After the late practise he’s just had he really is that tired but hearing Iris laugh is a much better reason to pretend to sleep, in his book.

“Are you finally awake?” She asks playfully, poking his side and Barry tries to snuff out a ticklish giggle.

“No,” he responds instead.

“Oh really?” She asks, her tone changing to sound a little more dangerous. Barry hears the sound of his seat belt being unbuckled before he feels the strap return to its place by the door. A rustle follows that peaks his curiosity but he stubbornly keeps his eyes closed.

The warmth of her body envelopes him suddenly and he feels her straddle his lap.

“If you’re so asleep you won’t feel me doing this then,” She whispers then her lips close over his. Instinctively he plants his hands around her waist and is surprised when he’s met with bare skin.

“Ah, ah, ah. You’re asleep remember? You’re not supposed to react.” She says, pulling his hands from her waist and keeping them at his sides. Iris trails kisses down his jaw to his neck, teasing him in a devilish way only she knows how.

“Iris,” he hisses, when she grazes his sensitive skin with her teeth. In one swift motion he frees himself from her hold and wraps his arms around her, pressing her to him as he attacks her lips. She laughs against his lips, planting her hands on his chest and applying enough force to pull herself from his embrace.

“Look who’s awake?” She says breathlessly, a triumphant grin playing on her lips. Barry finally opens his eyes and takes in the sight in front of him (or rather on top of him). Iris is sitting on his lap, completely shirtless save for her bright yellow, lace bra that compliments the chocolate of her skin. For a while he simply looks at her, mesmerised by the brilliance of her smile and the way her long locks fall to the side as she tilts her head ever so slightly. The street lights bathe her skin in orange rays that stream in from the windshield behind her. It all seems like a dream.

“What’s on your mind?” She asks, bringing his focus back into the real world and he does his best to offer her, his most charming smile but can’t manoeuvre his facial muscles to express anything but awe.

“That I wish I could wake up to you everyday.” He answers and her smile broadens.

“Let’s get through high school first then maybe we can arrange that.” She suggests while leaning into him and kissing him, soft and lingering.

Barry closes his eyes, losing himself in the feeling of her on him...

“Hey, wake up. We’re here.” Iris wakes him suddenly, her voice familiar but her tone far colder. Yet, still under the fog of sleep Barry blinks his eyes open and finds her hovering above him. She’s standing by his door, leaning over him, half in the car half out. The slightly orange tint, courtesy of the lights take him back to his dream and still shrouded in a cloud of incoherence Barry places his hand around the back of her neck and pulls her down for a kiss.

Chapter 3

[Barry]

She slaps him.

His lips barely got the satisfaction of being reacquainted with hers before she took a step back and assaulted his good cheek with a slap that Barry's sure echoed through out the quiet street. He looks up at her in disbelief and his hand nurses his bruised skin.

"Iris I'm..."

"Don't you ever touch me again, do you understand?" She demands and he hangs his head in shame and nods.

"Good, now come on in before you get anymore blood in my car." She orders as she walks around the car to the curb. Barry follows her with his eyes, shamelessly taking in the seductive sway of her hips as she climbs up the short flight of stairs to the door. She looks good.

Real good.

"Allen!" She yells without turning to confirm that he in fact isn't right behind her and he is startled out of his stare off with her ass.

"Coming!" he answers like an obedient boy scout and rushes up the stairs just as she gets the door unlocked. They step inside and she flicks on the lights, illuminating a sight he'd only ever seen in his imagination...

"Are you sure you'd want white tiles? Wouldn't that be hard to keep clean?" he asked and she looked back at him and smiled. His heart fluttered.

"A small price to pay for a more modern and clean look." She answered and he chuckled, pulling her closer towards him.

They were sitting beneath a tree in the park, his back against the trunk and Iris's against his chest. The lonely tree atop the hill that looked over the park had become their spot during high school. It's where the young couple spent most of their time dreaming about a future that was so close they could almost reach out and grab it.

"OK then, I'll remind you of that when the twins mess your kitchen floor for the billionth time and you scream out in frustration." He warned.

"Whoa, hold on a second twins?" She asked.

"Yeah, it runs in my family and since I'm one there's a high chance we might have them too. And why else would we need a house with four bedrooms?"

“Two guest rooms, one bed room for us and one for our two boys. Exactly three years apart.” Iris answered and Barry laughed at the precision of her vision, clearly she’d thought this one through.

“I was thinking more of something along the lines of one guest room, our bedroom and two for the kids.”

“So one boy and one girl?” She asked and he flashed her a shy smile and said:

“Well...”

“Barry?” She asked seriously and he chuckled out in defeat.

“How many pregnancies are you putting me through exactly?”

“Just two,” he answered confidently and a relieved smile crossed her face before he elaborated.

“But we might have twins in both. So I was thinking two girls and two boys. Hence two bedrooms for the kids.”

She gave out a half hearted laugh.

“You’re joking right?” She asked and he shook his head.

“Nope. I’m as serious as the chemistry paper I’m failing tomorrow,” he answered and she smacked his arm playfully.

“Yeah right. I bet you’ve never gotten anything below an A in your life.” She stated, the topic of kids strategically forgotten.

“Close. A-” he answered and Iris laughed, the sound filling him with a warmth Barry knew in his heart he’d never get enough of...

“You remembered,” he whispers as he takes in the space before him. To his right is a brand new white kitchen, spacious, with black and white detailing and appliances. A step elevates and separates the kitchen from a living room that is bordered on the far left side by floor to ceiling windows. Iris walks over to the wall and grabs a remote that’s hooked to it. Barry assumes it’s an air conditioning remote and is about to tell her not to bother when mechanical clicks sound through out the house as automatic shutters close them into a bubble of privacy.

“Follow me,” She instructs coldly before she leads him down a hallway with doors on either side. Despite each one being closed, he can somehow envision what he would find concealed behind them.

“This is the guest bedroom.” Iris announces as she opens a door at the end of the hall way.

“Make yourself at home, I’m gonna go see if we have any supplies to take care of your cheek.” She says before stepping aside so that he can go in.

As she walks down the hall he hears her on the phone and once he’s sure she’s out of ear shot

he sets out to explore. With his pocket square pressed against his cheek to stop any rogue drops of blood from staining the immaculate home, Barry opens door after door. Each one bringing back to him a piece of his past and filling his dreamer's mind with hope for the future.

Two guest rooms, guess I should have expected that.

