Recovery

by as_with_a_sunbeam

Summary

Yellow Fever was no small illness to overcome. Hamilton and Eliza head for Albany once they're deemed well enough to travel, but Eliza can't shake the feeling that something is still wrong with her husband.

Notes

Warning: some sexual content in chapter one. If you'd rather skip it, go to the next section once they're in their cabin.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

Eliza gnawed on her lower lip as the sloop tacked slowly up river towards her parent’s Albany home. Hamilton was seated beside her, his head tilted back and his breathing even as he slumbered. She squinted in the dying light to examine his face once more. No flush, no sweat, she noted with some relief. Still, it was not like him to fall asleep like this.

Of course, they had suffered a miserable journey thus far. Finding places to stop and rest for the night was difficult when they had so famously had the fever. No amount of her husband’s arguing that they were perfectly safe to travel made any difference. They had ridden almost through the night at one point. New York City barred them entirely.

The sight of the sloop that would take them to Albany had made Eliza smile for the first time in days. Her husband seemed relieved as well as they had boarded. He had ordered the one servant they had taken across the river to store their possessions in their cabin and settled into a deck chair beside her. They had alternated between the deck chairs and their tiny cabin below for the majority of their trip thus far.

“Sweetheart?” she cooed, resting her hand on his knee to gently rouse him.

He started and sat up straight, on alert.

“Sorry,” she whispered. “It’s almost night fall. We should go down below.”

He rubbed his hand over his face and nodded. “Yes, yes, of course.”

“Are you well, darling?” she pressed.

He paid her a closed lipped smile and nodded again. “Just a little fatigued, my angel. Nothing a good night’s rest would not cure.”

“Well, the cramped quarters of the ship likely will not answer the purpose. I wish we were in Albany already. I can almost feel the soft feather bed beneath me already.”

Hamilton gave her an agreeable grunt as he rose and held his hand out to assist her. Her fingers gripped the soft silk of his tailcoat as she leaned against him, more out of a desire to be close to him than a need for a steadying arm. The steep and narrow staircase to the cabins on the lower level was dim. She was careful to take measured steps as she descended, wary of knocking her husband down in a fall.

The ship rocked to the right as Hamilton pushed open the door to their cabin. Eliza braced on the wall and followed him inside. So tiny was the space that they kept nearly knocking into each other as they undressed for the night. He laughed gaily when she accidentally flung her under-petticoat into him after slipping into her night gown.

“Why, Mrs. Hamilton,” he gasped as though appalled, though his wide smile gave him away. “Flinging about your undergarments. What would people say?”

She rolled her eyes and kissed him firmly to shut him up—a time honored technique that always brought success. He responded eagerly as always and tumbled easily into bed beside her when she laid down. She blew out the candle and settled back on the cot. The ship rocked again, making her lean into him more heavily. His arms closed around her protectively.
“Why, Mr. Hamilton,” she whispered huskily to him, “are you trying to seduce me?”

“I’m flattered you believe I have the power to make the ship rock at my whim,” he chuckled. His hand stroked lightly at the small of her back, but he made no further advances.

She nuzzled against his neck, pressing her lips into the crook where his neck met his collar bone as he liked. Her feet rubbed over his as she slid her leg further to the side. They had made love the night before they left Philadelphia, but had not had the chance since. Their first night on board the ship, they had both fallen into an exhausted sleep immediately. She found herself aching for him as she pressed against him.

His breath tickled her ear as he sighed when she ran her palms over his firm chest. “I believe you are seducing me, my dear Eliza.”

She smiled coyly in the dark and flexed her thigh lightly. Hamilton moaned and desire shot through her. Her lips found his with renewed purpose as she ground against him. The kiss coaxed his hands into motion at last, his fingers drawing up the hem of her night gown as he flipped her onto her back. She spread her legs wide and kept her arms around his neck.

“I love you,” she gasped as he pushed into her.

His strokes were slow and deep. She was clutching his shoulders so tight she would not be surprised to see marks there tomorrow. Finding the little half-moon indents on his back in the mornings always gave her a secret thrill. Her hips bucked against him to urge him on. He hushed her, kissed her deeply, and kept his steady rhythm.

She felt the wave crest. Her eyes rolled back in her head and her toes curled with sheer bliss. She felt him find his release a breath after her, the pressure inside her softening as he pulled out. He collapsed to the side, breathing hard in the dark.

She curled against him and fell into a peaceful sleep.

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The cool crisp air of upstate New York brought a smile to Eliza’s lips as she stepped out into the sunshine of the morning. Hamilton was a step behind her, his hand on her hip as if to steady her, although she did not believe for a moment that the rogue’s intentions were so innocent. She turned to smirk at him and he winked at her rakishly before removing his hand to stretch in the open air.

His eyes looked bruised in the morning light, as though he had never found sleep. She worried her lower lip with her front teeth again. The color had never quite come back to his face as he recovered from the fever. Eliza felt hale and healthy, now, her eyes bright and her cheeks rosy. Her husband, however, still had a sickly air to him, and she worried that something was wrong.

“I forgot how refreshing a New York morning in autumn feels,” Hamilton remarked, apparently oblivious to her assessing eyes.

“Yes, it feels glorious,” she replied.

If she voiced her concerns, he would simply tell her to stop fretting over him. Somehow, he always made her sound like a nervous Nelly, while he was at liberty to fret over her and the children to his
He was lucky that most days she found the double standard endearing, rather than maddeningly frustrating as she should.

“Good morning, Mr. Hamilton,” a grey haired gentleman addressed her husband. He introduced himself with a firm handshake for Hamilton and a kiss on the hand for her. He added that if it was not a terrible inconvenience, he had hoped to have a conversation with her husband.

“Of course, sir,” Hamilton agreed. His eyes held an apology as they sought hers, and he asked, “Would you mind, my dearest?”

She told him she would not mind, as was expected. She smiled softly as she said it, hoping to assure him that she was not angry with him. The two men wandered off towards the bow of the ship, and Eliza made her way back to the deck chair she had claimed the last two days. They would make Albany by tea time if the autumn wind stayed strong at their backs. Her heart ached to see her children again. The comforts of home would be a welcome respite to the hard travel they had endured. She closed her eyes and dozed in the bright sunshine.

A kiss on her cheek startled her into opening her eyes once more. Her husband stood over her, smiling warmly. “Fatigued?” he asked mildly.

“Just enjoying the sunshine,” she assured him. “I slept quite well last night, actually.”

He smirked a little smugly. “The rocking of a ship can be most conducive to a good night’s rest.”

She gave him a warning glance, but did not scold him further. He did deserve most of the credit, she granted silently. Looking around, she noticed the gentleman was no longer with him.

“Are you finished with your business?” she queried, slightly surprised. She had thought she had lost him until the ship docked in Albany.

“Yes,” he answered succinctly.

She wondered if he had found the gentleman disagreeable, but did not question him. If he had, she did not want to cast a pall over their morning by forcing him to rehash an unpleasant encounter. Instead, she gestured to the empty chair beside hers in invitation.

He shook his head once. “I think I’ll stand at the rail for a bit.”

Her brow furrowed as he stepped over to the side of the sloop, his hands gripping at the rail as he looked out over the water. Perhaps he wanted to enjoy the scenery, she thought hopefully. She rose and stood beside him, looking out at the passing tree line as well.

When he cleared his throat uncomfortably she looked over at him. His complexion, pale this morning, had taken on a decidedly green hue in the past few minutes. She placed her hand over his and asked again, “Are you well, my love?”

He sighed. “I must confess to feeling a touch of sea sickness this morning.”

Sea sickness was not a common complaint for him. She squeezed his hand and tried to be calm, even as her concern flared up. “Do you feel like you’ll lose your stomach?”

“I hope not,” he replied. His insistence at standing at the rail made more sense, at least.

“We should be in Albany in a few hours. Firm ground will still your belly,” she comforted, trying to believe her own words.
He nodded once and cleared his throat again. They lapsed into silence. Eliza kept her hand over his but otherwise left him to battle his nausea in peace.

The ship tacked steadily up river, the heavy forests of upstate New York floating passed them, hints of red and yellow already dotting the tree lines as autumn took hold. As the sun rose higher in the sky, the air turned warm but not humid, tempered by the soft breeze off the Hudson as they sailed. How Eliza had missed the fresh, good air of her home throughout that sweltering, miserable Philadelphia summer.

Hamilton shifted his grip suddenly and leaned forward over the rail. A choking sound issued from his throat. Eliza removed her hand from his and instead placed it lightly on his shoulder blade, stroking her hand down over the fine material of his tailcoat. His eyes were clenched and he heaved dryly a few times. He swallowed thickly in between. When he brought the heaving under control, he spit some excess saliva into the river below and leaned back, drawing the back of his hand over his mouth.

Eliza glanced up river again, hoping to see Albany in the distance. Not quite yet, she noted with disappointment.

“I think I shall sit for a spell,” he told her, his voice weak.

She followed him back to the deck chairs. He sat back and rested a palm over his middle, slowly massaging his upset stomach. His eyes fluttered closed. She hoped he would fall asleep again. He looked exhausted. Settling back on her own seat, she looked out at the passing scenery once more and wished desperately for home.
Chapter 2

The carriage ride to her parent’s estate felt interminable. The green tinge had left her husband’s cheeks almost as soon as his feet touched dry land, but he still looked tired. They had been forced to undergo a medical exam on the opposite side of the river, and to leave most of their belongings behind before being allowed on their way. Their servant had loaded their trunks onto her father’s coach, which Philip Schuyler had waiting for them at the docks as their own was left across the river with their horses and the rest of their staff. Hamilton had given her his hand to assist her into the coach despite the fact that he was the one looking ill and unsteady on his feet. She had sighed at his stubborn chivalry but accepted his hand.