He thinks to himself as he finds a room decorated in a similar fashion to the one she escorted him to. Plain white walls, silver bed linen, white-grey marbled tile floors, and black furniture. It's all breath-taking but something about the combination lacks warmth to him. It reminds him of the new Iris. Beautiful but cold. All sharp edges and no soft spots. He closes the door and moves on, hoping to find her room next and gain a little more insight into the person she's become.

What he finds next, freezes him in his steps and shattered all dreams he conjured up of a future with her.

...

[Iris]

5 seconds.

That's how long it takes her to put her shields back up. To remember who she is, who life has forced her to become. But for those 5 seconds, brief as they may have been, as his warm lips grazed hers, she was plunged back into a shaky part of her being. A part that still missed him, that still wished things could be different.

But the past is ever present and those heart wrenching memories give her the strength to pull away. They break apart and he looks up at her with a stunned expression. Recognition registers in his stare but before his eyes can gloss over with affection she slaps him across the face.

His hand flies to his reddening cheek and the hurt returns to his gaze. A painful pin prick interrupts her heart mid beat but soon it fizzles away, leaving behind the ice cold she's grown so accustomed to.

Yet, even now, she can still feel the demons she thought she'd buried, resurrect in her heart and crash around the cage with hopes of being set free. Being this close to him, having him there, in a house they'd dreamt up together and despite her best efforts she couldn't help but make come true, it's all just too much.

"You remembered."

He whispers. He probably thought she didn't hear it but she did. Her heart flips in her chest at the fact that he remembers too. That she hadn't been carrying the dream in her mind all alone. She watches his face as he takes it all in.

Iris keeps her expression neutral but on the inside she is anxiously analysing his every facial twitch, desperate for his approval.

“I’m sorry he, he’s no longer with us.”

The voice of ghosts past hit her like a blow to the back of the head. Suddenly she remembers, she doesn’t need his approval, she needs answers. She needs to keep him alive long enough to get closure. To know that he wasn’t responsible for the torture she endured six years ago. To get the answers she’s been trying to avoid ever since.

But she can’t run anymore.

Not when life has put him back in her path. When he’s, literally, an arms stretch away from her. When she’s, so suddenly, been forced to confront the fact that she still loves him and if he is as innocent as her heart wants to believe, then maybe, just maybe there might be a future for them after all.

You shouldn’t have brought him here.

This was supposed to be your safe space.

Her voice of reason warns but her bravery speaks louder and drowns out her fears. She’s not as weak as she was six years ago. Years of hits and a laundry list of dead bodies to her name have turned her into a cold blooded killing machine. Love or not she knows in her heart that if he is in anyway connected to the ordeal she faced in her past she will put a bullet between his eyes without a second thought.

“Make yourself at home, I’m gonna go see if we have any supplies to take care of your cheek.” She says and as soon as he steps inside she walks back down the hallway towards the bathroom but his proximity disconcerted her enough that she finds herself needing reassurance.

Panic creeps into her heart and her heartbeat sky rockets. She reaches into her pocket for her burner phone and dials her cousins number. With each unanswered ring, Iris feels her panic grow and her hand subconsciously grazes her stomach.

“Hey Iris,” comes Nissa’s voice from the other end, finally and she breathes out a sigh of relief that Anissa is still awake.

“Hey Nissa. Is... is everything OK?” she asks while trying to maintain her breath steady. Afraid that her conversation might be over heard she walks back towards the living room and makes her way outside to the porch.

“Yeah everything’s fine, but... are you OK? You sound a little shaken.” Anissa asks concerned.

“I’m alright, it’s just been a long night. Can, can I talk to her, is she up? I just need to hear her voice.” Iris asks softly.

“Of course, one second,” Nissa chuckles and Iris feels her heart beat so fast that she fears it might stop.

“Hi mommy,” the sweet sound of her daughters voice washes over her and Iris closes her eyes as her body remembers how to breathe again.

“Hi baby,” she whispers back with tears in her eyes and a warm smile that lights up her entire face.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

And so the plot thickens ☺

Cliffhanger warnings apply ☺❤

XOXO 💋

[Flashback]

Iris looked down at the test in her hands and took a few deep breaths. Each inhale and exhale saw her sinking deeper and deeper into her mattress, like the seriousness of the matter weighed her down the more she considered it. No matter how many times she looked away and looked back at the little stick, the result didn't change. It was always positive.

She was pregnant.

She didn't know what to feel. What to think. How to act. Her hand rose, tentatively, to her stomach and she let it rest there over her navy blue sweater as her mind raced through thoughts of Barry.

The man she loved. The father of her child.

A smile spread over her lips as was often the case when she found herself thinking of him, something she also did quite often. Her love for Barry was unlike any other teenage crush she'd been through. It was the kind of love that consumed. That melted into your senses till you felt incomplete unless the object of your love was within reach. There for you to smell, hear, see, touch and taste.

It was the kind of love that only happened once in a lifetime.

And now he was inside her. A piece of him anyway, perfectly blended with a piece of her, growing inside her. Taking form and gaining life in the little space that laid beneath her palm. Tears blurred her vision as an incomprehensible joy washed over her, partnered very closely with a hint of fear.

Her phone rang and as she watched Barry's name flash on the screen the fear grew. Doubts crept out from the dark recesses of her consciousness and soon Iris was trembling.

What if he doesn't want the baby?

What if he's not ready to be a dad?

Am I ready to be a mom?

Can I do this?

After all she was only nineteen and after a year of traveling both her and Barry were ready to take the next step into adulthood and start college. Having kids didn't seem like the first step, it seemed like a leap. She should have been shopping for stationery and dorm hunting instead of picturing herself shopping for strollers and car seats.

The ring persisted so Iris swallowed the knot in her throat and answered the call.

"I love you," his voice echoed into her heart and vibrated through her body, extinguishing any and all doubt from her mind. It was a little something special between her and Barry, always greeting each other with an "I love you" instead of a "hello" or a "goodbye". She found it sweet at the beginning of their relationship, like he'd been holding off from telling her how he felt out of fear of scaring her away but after he finally confessed he couldn't say it enough. She asked him about it once it felt like they'd been together long enough that no question proved awkward.

His response:

"Hellos seem to always be followed by goodbyes, goodnights, see you later or see you soon and I never want to say any of those things to you. I never want to feel like there's a chance you might be walking away from me, not even with the certainty that you'll be coming back. An "I love you" is eternal, it's a promise that no matter where either of us go we will be with each other. It says that no hellos are needed because this isn't the awkward beginning and no goodbyes are necessary because there's no end to you and me."

The memory made her tear up and brought her all the safety she needed. As insecure as she felt at that moment, the one thing she was certain of with every fibre of her being was that Barry Allen loved her. That's all she needed to know.