The coach bumped along the road to the Pastures. Eliza had started the journey sitting across from her husband. His eyes kept slipping closed and flying back open as the wheels jostled over uneven dirt and rocky patches. After several minutes of watching this, she swung herself around to sit beside him.

“What are you doing?” he asked with a furrowed brow.

“Lean your head on my shoulder,” she directed. Her weight beside him would brace him, and he would rest easier on her shoulder than with his head against the bumping coach.

“I assure you I’m quite well, my darling,” he insisted.

She fought back the urge to huff in irritation. Instead, she grabbed a fistful of his tailcoat and tugged him towards her until his head rested against her. She brushed a palm over his cheek and pressed a kiss against the crown of his head. The tension slowly left his shoulders and he made no effort to move for the rest of the trip.

The sight of her childhood home made her feel almost giddy with relief. Finally, they could rest properly. A real bed, good hot food, and the comfort of her family would soon restore her beloved husband to health, she was sure of it. Hamilton sat up and adjusted his coat when the coach came to a stop. She reached over to adjust his cravat, then looked up into his eyes. He shifted forward slightly to press a soft kiss onto her lips.

The coach door opened and he stepped out, again holding a hand out to help her down.

Five of their children were lined up before them, along with Eliza’s parents, younger siblings, and the house staff. A maid held little Johnny, who had just passed his first year a few weeks earlier. Her eyes filled with tears as she looked at her children.

Philip, Angelica, Fanny and little Alex all seemed to be making a supreme effort to stay standing quietly. Propriety and tradition dictated that Hamilton and Eliza greet her parents first and then work their way down the line of family and staff that had assembled to greet them. Jamie, just five years old, could not contain himself. Philip made a belated grab for his little brother, but Jamie broke out at a run towards his parents.

“Mama! Papa!” he cried, running straight into Eliza’s arms and clutching her with surprising strength. She knew she ought to scold him. Instead, she knelt down and nearly crushed the little boy in her embrace.

“Yes, all right, come on then,” she heard her husband chuckle beside her. She looked up to see four more of her children break from the line and race towards them. Philip and Alex latched
themselves onto their father, and Angelica flopped to her knees and wrapped her thin little arms around her mother and little brother. Fanny bounced on her toes behind her, clutching at Eliza’s arm with a surprisingly firm grip.

“We thought we would never see you again,” Alex cried dramatically, though his voice was muffled from having his face pressed firmly against his father’s waistcoat.

“Are you and Mama well, now, Papa?” Philip asked. “The papers kept saying how everyone was dying of the fever. We were so worried.”

“Your mama and I are just fine, son,” Hamilton cooed, ruffling the mop of curly brown hair atop their eldest son’s head. “All the better now for seeing you.”

“I didn’t want to be an orphan,” Jamie said seriously as he pulled away from Eliza.

Both Eliza and Hamilton laughed.

“And you are not, my sweet boy,” Hamilton assured him.

Jamie launched himself at his father next, leaping up into his arms. Angelica followed, catching Hamilton around the waist and squeezing him tight. Fanny gave Eliza’s arm one last squeeze before lunging for Hamilton as well, wrapping her arms around his left leg and holding on for dear life. Eliza smiled fondly at the scene as Philip and Alex scrambled to latch on to her. When the maid walked over to hand Johnny to her, Eliza took the infant into her arms and inhaled his delicious baby smell deeply.

“I’m so pleased to see you both in good health,” Philip Schuyler stated as he walked over to them. Eliza’s mother followed, smiling widely in welcome.

“Yes, you gave us all quite a fright,” Kitty Schuyler added. She kissed Hamilton and then Eliza on the cheek in greeting.

Eliza’s father embraced her warmly and added, “Come inside and settle in. You must be exhausted from your journey.”

“It was somewhat trying,” Eliza agreed, still holding Johnny close.

She looked over at Hamilton and smiled to see Jamie still clinging to his neck like a monkey. Her husband grinned at her as he patted the boys back. Their four older children seemed reluctant to be more than a step away from their parents. Angelica had moved back beside her and was gripping at her skirt as she walked. Fanny was on her other side. Eliza felt slightly concerned the girl would trip, as her eyes stayed locked on her parents. Philip appeared half determined to trip his father he was hovering so close. Little Alex was walking a step behind her husband, his eyes jealously watching Jamie, as though he wished he were the one being carried inside.

“Come sit and have some hot tea,” Kitty invited.

They settled into the parlor. Hamilton seemed to have difficulty extracting himself from Jamie’s hold, but after some prodding the little boy was sitting at his side with a biscuit in hand. Her husband accepted his cup of tea gratefully. He turned down the offered food.

Eliza felt slightly famished and ate heartily as her father updated her husband about the goings on of Albany. She looked over at her eldest son and noticed him grinning at her. She grinned back and blew him a kiss. Philip pretended to catch it, making her chuckle.
The laugh caught Hamilton’s attention, and he looked from her to his son. “Pip, it is such a lovely day outside. Perhaps you could take Alex and Jamie out to play for a while before it gets dark?”

“May I go, too, Papa?” Angelica asked eagerly.

Hamilton eyed his daughter’s white dress hesitantly then glanced at Eliza. Eliza shrugged. It would hardly be the first time her daughter ruined a dress by playing with her brothers. She supposed it was a fair turnabout for all the dresses she’d ruined as a girl wandering around the woods of Saratoga.

“Yes, all right,” her husband agreed. “Just, try to keep from ruining that pretty dress?”

“Of course, Papa,” Angelica said sweetly, kissing her father on the cheek. Hamilton shook his head and glanced at her again. They shared a skeptical smile.

Fanny stayed seated on the sofa, looking at her own blush pink dress with concern.

“Would you like to go, too, sweetheart?” Eliza asked.

Fanny’s bright eyes tracked between them and she nodded. “Yes, Mama.”

“Off you go, then,” Hamilton laughed. The younger girl required no additional warning for her pretty dress. Fanny primly lowered herself down from the sofa and walked passed her father to follow her siblings outside. Hamilton grinned and grabbed her round the middle, tickling her sides as he pressed a kiss against the top of her head. She shrieked with laughter.

“Papa, you’ll make my hair all messy,” she scolded through her giggles.

“I would not dream of it, my dear little lady,” Hamilton assured with faux gravity as he released her.

The children filed out of the room, breaking into excited chatter as soon as they were in the foyer. Kitty smiled at Eliza warmly and commented, “Your homecoming has put them all in much better spirits. They have been a gloomy, grave bunch the past weeks.”

“We’ve missed them terribly as well,” Eliza said, still grinning at the door where her children’s voices were growing fainter as they moved outside.

“We should leave the ladies to their tea, should we not, my dear Hamilton?” Her father quickly jumped at the opportunity to steal her husband away into his office to talk business.

“Of course, sir,” Hamilton agreed easily, rising with her father. He gave the aging General a minutes head start, stretching subtly and leaning down to kiss Eliza on the crown of the head. She squeezed his hand and smiled up at him.

“I’ll see you at supper, my darling,” he whispered. She nodded agreeably as he followed her father’s slow path out of the parlor.

“Would you like more to eat, my dearest?” Kitty asked softly.

Eliza nodded, breathing in the comforts of home.

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“Eliza?”

Eliza groaned and rolled away from the hand shaking her shoulder.

“Eliza? Sweetheart?”

“What?” she asked sleepily, her eyes still squeezed shut.

“Would…would you get me some tea?”

Her eyebrows furrowed as she reluctantly opened her eyes. The windows behind the curtains were still pitch black with night. Whatever could he possibly want with tea in the middle of the night?

“Tea?” she repeated.

“Chamomile, please,” he requested softly.

Confusion gave way to concern. He only drank chamomile when his stomach felt queasy. “Are you feeling ill?”

She heard him swallow thickly before answering, “Just a touch of indigestion, I think. It makes it difficult to sleep.”

She believed his stomach was unsettled, but she doubted indigestion was the cause. She wondered silently if his stomach had been bothering him on the sloop the night before as well. Pulling herself from the blessedly soft bed, she slipped into a robe and assured him, “I’ll be back in a moment, darling.” She padded her way down to the kitchen in the dark, knowing the route so well she had no need of a candle.

She finally lit one after arriving in the kitchen. The kettle clattered loudly as she pulled it out to fill it with water from one of the bowls left out by the servants the night before. The fire had mostly burned down, but she added a log and stoked it to get it going again before hanging the kettle up to heat. It would not take long. He liked his chamomile tea more warm than hot. She set about looking for the tea, sure her parents would have some. It was a common remedy for a troubled stomach. She found it, pulled the kettle away from the fire, and prepared a small cup.

When she made her way back to her room, candle in hand this time, she found her husband sitting up in bed with his head back against the headboard. One hand rested over his abdomen, the other against his temple. Worry sprang up within her once more.

“Tea, my love,” she whispered.

“Thank you, dearest,” he whispered back, reaching out for the tea cup.

She set the candle on the bedside table and sat on the bed beside him. He sipped slowly at the tea, one hand still cradling his abdomen as he drank. Several silent minutes passed before he set down the cup on his side table and laid back against the pillows.

“Did that help?” Eliza asked.

“Enough, I think, to help me sleep,” he answered drowsily.

His breathing was already starting to even out as she blew out the candle and settled in beside him once more. She wriggled onto her side to look at him in the dark. He had seemed better today. He
had played with the children, and had a full, heaping plate of pork, onions and rice at supper. Now she was worried again. Why was he still ill?

She moved her arm hesitantly towards him, then thought better of it and pulled back. Biting her lip, she considered for a moment before whispering, “Hamilton?”

“Mm,” he hummed.

“May I hold you?”

He gave a sleepy chuckle. “We have been married thirteen years, and you still feel you need to ask?”

“I thought it might be uncomfortable for you, as you’re feeling unwell,” she explained.

He stretched his arm towards her in invitation. She adjusted closer to him as his arm wrapped around her to pull her in.

“Just…not my belly, perhaps,” he added with a sigh.