"I love you too," she whispered out trying to hide the shake from her voice but...

"Are you alright, babe?" ...he picked it up.

"Yeah, I'm fine." Her first lie.

"Just woke up," Her second.

"Oh I'm sorry, can you still catch your dream if I hang up now?" he asked apologetically.

"You are my dream," she confessed truthfully and she could practically hear his cheeks tint.

"What's up?" She asked, saving him from having to come up with a corny comeback to out cheese her cheesy line.

"I just wanted to hear your voice," he answered and her heart melted.

"Well since I'm up how about I do one better? Meet me at the tree?" She asked, her resolve hardening.

"I kinda have something I wanna tell you." Her eyes flickered to the pregnancy test in her hand.

"Are you sure you're OK?" he asked yet again and she chuckled.

"Barry I'm fine. Just meet me at the tree in fifteen OK?" She waited as he decided whether or not he wanted to believe her when she said she was fine but soon enough he gave in.

"Alright, see you in fifteen. I still love you." He greeted.

"I still love you too." She replied and ended the call.

The floor was white as far her eyes could see except for the shovelled pathways that offered a hint of gravel grey to the scenery. For some reason Iris had bundled herself up even more that afternoon, almost as if she didn't trust her body to insulate their child against the harsh temperatures of the Central City winter. Unlike her, their favourite tree was barren of any leaves and provided no shelter from the slowly falling snow but despite this she knew that it had to be there. This is where she had to tell him that their lives were about to change, and not just because they would both (hopefully) be going off to college that spring. Her hands moved in the warmth of her jacket pockets, rubbing her still flat belly and filling the silent place with the sound of stuffed nylon being rubbed.

The cold had kept the children at bay, giving the park an isolated quality. It couldn't be any more perfect. Iris heard the wet crushing of the snow behind her and closed her eyes before his hands squeezed through her bent arms and wrapped around her waist. He kissed her cheek and she smiled warmly at the feel of his arms around her stomach. It felt right.

"You been waiting long?" he asked, resting his chin on her shoulder and swaying gently.

"No, just had enough time to take in the scenery."

"Yeah it is something. Second most breath-taking thing I've seen all day," he said and gave her cheek another kiss to make it clear that the first thing was her. Iris chuckled and turned around in his arms, wrapping her arms around his neck and smiling brightly up at him.

"Barry Allen, ever the charmer," she teased and he grinned down at her.

"Only for women I find irresistible," he responded.

"Oh really?" she challenged with her eyes wide open.

"So how many of us are there?" she asked knowingly.

"Mmm," Barry closed one eye and pretend to think about it.

"Just one. You." He answered and leaned in to steal a quick peck but Iris held him there, parting his lips with hers and deepening the kiss. It wasn't a hungry kiss, on the contrary it was soft and she gingerly played with the hair at the back of his neck that stuck out between his scarf and his wool hat. She gave him a final peck, tugging on his bottom lip, and he rested his forehead on hers.

“What was that for?” he asked, his eyes still closed as her warm breath melted the cold on his lips. She smiled.

“For saying I’m the only woman in your life right now. Besides your mom that is.” She justified and he chuckled though the happy sound had a hint of sadness in it as was the custom when the topic was his mother.

“It’s true,” he reassured her.

“There isn’t and I fear there never will be another woman in my life. You’re it for me.” He promised and her eyes searched his.

“You really mean that don’t you?” She asked, her eyes growing moist.

“With every fibre of my being. I’d go to the end of the world to prove it to you. Even if that meant declining both my scholarships.” He said and grinned knowingly as her eyes grew wide.

“You got them?” She asked a smile teasing the corner of her lips and he nodded, happy to see the twinkle of pride in her eyes.

“I did.”

“Oh my gosh, Barry! I’m so proud of you baby!” She said and covered his face with a dozen enthusiastic kisses. He laughed, his entire chest shaking merrily from the action.

“Thank you,” he said once she seemed to be calming down, the smile on her face making his own smile grow till his cheeks hurt and he could barely see from squinting.

“I knew you were gonna make it. You’re a talented athlete and have the greatest brain in the city. They’d have to be blind not to see that.” She gushed over him and his cheeks tinted further than the blush offered to him by the cold weather.

“And yet you’re still the most important part of me.” He said and pulled her closer, he just never quit.

Then suddenly her stomach dropped as she looked into his eyes. For the first time, his undying love and devotion filled her with a prickle of dread.

“I’d go to the end of the world to prove it to you. Even if that meant declining both my scholarships.”

His words rang through her brain and the infatuation in his gaze told her he wasn’t kidding.

“So what did you have to tell me?” he asked and she couldn’t help but think that his timing couldn’t have been any worse. How could she bring herself to tell him that she was pregnant, knowing exactly how he’d react?

How much he’d be giving up.

Because that's just how Barry was. He was the type of guy who took responsibility for his actions and valued family above everything. She saw that in how close he was to his twin brother and how much he looked up to his uncle. She could only imagine how proud they both were of him. All the plans they must have for his future. But Iris also knew that he loved her, with every bone in his body. So telling him would be ripping away that future. Snuffing out the flame of his dream and Iris couldn't bring herself to do that. So she answered:

"Just that I love you. But I wanted to give you the opportunity to kiss me when I did so."

His eyes shrank as he smiled and she was surprised that the snow around them didn't begin to melt with the brightness of it.

"I love you too," he said before leaning in to taste her lips.

And her heart broke a little as she wondered how many more times she'd get to hear him say that before she had to walk out of his life for good.

[10 months later]

Iris's eyes fluttered open slowly and her entire body felt heavy, like gravity had taken particular interest on her that day. She was completely numb from the waist down and as her foggy mind tried to make sense of her surroundings she grew more and more confused. Nothing about the pale white room or the cold decorations in the space brought about the smallest whisper of familiarity. Then as her mind cleared, small wisps of recollection floated through her brain and suddenly the drugged nightmare she thought she was in became all too real. As her eyes painfully adjusted to the fluorescent lighting, the windowless space with its bland furnishings began to look more and more like the prison she'd grown accustomed to the past few months.

But something felt wrong that day and she couldn't quite put her finger on it. All she knew was that whatever it was, it wasn't just the room. It wasn't the white, steel and glass décor nor the sterile smell or unnatural lighting. It was something inside her. Something within her had changed, shifted. Something was missing.

My babies!