“Of course,” she agreed easily. She placed her arm high on his chest to avoid brushing his troubled middle. His breath displaced some loose hair around her face, tickling her cheeks lightly. She adjusted her head a little, keeping it pillowed on his shoulder as she squeezed him against her gently. She fell back to sleep to the sound of his steady breathing.
She woke up alone.

When she made her way down to the breakfast table, she greeted each of her children with a kiss on their heads, but found her husband and her father absent. Kitty Schuyler made her a plate while she made her rounds. Eliza smiled and thanked her mother.

“Have you seen my husband this morning?” she asked as she started on her food.

Her mother smiled. “He disappeared into your father’s office around dawn. He said needed to work on correspondence.”

“Papa was mad,” Jamie noted from down the table.

Eliza looked over at him, surprised. Hamilton rarely lost his temper, and especially governed it around the children. “What do you mean, sweetheart?”

He looked up from his plate. “Papa was mad,” he repeated. “He said he was going to get back on the ship today and go away.”

“He said he would do that only if the mayor didn’t see reason,” Philip corrected.

“Didn’t see reason?” Eliza echoed, thoroughly confused.

She glanced at her mother, and found Kitty Schuyler wearing a curiously guilty expression. “Mother?”

“Your father may have made certain…assurances…to ensure your welcome in Albany. When your husband heard, he was less than pleased.”

Eliza continued to stare at her mother, silently pressing for more.

Kitty sighed and continued, “He promised neither of you would leave the house once you arrived. Hamilton seemed to find that a violation of his rights as a citizen.”

“He said he didn’t fight a war to be a prisoner in his own family’s home,” Alex added helpfully.

Eliza looked over at her children once more. “Were all of you witness to this conversation?” she asked.

“Only me, Alex and Jamie,” Philip said.

“Wonderful,” Eliza huffed in exasperation. If Hamilton was going to go off on a rant about civil liberties, he could at least avoid doing so in front of their impressionable children.

She pushed back from the table and stood. Stalking down the hall, she pushed open the door to her father’s study without knocking. Hamilton was bent low over a sheet of paper, writing feverishly. He barely glanced up at her before going back to his work.

“Hamilton,” she demanded.
He scribbled a few more words and looked up. “Do you know what the mayor demanded? We’re practically prisoners, Eliza! I’ll not stand for it. I will go back across the river and re-enter under new terms if I must.”

“Does it really matter?” Eliza asked.

“Of course it matters!”

“You should be resting anyway, darling. You have no cause to be running around town.”

“It is the principle of the thing. I didn’t fight a war for freedom to be told I’m not permitted out of the house without the permission of a state official.”

“Hamilton,” she began.

“I will not stand for it, Eliza,” he repeated firmly. “They have no cause to act this way. We were cleared by the doctor in Philadelphia, and again before entering the city. Neither of us poses the slightest danger to society.”

Eliza hesitated. He fixed her with a pointed glare. “What?” he snapped.

“Sweetheart, you…you still seem a bit…unwell, is all. I simply worry over you,” she said, holding up her hands to placate him. “I wish you wouldn’t get so worked up so soon after your recovery.”

He softened a little, but shook his head. “It cannot stand.”

She nodded, giving up on fighting him when he was in this kind of mood. Sighing, she told him, “Come have some breakfast when you’ve finished.”

“I’m not hungry,” he replied.

“You need to eat,” Eliza urged.

He nodded vaguely, his attention already back on his work.

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“General Schuyler? A messenger is at the door,” Prince announced.

“A messenger?” her father repeated. He stood slowly, wincing as he put weight on his bad foot. Eliza glanced at her husband, who was dozing in the armchair before the fire. That he was still falling asleep in the middle of the day concerned her, but he gave a little snuffle that made her smile fondly.

Moments later, her father returned, carrying a letter. He had that erect bearing and proud grin that told her something had reminded him of his son-in-law’s prestigious position. Sure enough, he held up the letter as soon as he was fully in the room and said, “A message for Secretary Hamilton from the President of the United States.”

Hamilton opened his eyes and sat up, rubbing his hand over his face. “How did he even know I was here?” he mumbled, still half asleep.
“I’m sure he knew you’d make your way up here soon enough,” Philip answered, limping forward to put the letter in his hand. “Government business never stops.”

“I wish it would,” Hamilton muttered, staring down at the letter.

Eliza’s head shot up from her mending. She’d never heard him voice a desire to leave his position out loud before. She saw her father standing beside him, looking equally startled.

“Now, son, I know public service can be trying at times,” Philip began, voice soft.

Hamilton laughed derisively. “Trying?” he repeated. “I work fourteen hours a day trying to repair the financial state of our nation. In return I receive no gratitude, no appreciation. I’m hardly compensated enough to feed my family.”

“Son,” her father repeated, looking lost for words.

Hamilton glanced up and Eliza saw realization pass over his face, as though he hadn’t known he’d been speaking aloud. He shook his head. “My apologies, sir. I was…talking nonsense. I’m just tired.” He stood abruptly. “I should go read this.”

Her father met her eyes when Hamilton left the room.

Eliza placed her mending down and stood. “I’m going to speak to him.”

She followed his path from the parlor to the office and watched him pacing the floor, clenching the letter in his hand.

“Is everything all right?” Eliza asked.

Hamilton started and plastered on a smile. “Oh, yes. The president is just asking for advice on a constitutional question.”

Eliza nodded, stepped fully into the office, and closed the door behind her. “What sort of advice?” she asked.

He paused in his pacing. With a sigh, he held the letter out to her. “Go ahead,” he urged.

Eliza scanned the message, her heart sinking. The president was looking for a way to call the government back together. He wanted everyone to meet in Pennsylvania once more, preferably in Germantown as Philadelphia was still overrun with the fever. Washington was asking her husband to advise him on the constitutionality of the President calling for the government to assemble somewhere other than the capital.

“It’s not constitutional, right?” Eliza asked.

Hamilton shrugged.

“No. Everyone will just have to wait until the fever abates in Philadelphia,” she said. He wasn’t ready for another long journey. He certainly wasn’t ready to go back to government work.

“When did you become such a constitutional scholar?” he asked with a teasing smile. “I helped write it and I couldn’t answer so quickly.”

Eliza shook her head, refusing to let him distract her. “You can’t go back yet.”

“Can’t I?”
“You’re not well,” she snapped. Closing her eyes, she fought down her temper and added in a more measured tone, “You need to rest and recover. A long trip wouldn’t be good for you right now.”

A long pause followed.

“I’ve been thinking about resigning,” he said in a whisper, as though confessing a great secret. She felt horribly conflicted, torn between the reaction she should have, and the reaction she wanted to have. Truly, she’d love for him to resign. She hated the long hours and the stress and the constant attacks that came with his position.

She forced herself to be the dutiful, republican wife. “Darling, you’ve just recovered from a terrible illness. Now isn’t the time to be making these kinds of decisions.”

“I was thinking about it before I got sick,” he told her. “Getting sick just made the decision seem more obvious. We spend so much time apart, Betsey. So much. And the first time you stayed by my side, you nearly died. I don’t know what I’d do if you died.”

“Honey,” she tried to interrupt him.

“Do you know what that man wanted? The other day, on the sloop?” She shook her head. “He wanted to talk about how my bank is corrupting the souls of America. And then he had the audacity to inquire what I thought was a proper price for bank script! I…I don’t even remember why I’m doing this anymore.”

Eliza took two steps further into the room and wrapped him in an embrace. She could feel him trembling in her arms. “You are creating a strong, stable country to pass on to our children. You are founding a nation that will revere your name. That’s what you’re doing.”

He nodded a little against her.

“And if you want to stop, I will still love you every bit as much as I do right now.”

He pulled away and gave her a weak smile. “Thank you,” he said with a reverence she’d never heard in his voice before. He sniffled lightly, then held up the letter he was still clutching in his hands. “I should answer this.”

“Right,” she said, easing her hold on him. He stepped over to the desk, and she asked curiously, “Is it constitutional? Ordering the government to assemble somewhere other than the capital?”

“Oh, not even remotely.”

“So you’ll have time to rest?” she said, nearly sighing with relief.

“No.” He laughed when he saw her look of confusion. “He can’t order the government to meet somewhere else, but there is no harm in his recommending it.”

“Doesn’t that amount to the same thing, just worded slightly differently?”

“It’s called lawyering, darling. I do it professionally,” he grinned. He seemed rejuvenated somehow, as though her permission to stop had spurred him to recommit himself.

*Well done*, she berated herself as she left him to write his letter. She’d just convinced him to do the very thing she’d been begging him not to do when she’d followed him into the office.
Eliza looped some thread around her finger, held it before her to measure, and then cut it to the proper length. She had to squint in the firelight to thread the needle, but she managed it after only one false start. Just as she was about to begin the next section of the handkerchief she was embroidering, she heard her father’s heavy boots in the hall.

Hamilton looked up from the book he was reading in the armchair across from her. “General,” he greeted Philip Schuyler with a smile.

Her father looked uncomfortable. He inclined his head slightly, and he closed the door to the parlor behind him. “I need to speak to you both.”

“What is it, Papa?” Eliza asked.

“I’ve given it some consideration, and I cannot allow you to take the children with you when you leave this week.”

Eliza’s eyes widened. He wouldn’t allow them to take their children? Had he gone mad? She looked over to Hamilton to see his expression had gone tense as well. His voice was low and falsely calm when he asked, “What do you mean, sir?”

Sensing their mood, her father held up his hands and forced a smile. “I’m only thinking of you and them. You know how much I adore you all.”

Neither of them said anything in response, so he continued. He fixed his gaze on Hamilton and said, “Son, you’re not well.”

“I have been assured by two physicians that I’m no longer contagious and that I’m fit to travel,” Hamilton retorted immediately.