The cry popped into her head and her hands automatically flew to her deflated stomach. Some of its swelling remained but it felt different. It felt empty. She started to panic and her breaths shortened as she moved her hands frantically up and down her abdomen in search of some sign of life. Her eyes widened and grew teary as she searched her mind (and body) for some form of explanation as to what had happened. When she felt under the plain white shirt that fell loosely around her torso, she found a thin line of scarring skin stretching across the bottom of her stomach just above her midsection. Blurry memories came to her at the feel of it:

The sharp pain in her pelvic region. A nurse telling her to relax. A heavy exhaustion dulling her senses. The blurred out sparkle of what looked like an operation room in use.

Then suddenly the possibility dawned on her like an unwanted thought:

My babies are gone.

And something inside her snapped.

“Where are my babies!” she yelled to whoever was keeping her hostage in that tastelessly decorated room.

“My babies!” she screamed, the thought that the place was sound proof escaping her mind in her panic.

“My babies! Give me back my babies!” she shouted, flaying her arms around like a mad woman, the fact that she couldn’t move the bottom half of her body, infuriating her further.

As the tears began their trek down her cheeks a knock echoed from the door. Iris swallowed down her tears and fell silent. The round door knob turned slowly and Iris watched it intently, her heart racing. In stepped two women, dressed in blue scrubs and each holding a tiny blanket wrapped bundle in their arms. Iris sucked a hopeful breath in and held it as the women approached.

“Good morning Ms West. Glad to see that you’re finally awake. These two little angels have been dying to meet you.” One of them spoke with a smile. She had fiery red hair and startling green eyes. Her friend wore a smile similar to hers that twinkled in her golden-honey coloured irises, her hair a glossy auburn.

“Let me help you up,” the dark haired one offered as she handed the red-head the baby she was holding before approaching Iris’s bed. She helped Iris sit up and adjusted the pillows behind her with the attention of a dedicated nurse, then she retrieved the baby from her friend (who had also approached) and gently placed it in Iris’s keen arms.

Iris exhaled loudly, relief flooding her body as she laid eyes on the perfect bundle of warmth in her arms. Judging by the blue attire, Iris assumed it was her baby boy.

Joseph Junior, she thought, her previous frustrations forgotten as she met her son. Joey, after my father.

The next baby was her baby girl, and a tear slipped Iris’s eye as her daughter moved in her arms.

Nora, after your father’s mother.

She named them silently and planted a loving kiss to each of their little heads as a half sob, half chuckle escaped her lips.

Joey and Nora.

Her perfect babies.

[Iris]

“I love you mommy,” Nora says, her voice distant and Iris chuckles. Knowing her daughter, Nora probably has her eye’s glued to a book and answered the phone distracted.

“I love you too baby. Always will.” Iris sighs her heart beat returning to normal. She hears the soft ruffle of pages being turned and smiles.

“What are you reading baby girl?” Iris asks, trying to contain the tremble in her voice as she steadies her breathing.

“What’s wrong mommy?” Her daughter notes, ignoring her question and Iris chuckles.

Like father like daughter, she thinks to herself. Both can read her like an open book.

“Nothing baby, mommy just needed to hear your voice.” Iris assures her and closes her eyes to commit every note and change in pitch to memory.

“Are you sure? Cause you don’t sound too good.” Nora insists.

“Yes baby, mommy’s fine. I just miss you.” She dropped Nora off at Anissa’s apartment this morning, like always, but the tightening in her chest made it feel like it’s been years. She can’t stand to be away from her daughter for long periods of time. She never could.

“I miss you too mommy. Will you come get me soon?” Nora asks, her voice tiny and hopeful.

“I will baby. I promise.”

“So can I stay up and wait for you tonight? We can read another biography together?” Nora offers and Iris chuckles. Despite being a mere five years old Nora has the brain of a teenager, and it was her heightened intelligence (and Iris’s extreme paranoia) that fuelled her mother’s decision to have her home schooled.

“No that’s alright sweetie, go on and let aunt Nissa put you to bed. You need your sleep.”

“So do you mommy. According to your sleep tracker you only got four good hours of sleep last night and you know that you need at least double that to keep your body and mind functioning properly.” Nora lectures and Iris can’t help but smile.

“I know baby girl, I know. I promise I’ll get enough sleep tonight but for now it’s time for bed. I’ll pick you up in a few.” Iris promises.

“Ok mommy. Goodnight then. I still love you.” Nora whispers it like a secret and Iris’s heart flips in her chest.

“I still love you too.” Iris whispers back and laughs just as quietly.

“Goodnight baby.” She greets before Nora hangs up.

For a while Iris simply stands there in the darkness of night with the cool evening breeze whispering it’s travelled secrets into her hair. With her eyes closed she pictures her daughter’s sweet face. The soft caramel of her skin, the fullness of her little lips (like her mom’s), the

roundness of her light green eyes (like her father's) with a beautiful hint of honey, the cute roundness of her nose. She sighs out, content, though a bitter sweet taste lingers on her tongue. Despite the thought of her daughter's perfect features making her heart swell with so much love and so much pride, it also serves to remind her of the other half that made that perfection. The other half of her heart. The man that was currently bleeding in her guest room.

Her fingers brush over her lips, remembering the brief seconds he'd pressed his to hers. It would have been so easy to give in, to kiss him back. To let herself be swept into his arms, let him love her again. To just march in there and tell him the truth, tell him why she left, that he's the father of a beautiful, Einstein smart little girl who's his biggest fan. That he used to have a son.

Her throat closes up at the thought of her baby boy. Five years had passed but the memory of his innocent little face still made her eyes sting with tears of grief. Iris catches herself in time and blinks the tears away. She can't risk it. She can't tell him. He can't know about Nora. Not yet. Not before she knows the whole truth.

Her heart hardens once more and she walks back into her house, cold as ever. Iris prays that her poker face is good enough to mask her inner thoughts. As her bare feet land silently on the tiled floor she, wonders which version of her, exactly, she's trying to hide from him. The girl he once loved or the woman she's become.

[Barry]

He waits for her in the bathroom, his mouth dry and his mind a chaotic mess of thoughts. Mostly questions without answers.

Every time he closes his eyes he can see the inside of that room as clearly as if he were looking at a photo of it. The light purple walls were covered in posters of old musicals and diagrams of the solar system. The tiny white furniture, a child sized book shelf and a square wooden table with three matching chairs, looked delicate yet sturdy. The bed was neatly made with a lilac and white polka dot set. The stuffed animals, a polar bear, a turtle and a penguin, were neatly plopped up against the pillow and the ceiling was covered in glow-in-the-dark stars. It's the kind of room he imagines his daughter would have, if he had one.

Would have. Had.

An opportunity lost. A future erased. Because the only woman he's ever pictured himself starting a family with seems to have started one on her own. Without him.

Is she married?

I don't remember seeing a ring.

How old is her daughter?

Did she really get over me that fast?

Is it even her daughter?

What if it's a niece or something?

Iris walks in interrupting his whirlpool of thoughts as he pieces her life together in his mind without a single shred of evidence besides the child like room. He expects her to say something quirky, like:

"I see you've found the bathroom,"

Or...

"Let's get you all patched up."

But she, once again, proves that he no longer knows her by silently retrieving a first aid kit from the cabinet beneath the sink before giving his cheek more attention than she's offered him in the short while since their reunion. He wants to speak to her, to ask her about the room. Ask her how she managed to move on cause he was still hurting as much as the day she walked – ran – away from him. How she could find it in her heart to love someone enough to give him a child so soon after their relationship ended. Did he mean nothing to her?

He flinches as she swabs a particularly sensitive area of his wound with the alcohol soaked cotton ball.

"Sorry," she whispers and for a second the concern in her eyes takes him back to their high-school days. When this scenario wouldn't have consisted of silent breaths after fleeing death but a relaxing bath for two that he would have drawn as Iris read their daughter to sleep.

And suddenly he finds himself wondering what the little girl might look like. Is she a miniature version of her mother? Beautiful chocolate skin and adorably big eyes? Are her eyes brown like Iris's or are they the same colour of the lucky bastard fortunate enough to hold the place Barry once deemed as his in Iris's life? Does she have soft curls? Pigtails?

"How old is your daughter?" He blurts out, not realising that he's thinking out loud till the words are out of his mouth. Iris stiffens mid swab then hurriedly carries on.

"What makes you think I have a daughter?" She asks, trying to hide her nervousness but it pleases him to see that he can at least read her some of the time.

"I saw her room. When I was looking for the bathroom that is, I sorta stumbled into it."

"Oh." She answers without indication that she means to answer his question.

"So?" he presses on.

"So what?" She asks sternly.

"Are you gonna tell me how old she is?" he asks again.

“Five,” she answers, then adds: “And before you do the math...” a moment of hesitation and his heart fills with hope.

“...She’s not yours.”

Silence.

He can’t bring himself to ask how that was possible. Cheating didn’t cross his mind, Iris wasn’t that kind of woman. She hadn’t been that kind of girl. Yet the thought of someone else touching her as intimately as he once had, a few days or even weeks after she’d chopped up his heart and handed it to him in a paper bag, still packs a nasty sting.

But in his heart Barry can’t bring himself to doubt her love. An emotion of that magnitude can’t be faked, he couldn’t have spent three years of his life being fooled.

That’s what pounds through his mind as she cleans and dresses his wound.

As she gives him instructions to help himself to anything in the kitchen and to make himself at home. He is not to, under any circumstances, leave the premises without her and no take out, it will draw too much attention.

Barry can’t really explain whether its shock or fear that makes him go into auto pilot and silently accept her rules without the slightest bit of protest.

All he knows is that as he watches her walk away again, his heart seems to break a new. Only this time he finds no hope in himself to glue it back together.

[Iris]

Her stomach lurches as she looks over her shoulder at him one last time and notices the light fade from his eyes.

He’d been quiet after she told him Nora wasn’t his. Too quiet, and with every word she saw flash through his eyes and never make it out his lips, Iris found that the lie burned her insides like hot acid. As she steps into his car and drives towards her cousin’s apartment, she knows that she should have offered him an explanation but her mouth had run dry and with his silence driving her crazy she knew that if she opened her mouth it would be to tell him the truth.

So she matched him at his own game and let him make his assumptions. Surely nothing he came up with is worse than the truth. That she’s keeping their daughter away from him despite his history. That she’s lying to him without any shred of proof that he had anything to do with what happened to her six years ago.

What happened to their children.

That despite her heart refusing to paint him as anything but the love of her life, her mind and maternal instinct keep screaming at her to be cautious. She’s already lost one child, she can’t afford to lose another.

Iris stops at a red-light and fishes out her phone from her pocket to give her cousin a call.

That’s when she realises that she has five missed calls from Anissa. A tiny voice inside her begins to chant that something’s not right but she pushes it down and calls her cousin back.

“Iris finally!” Anissa responds, her voice increasing Iris’s panic.

“What’s wrong?” Iris asks, her voice as solid as a reinforced brick wall.

“You tell me,” Anissa answered. “Your dad banged on my door a little after you hung up and told me he was taking Nora. I tried to hold him off but there’s only so much I ca-”

“Did he say where he’s taking her?” Iris asks, crossing the red light and making a violent “u” turn to head home.

“He said to meet him at home.” Anissa answers and Iris breathes out through gritted teeth. She knew that her father would want to discuss her little interference at the casino tonight but she hoped that he would leave the dagger throwing for tomorrow. But he’s desperate, that’s the only excuse she can come up with for him using Nora to get her attention. As much as she wants to be respectful and hear him out she was already upset that he would go after Barry without consulting her and now she’s down right pissed.

So with smoke steaming out of her ears and her heart racing from the anger based adrenaline flooding her body she bangs open her parent’s door to find her father calmly sipping a cup of tea in front of the TV. His feet are up and he barely pays her grand entrance any mind, his nonchalant attitude increasing her annoyance.

“What the hell dad!” She screams and, with just as much force as she used upon entering, she bangs the door closed.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

So this chapter might get a little confusing so imma break it down for yall.

Iris POV has a Flashback within a Flashback. So in the present, she's doing a hit. The first Flashback is when she thinks about the conversation she had with her dad. That conversation is the continuation of the previous chapter.

In the Flashback she remembers a past interaction between her, Barry and Joe.

In Barry POV has one flash back only ♥

Chapter Notes

A-hoy shippers!

Sorry for the radio silence, my laptop kinda crashed so I'm having to retype all the chapters to the fics on my phone 🙄🙄🙄

Please just be patient with me I'm typing double time to update ♥🙄

And please enjoy this chapter. I hope its not too confusing 🙄 I kinda write in a weird way so please just bare with me 😞♥

Cliffhanger warnings apply ♥

XOXO ♥

[Iris]

The doorman holds the door open for her and Iris thanks him with a smile as she pushes the stroller in. Her mom jeans hang loosely around her legs, concealing the armada of weapons strapped to them and years of practice allow her to walk without acknowledging the extra weight. It's an easy enough target, mistaken identity style kill, but she'd rather be prepared then to get trapped with nothing but a rifle. Iris walks into the lift and keeps on her act. Bare hands (except for her ring); large, square shades obscuring her face and a short wig that's styled into a generic "mom-like" messy bun.