Philip nodded. “I’m sure they were correct that you are no longer in danger,” he assured. “But I can tell you’re still feeling under the weather. The trip to New York and then on to wherever the government will be meeting will be long and difficult. Many areas are still teeming with the fever. Do you not think it safer, for their health and yours, for them to stay here? They will be protected from the fever and neither of you will need to overexert yourselves caring for them.”

Hamilton met her eyes, silently seeking her opinion. Eliza sighed as she considered her father’s argument. He was right, she decided. Hamilton was still obviously unwell, and they were both to be traveling back into the heart of the epidemic. She held his gaze and nodded once.

Her husband’s shoulders sagged a little as he looked back at her father. “You’re right, sir. I wasn’t thinking clearly. Eliza and the children should stay here.”


“It’s too dangerous. You had fever in the first place because I didn’t wish to part from you. I would never forgive myself if you became ill again because of me. You should stay here where it’s safe.”

“I’m going with you,” she repeated. “How do you think I would feel, if you became worse on your own in the city?”

“Eliza—.” He began.
“There’s no point arguing,” she cut him off. “We will leave on Thursday as planned, and the children will remain here a bit longer, until it’s safe for them to follow.”

A little smile quirked his lips. “Our wedding was some time ago, so it’s a little difficult to recall. Was it not you who made the promise to obey me?”

She stared hard at him, utterly unamused.

“I’ve always thought that should be the other way round, myself,” her father added with a chuckle.

“It would be more honest, certainly,” Hamilton remarked. The smile was still on his lips. “We’ll do as you say, my dearest. I have little hope of convincing you to remain if you do not wish to.”

“I do not wish for my husband to work himself to death while I remain in the comfort of my family home,” she said sternly.

“Very well. You’ll come with me to watch me work myself to death up close.”

She glared at him.

He laughed. “I’m just teasing, my angel.”

“I don’t find your health to be a laughing matter,” Eliza told him.

“Nor I yours,” he replied. “So you will continue to place yourself in harm’s way for my benefit, and I will continue to resist you. I believe that is the marker of a good marriage.”

At last, she gave him a tiny smile in return.

~*~

Their children saw them off with red eyes and mournful faces.

“It’s just for a little while,” Eliza assured them. “Just while everything gets settled. Then we’ll all be together.”

None of them looked cheered.

She was giving Johnny a face full of kisses when she saw her father lean in to speak to her husband. Philip Schuyler placed a hand on Hamilton’s shoulder and whispered, “The work you do for the country is vital, and very much appreciated by every reasonable citizen in this nation.”

“I know, sir. I was just tired and… emotionally overwrought from the illness, I suppose. I didn’t mean to worry you.”

Her father shook his head. “I would hate to see you give up your position and the good work you are doing,” he continued. Hamilton nodded quickly and opened his mouth to respond, but her father held up a hand. “But I want you to know, you have my full support and constant affection, whatever you decide.” Her husband’s eyes went bright.

Her father patted him on the back firmly, then turned to her with a wide smile. “Have a safe journey, my beloved child,” he wished, embracing her.
She kissed each of her children once more, then allowed Hamilton to assist her into the coach. He was stepping up himself when his foot slipped. He caught himself on the door and placed a hand to his temple as though he’d been suddenly overcome with vertigo. All the color had drained from his face.

“Hamilton,” she cried, sliding over and reaching out for him.

He smiled weakly. “I’m all right,” he whispered. She wasn’t sure if he was trying to convince her or himself.

As the coach bumped down the road away from her childhood home, she was overcome with a horrible sense of foreboding. This was a terrible idea.

Chapter End Notes

I had a little trouble with this chapter, but I hope it turned out alright. I always thought it was interesting that Hamilton thought about resigning during this time, and actually did have a conversation with his father-in-law about it.
“You know, Ham, if you miss me, you could just invite me over for dinner once in a while,” Edward Stevens commented mildly as he gently felt her husband’s pulse, his eyes fixed on his pocket watch. “We really must stop meeting like this.”

“I’ll bear that in mind,” Hamilton replied with a weak smile.

Eliza shook her head at the pair as she dabbed a wet flannel against her husband’s temple. The trip back to New York had been just as harrowing as their journey up to Albany. Hamilton had nearly fainted in the foyer of their New York townhouse just as they had arrived. He’d stopped two steps through the door and muttered, “My head is spinning.” Then he’d lowered himself to sit on the floor, his head tipped back against the wall, and he’d done nothing but breathe deeply for nearly five minutes. When he’d opened his eyes, Eliza helped him struggle upstairs and into bed.

She’d called Doctor Stevens to come look at him first thing this morning.

“What have you been vomiting at all?” Ned asked after he’d lowered Hamilton’s hand back onto the mattress.

Hamilton shook his head.

“He’s been nauseated, and he hasn’t had much of an appetite,” Eliza provided when her husband failed to say anything further.

“I haven’t actually gotten sick, though,” he said defensively.

Ned met her eyes then gave his own an exaggerated roll, which made her laugh.

Hamilton huffed in annoyance.

“You get grouchy when you’re sick, you know that?” Ned asked, turning to rifle through his black doctor’s bag.