As the numbers on the little screen change, taking her closer to her destination, she finds herself taking deep breaths and completing her transition into her work persona.

Cold.

Cruel.

Calculated.

The transition is almost ritualistic. Usually she switches within the blink of an eye but this evening her mind is pestered by memories of the night before...

"Iris," her father greeted calmly, without turning his head towards her. His relaxed attitude aggravated her further and she found herself forcing deep breaths in order to stay as composed as possible.

"Where's my daughter?"

"Upstairs, fast asleep, but..."

Iris stopped in her tracks.

"...before you go up and get her..."

Joe put his cup down and stood up to face her for the first time.

"Don't you dare turn your back on me Iris!"

"Or what? Huh?" She challenged, her cool seeping out of her with every passing second.

"What are you gonna do dad? In a matter of hours you've attempted to kill my daughter's father then kidnapped her. How are you planning on topping that off?" Iris kept her voice down out of fear of waking Nora and having to face questions she wasn't as yet ready to answer.

"What were you doing at the casino?" He asked, ignoring her question. Iris looked at him incredulously then let out a half-hearted chuckle and answered:

"I felt lucky, thought I'd have a go at some poker."

"I'm going to ask you, one more time. What? Were you doing? At the casino?"

"I already-"

"Iris." Joe's tone came out as a warning and he turned his head to the side, closing his eyes shut like a man trying to hold back an outburst.

"Hasn't that boy ruined your life en-"

"No dad! He didn't ruin my life, you did! You ruined my life when you kicked me out!"

"I gave you an option God damn it! It was your decision to walk away!"

Iris couldn't believe her ears. To this day her father still thinks that the alternative to her packing her bags would have been the better choice.

"I'm not in the mood to have this conversation for the billionth time. Now if you'll excuse me I'm going to get my daughter and go home."

"Where is he?" Joe demanded, once again paying her statement no mind. His ability to hear what he wants to when he sees fit never fails to surprise her.

"We both know I'm not going to tell you. I didn't save him just to have you kill him."

"So you were interfering with my hit?"

Iris sighed, tired and exasperated.

"Yes dad I was. Is that what you wanna hear? That I was doing what's right for my child like any good parent would? Do I have to explain how this works since clearly good parenting is a language you forgot the minute I told you I was pregnant?"

She regretted the words the minute they left her lips but it was too late and the grave expression that fell over her father's worn features told her that she'd pressed the mother of all buttons.

"Get out," he growled under his breath.

"Gladly. After I get what's mine," she answered without letting her regret show through.

The lift dings on her floor and Iris pushes the empty stroller to apartment number 64, the very apartment she pretended to be scouting a week before as she took notes of the building's important features: emergency exits, security cameras, fire alarms etc. That's how she knows that the hallways are monitored with cameras while the apartments are kept safe with motion detectors.

The stair ways are dead zones and are basically the least secure places save for the automatic locks on the doors that can only be opened with access key cards. The stairs are also the only way to reach the basement and that's where the screen room is located. Not that she needs any of this information. Her father has a Loyal in almost every building in the city. These are people that either owe him, work for him or are too afraid to test him and therefore grant him any and all means of access into a number of places. Apartment buildings, restaurants, entertainment destinations, tourist attractions – you name it. And all she needs to get in is her red ruby ring. It's a simple stone, common enough not to draw suspicion if worn by many and yet unique enough to be used as a distinguisher. Although in her case the red makes it special. The rest of her father's hit family have rings with much the same design but their stones are green emeralds instead. Red rubies are reserved for those with the last name West.

They were her mother's favourite gem stone.

The walk up the stairs threatened to bring back memories she didn't need roaming through her mind at that very moment. Memories from before. Before loss turned her father in to a cold hearted killer. Before she saw the way his face changes just before he pulls that trigger.

Before she became him.

Iris walked into her old bedroom, all the details giving her a sense of Déjà vu. It was all exactly as she'd left it, from the positioning of the furniture to her high school photo frames (considerably emptier than they were when she still called the room hers), to the paint on the walls. It was like stepping into a time capsule of some of the greatest moments of her life...

Her freshly painted toes wiggled in the air as her feet rested (crossed at the ankle) against the wall. The still hot curls in her hair, cascaded over the edge of her bed like a water fall and she passed the time with a book in her hand. Getting dressed with three hours to go seemed like over kill and even though she was excited to see Barry, she wanted the moment to be perfect.

Perfect didn't include her looking sweaty in a wrinkled dress. So she practised the art of patience as she dove into the third of the Twilight books. A knock on her door drew her attention away from Bella's latest inner turmoil and she asked the visitor to come in. Barry's fresh shaven face popped into her room, his hair neatly slicked back and as he stepped inside, the space was filled with a deliciously masculine scent. Her eyes bulged out of their sockets as she took him in, pressed suit with a bouquet of sunflowers in his hand, ready to go and earlier than ever.

He was up to something.

"Barry what are you doing here so early? We're not supposed to meet for another three hours!" She asks, putting her book down without saving her page, she'd already read it three times any way, she'd be able to find that page with just a few flips.

"I just couldn't wait to see you." He smiled, though she noticed the glimmer of nervousness in his stare.

"But - " Before she had a chance to finish her sentence Barry dropped down on one knee and Iris felt herself grow pale.

"Barry? What are-

"Just, hear me out ok? I know that we've only known each other for a year and that we still have a life a head of us – graduation and college and work - but Iris the truth is, within our first week together I already knew that no one would ever complete me the way that you do,"

"Barry," was all she could whisper out as she tried to keep her tears in. She was shocked out of her mind and had no idea what to think but her heart felt every word that slipped out of his mouth.

"I love you Iris," he said as he reached into the bouquet and pulled out a tiny red velvet box.

"And I know that we're too young to get married, but I can't stand the thought of a possible future without you. Which is why I found a compromise." He opened the box and inside rested a single silver band with tiny red jewels imbedded into it.

"This isn't an engagement ring, not yet anyways, but it is still a symbol of my promise to you. My promise to love you, be there for you, support you and take care of you for the rest of our days. And someday, hopefully soon, I promise to replace this ring with a much more permanent version."

Iris found herself struggling to breathe and if it weren't for the fact that she was still standing paralysed in front of him she might have thought her legs had magically disappeared because she couldn't feel them. She couldn't feel any part of her body except for her roaring heart.

"What do you say Iris? Will you take this ring as a symbol of my promise of forever?" he asked and at that the tears made their debut on her yet to be made-up face. She nodded, unable to speak and covered her mouth with her left hand as she slipped the delicate piece of jewellery on her right hand's ring finger. Barry rose back onto his feet and she half laughed, half sobbed as she noticed the moisture in his eyes before she pulled him into her and hugged him tight. They parted a few inches, just enough for him to lean into her and offer her a tender kiss.

"I'm guessing this means that she liked it?" came Joe's voice from the door way and the young couple took a reprieve from their embrace to look at him, though they remained in each other's arms.

"Dad?"

Joe smiled and folded his arms over his chest as he leaned side-ways against the door frame.

"And I thought I had a hard enough time gift shopping for you, but this young man right here second guesses everything when it comes to you. This was the longest jewellery hunt in the history of man." He commented with a chuckle and a look of fondness directed at the youth before him.

"Wait a second, so you knew?" Iris asked.

"I kinda asked your dad for help shopping for the ring," Barry admitted, sheepishly.

"Right after he asked me for permission to give it to you and promised never to break your heart." Joe added proudly, there was nothing Joe loved more than a respectful young fellow with good old fashioned morals. Except of course if that young fellow happened to look at his little girl like she hung every star in the sky. That was reason enough to have his old heart smiling for the rest of its beating days.

Because she'd found someone who would love her as much as he once loved his wife.

"Hold on to this one baby girl. He's one of the good one's"

"I know," Iris said, her twinkling gaze glued onto Barry's just before he closed his eyes and pressed his forehead to hers.

Her eye's drifted briefly to the jewellery box on her vanity table and almost as if she had x-ray vision, in her mind's eye, she looked past the white jewelled exterior and could picture the ring where she'd left it. Hidden from herself at the very bottom. Almost as if she were trying to bury the memories and emotions that came with it.

The whiskey burns its way down her throat and warms her up from the inside out. It's the only thing she currently feels as she waits for the tiny buzz of her watch.

Beep – beep.

There it is.

With one last look at the city she downs the rest of her dry drink and turns around to make her exit, grabbing the diaper bag and travel seat that rested on the couch. Her "busy mama" act has her power walking to the nearest stairway exit where she uses her access card to disappear from the cameras view. The stairs offer her all the privacy she needs to slip out of her baggy sweater and jeans to reveal the black leather, skin tight suit she has on underneath. Her weapons are still carefully attached to the sides of her legs.

Iris pulls on her gloves and ankle length trench coat then whips off her wig and reaches down for a gun as she gazes at her watch. A door on the wall to her left opens up to a storage closet that she uses to hide away her baby seat and diaper bag then up the stairs she goes, screwing on her silencer as she takes the stairs two at a time. All the while she takes deep breaths and pushes down the last of her humanity, the last of her thoughts of her baby girl.

Her focus shifted from the Pandora's box on the table to Nora's sleeping figure. Cecile, who was seated on the edge of the bed beside Nora, looked at Iris and smiled sadly. Iris's heart went out to her; she was the only one who could get her father to feel anything other than hatred at the world since her mother's passing and yet she couldn't get him to be the old Joe, the Joe she deserved.

"How long has she been asleep?" Iris whispered, kneeling down beside her bed and stroking her daughter's hair gently. All at once the action soothed her every insecurity and it felt like discovering how to breathe a new. She leaned in and planted a tender kiss to the child's warm forehead and breathed her in.

She smelled like home.

"Not long. Go ahead, take her, I'll help you out with her chair." Cecile whispered back, smiling sympathetically. Iris thanked her with a smile of her own and shifted so as to slowly lift her daughter up. She was careful not to make any violent or miscalculated movements, almost like she were handling a rare doll made of glass.

But the caution was needed.

Nora curled into her mother's arm burying her face in Iris's chest and no words could describe the paradoxical feeling of fear and security that came with having her baby in her arms. With one arm under her daughter's knees and the other supporting her back, Iris walked down the stairs and out the door towards her car; her father paid her no mind as she left and she did her best to ignore the sting his lack of attention injected into her.

"Thanks Cecile." She said once Nora was safely strapped in and her chair tucked away in the trunk.

"Not a problem, and don't worry about your dad. He'll come around." She said.

"Not if he keeps hating on everyone with the last name Allen," Iris pointed out in a matter-of-fact tone.

"That name, it's taken a lot from him." Cecile tried to reason with Iris and the other woman's eyes seemed to say 'form us' though she dared not speak of her loss. It hurt too much to think about.

Iris wouldn't budge. She knew better. She knew that her father didn't know the half of what he'd lost, of the nightmares she attributed to that name. And with the way that things were going he would never know. Not from her mouth anyway. So as she steps into her car she responds:

"Not me, he pushed me away all by himself."

The jog up the three flights of stairs help circulate the adrenaline in her system so by the time she steps out into the hallway of the 28th floor she's fired up and ready to strike. She takes calm steps towards apartment number 81 and stands in front of it like she's ready to knock. With a subtle movement she tucks some stray hair behind her ear, flashing her ring at the camera and a few seconds later, the red recording light dies out.

She's got five minutes.

Her actions gain a certain fluidity as she turns back towards apartment number 83 and knocks as gently as she possibly can. A tall man with a 6 o'clock shadow and a head free of hair answers the door. His dress shirt is half undone yet still tucked into his black suit pants, under different circumstances Iris might have stopped to allow herself to take him in but her mind is elsewhere and she's still pissed about last night. She needs to blow off some steam. His seductive smile slips from his lips when his eyes land on Iris giving away that he was expecting someone else.

In his confusion he asks:

"Who the he-"

But Iris has no time for chit chat. Before he can blink, she's moved into the apartment, closed the door behind her, pressed her weapon against his forehead and pulled back the trigger. Pieces of cerebral tissue redecorate the space behind him and he falls to the ground, painting the white tiled floor with blood. Iris approaches without hesitation and stares at his wide eyes with indifference.

"Your wife sends her love," she says before firing two more shots. The hit brief she got requested that this be staged as a crime of passion. Hence the foreign gun and overkill. Some poor unfortunate side piece is about to get some major jail time while the "weeping" widow cashes out the prick's life insurance. All's well that ends well in the game of hearts. Iris discards the weapon on the floor and walks out with a minute to spare. She sees the numbers above the elevator light up as it brings a passenger closer to her and she smiles, assuming that it must be the unsuspecting mistress. Just before the lift reaches her floor she walks back out into the stair way and follows it down to her disguise with a reassurance that a few seconds later the cameras rebooted and set the perfect trap.

.....

[Barry]

Earlier today...