“I’m not sick. It was merely a passing dizzy spell. You two are overreacting,” he insisted.

“Well, if it’s all the same to you, Doctor Hamilton, I think I’ll do my own examination. I didn’t spend all those years studying medicine for my own amusement,” Ned replied with a smirk as he turned back towards the bed with a thermometer in his hand.

“Fine,” he grunted.

“All right, Ham, you’re going to need to keep your mouth closed for a few minutes. I know that’s hard for you,” Ned said laughingly as he popped the thermometer between Hamilton’s lips. Hamilton glared at him as he leaned down to examine Hamilton’s eyes.

Ned met her eyes again and mouthed, “Grouchy.” She laughed again.

Hamilton caught her eyes, and his mouth quirked up a little around the medical instrument.

Ned moved down to palpate Hamilton’s abdomen. He applied a little pressure to a spot on his belly and asked, “Does this hurt?”

“How am I supposed to answer if I can’t open my mouth?” Hamilton asked around the
“I thought you were supposed to be smart?” Ned smirked at him again. “Seriously, Ham, keep your mouth shut for a few minutes. Just shake your head yes or no.”

He shook his head no.

“All right, good,” Ned nodded. He finished the exam and then plucked the thermometer from Hamilton’s mouth, holding it up to the light. He shook the instrument out and looked up at Eliza with a smile.

“He’s not had a relapse,” Ned assured her. “No yellow in the eyes, his temperature is within normal, and his liver isn’t tender.”

Eliza let out a shaky, relieved breath.

Ned sat down on the bed and patted Hamilton’s arm gingerly. “It’s going to take time to recover, Ham. I know it’s not in your nature, but you’ve got to take it easy for a little while. Try to avoid getting overwhelmed with stress. You’re lucky the fever didn’t kill you.”


“If this is your best, you’re going to have to do a little better,” Ned shot back. “I know Mrs. Hamilton’s said you haven’t had much appetite. You’ve been feeling queasy?”

Hamilton nodded slightly.

“Try to chew a little peppermint. Or have some chamomile tea,” Ned recommended.

“He’s been drinking the chamomile tea,” Eliza informed the doctor.

“Good,” Ned nodded. “That’s good. But you’re going to have to try to eat a little more. That’s why you’re feeling light headed. You haven’t gained as much weight back as I’d have liked to see, either.”

“My other doctor kept telling me I had to lose weight. Now you’re telling me I have to gain it. I just can’t win with you medical types.”

Ned laughed heartily. “Eat with my blessing, Ham. Have something rich you’ve been denying yourself. Indulge in sweetmeats to your heart’s content.”

He gave Hamilton’s hand a squeeze and then rose from the bed. “I prescribe lots of rest and a good diet. I’ll entrust you to your wife’s capable hands.”

“Thank you, doctor,” Eliza said, smiling at her husband’s oldest friend. “I’ll see you out.”

She walked downstairs with him. He paused at the door to give her an appraising look. “How have you been, Mrs. Hamilton?”

“Oh, I’m feeling quite recovered,” Eliza assured him.

“Good,” Ned said. “Don’t let him worry you too much. He’s really all right. At least, he will be if he takes care of himself properly.”

“What are the chances of that happening, do you think?” Eliza asked. They shared a knowing smile.
“Slim to none, but I’m sure he’ll bounce back anyway. He just likes to worry the rest of us.”

“Thank you again for coming.”

“For Hammy? Anytime.” Ned leaned in and pressed a chaste kiss to her cheek. “You look after yourself Mrs. Hamilton. And do what you can with that husband of yours.”

With that, he placed his hat on his head and took the stairs down the stoop at a rapid pace before setting off into the cool, bright autumn day. Eliza closed the front door. She leaned against the wood for a moment, sighing with relief. Thank God he wasn’t seriously ill again.

As she moved back towards the stairs, she considered his current state of health. With Ned’s approval, he would be heading to Germantown to help Washington get the government running again. Getting him to take the time to properly recover was going to be challenge.

She moved quietly towards the bedroom, hoping Hamilton had nodded off in her absence. When she peeked her head through the doorway he looked up and smiled. “Did Ned get off safely?”

“Yes.”

“Did you two talk about me?”

“Of course.” She grinned as she made her way over to him, leaning down to kiss his forehead and adjust the blankets around him. “Now, what would you like to eat?”

He wrinkled his nose slightly.

“You have to eat,” she told him firmly. “You heard what Ned said.”

“I know. I will,” he promised. “I’m just still a little tired.”

She fought down the impulse to lecture him that avoiding food wouldn’t make him feel less tired and ill. “One hour,” she bargained.

He nodded and patted the space beside him. “Lie down with me?”

She smiled fondly. As she climbed onto their bed, he turned onto his side and pulled her against him. She squeezed him once, then kept her arms around him, holding him close as he drifted back to sleep.

She sighed as she ran a hand through his hair tenderly. “Whatever am I going to do with you?” she whispered.

He snuffled in his sleep.
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