It's a weird feeling, waking up in a strange bed at a strange house and yet somehow feeling completely at home. This notion haunts him all morning as he stares up at the white ceiling and tries to make sense of it.

Maybe it's the thought of it being her house. Or the fact that her scent lingers in every little corner of the place. Maybe that's why it all seems so strangely comfortable. Like getting to share her little secret.

Getting to be her little secret.

Yet, as good as that all might sound Barry can't help the sinking feeling in his stomach, the dull ache of his heart's every thud. The gut twisting sensation that she's hiding something from him, something life changing. He plops one hand underneath his head and sighs. It's mid afternoon and Barry is wasting his day away in bed. He tried to do a little cardio, made some breakfast, read a page or two but every action put him down a path of what ifs.

What if Iris were there? Would he be making her breakfast? Would she be reading him a passage from the book as he poured her coffee? Would she be wearing one of his old t-shirts and chuckling when he pressed a random kiss to her cheek?

Sigh.

More questions without answers.

It's times like these that Barry normally turns to his brother. Bart is most definitely the most rational of them both. Barry always thinks with his heart despite his superior intelligence but Bart always finds a way to act with rationality. They always joke that their personalities came with their middle names. Bartholomew "Barry" Henry Allen took after their father, flexible

mind but much too large a heart. Bartholomew “Bart” Harry Allen took after their ‘uncle’ and legal guardian Harrison, kind at heart but ever the critical thinker. It’s a trait that Barry, at times, envies in his twin brother: the ability to disconnect from emotion in favour of science. Barry can’t bring himself to do it.

He always wears his heart on his sleeve.

The sound of keys turning in the lock draw Barry’s attention back from his differences with his twin and he turns his head towards the sound while listening intently.

“Can we get the purple tights and my STAR Labs sweater aunt Anissa?”

A young girl seems to ask and the innocence in her voice brings a smile onto his face.

“Course you can baby. Since your mom forgot to pack your clothes this morning you get to pick what ever you like.”

That voice is unmistakable. It’s definitely Iris’s favourite cousin Anissa. Barry hasn’t seen her since that random run in, a year after the break up...

It had been a year since he’d last seen her. Their anniversary was drawing near and he hadn’t so much as glimpsed her across the street or bumped into her at the grocery store. It was hard but nothing compared to those first few months.

The confusion as to what could possibly have gone wrong. The multitude of questions without answers. The heart ache, so strong at times he’d wake up in the middle of the night fighting for breath. He’d sunk into a depression so deep that his uncle had him seeing both a psychologist and psychiatrist. He’d been prescribed antidepressants and moved to England because a “change in scenery” would do him good.

All it did was provide him with enough isolation to feed his loud mind. So during the brief Christmas break, when Harrison summoned him back home, Barry made a habit out of wondering aimlessly about the streets of Central City. He blamed his sleeplessness on the time zones but he knew better. A good night’s sleep hadn’t formed part of his routine in a while. Power naps and unhealthy amounts of coffee were what kept him afloat in college.

In England he’d found an escape in his academics, burying himself in pile after pile of literature. Completing assignments way ahead of the due dates and prepping tutoring material to help a few nameless faces after class. So when the holidays came around he suddenly found himself spoiled for time and with nothing else but his neglected heart ache to occupy his mind.

That’s when the endless drives around the city became routine. He’d managed to convince himself that he was simply trying to pass time but he knew – he felt – that in reality he was looking for her.

Iris.

It was on one of these drives that he ran into Anissa. With no where to go, Barry found himself at a 24hr convenience store, roaming through the aisles of all things comforting and deadly. On his way to the freezers he glimpsed a familiar profile in his peripheral and stopped mid step. Low and behold there she stood, with a tin of powdered milk in her hand and a shopping basket filled with baby supplies. The tin she held grabbed all her attention so she didn't notice Barry approaching till he was a few steps away and asked:

"Anissa?" She startled, which was expected, but when her face turned towards him it didn't instantly flood with recognition and a drop of sympathy. Instead her eyes widened and her face paled with fear. Without warning she dropped her basket on the floor and took off running. He chased after her, too desperate to pay the questioning looks any mind.

"Anissa wait! Please!"

But she didn't slow. Instead she knocked down a stack of canned food in an attempt to leave the tin of milk that was still in her hand. Barry chased her outside but couldn't catch up to her. So eventually he stopped and simply watched her make her escape. Jennifer, her younger sister, was in the car with her and she seemed to have a baby in her arms...

Barry remembers wondering who's baby was in the car that night. Now, doing the math, he realises that it could have been Iris's little girl. Which leaves the question: Where was Iris when her cousin was playing house with her daughter?

"Do you want to get any books while we're here?"

The little girl's voice held a note of sadness at the mention of her birthday, but a sadness brought on by hope. Almost as if she wanted to believe that the statement was true but knew otherwise.

"Does that mean you're not coming to see aunt Jen and me? You know she's been working real hard on your surprise." Anissa tries to cheer the little girl up, all the while Barry listens intently from his new vantage spot behind the door.

"I like cup cakes better the next day. Aunt Jen can just put them away for me." She answers, by the sound of it she seems distracted.

"Cupcakes? Who said anything about cupcakes?" Her aunt sounds surprised.

"Come on aunt Nissa. I practically live with you and I know you barely get enough time to bake. I also know that you only get one bag of flour to last at least five months if the expiry date permits and only get enough chocolate chips to cover one batch of pancakes or cookies when you feel up to the task. That being said, last week you bought a fresh bag of flour, a dozen more eggs when you already had in your refrigerator and enough chocolate chips to either make three batches of cookies or aunt Jen's double chocolate cupcakes. You're out of shortening so that can only mean you're making cupcakes. Conclusion: aunt Jen is making me cup cakes for my birthday."

Barry's jaw drops and it isn't till he sees his own shock reflected on Anissa's side profile that he realises he's stepped out of his hiding place. His ears couldn't believe what they were hearing so he subconsciously walked towards the sound of her voice only to find that the person giving out such a detailed explanation is in fact a little girl.

Her back is to him as she's sorting through some clothes in a drawer and her hair is done in two loose fish braids that disappear into the back of her wheel chair.

"Are you sure you're five?" he blurts out, unable to suppress his own shock and startling them both. The little girl manoeuvres her chair so that she can face him and Barry feels his mouth go dry as he takes in her face.

He's suddenly lost in her little green eyes.

End Notes

P. S. For those of us who can't handle cliffhangers this story happens to be my tumblr exclusive and there's two more chapters up there right now.

♥Enjoy☺

XOXO



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