

CHAPTER ONE

“We all got trumped in last month’s election.”

George’s blanket concession to Snipe as they stood in front of the multiple iconic Coldwell Banker Christmas windows on Capitol Hill encouraged a nearby anxious young woman’s eavesdropping. She inched closer; camera phone plastered over the top of the bundled scarf obscuring the lower half of her face like a mask.

“Watcha gonna do ‘bout it?” His bodyguard refused to join in the legislator’s pity party.

Instead of answering the lawmaker engaged the woman, noticing something unusual about her snapping pictures in between distressed glimpses toward him. With a taut six-foot, broad shouldered, athletic physique; Hollywood-handsome, angular Asian facial features; and also, a noticeable Member of Congress pin on his tie, he always attracted consensual females – but this one intrigued the head on his neck instead of between his legs.

“Want a picture of you in front of the decorations?”

“Yes.” In an instant she handed him her phone and struck a pose in front of the first bay window display as if she had expected George to ask.

“Are you visiting?”

“No.” She moved onto the next panel with George paralleling her sidesteps, with the pit bull-faced Snipe switching into U.S. Capitol Police protection mode when he detected an accent.

“In school?”

“No.”

“A conference?”

“No.”

Now in front of the fourth and final panel, the stranger paused and proffered: “I can be your guest if you help me stay.”

“Excuse me?”

“I need to leave country by midnight...that is when White House says we Russians must be out.”

George gripped her phone in his gloved hand. “Sorry – I don’t know you or who you are-”

“My family and I did nothing...we are just embassy employees...how could Obama mix us with intelligence workers and give us so little time to leave? Forty-eight hours!”

“No one else is here with you.” He lowered the woman’s cell to his side with a slight turn away from her.

“I rushed here to take pictures of this because we do not have such decorations in Moscow, and I remember this one-” gesturing to the Christmas shop windows, “because it is so rare.

“And the others?”

“They are packing. I took taxi here.” The young woman seemed to refuse she could not insulate herself from the edict booting her, her family and other diplomats out of the United States. “I am innocent.”

George checked her self-confession. “You must really like America,” he consoled, slipping his hand with her phone in his coat pocket.

“We don’t have this much in Russia.” She motioned to the gigantic snowflakes dangling from street lamps with candy canes curved around the poles, shimmering garland looping between storefronts, silver bells dangling from corner trees all lining Pennsylvania Avenue in the shadow of the Capitol dome – her last glimpse of a democratic symbol in person.

“We have Wenceslaus, but not as you do here...we always had opportunity to participate-” As she broke off her response, her eyes morphed into shell-shocked fixtures: “How could this election have happened?”

The combined irony of her exposed facial expression and question gut-punched George – someone who claimed to be a Russian diplomat member asking him about the outcome of the U.S. presidential election?

“Congress can’t overturn the executive order-”

“But you are in the new president’s Party...can’t you do something since he’s coming in and this one is leaving?”

George beamed, lifted her phone and waved it while casting her an accomplished look. “I’m sorry...I can’t help you.” He handed her the device. “Please have a safe trip...and try to have a Happy New Year.”

Snatching the cell from George’s hand, the young woman burst into tears and ran away amid scattered pedestrians, some turning to watch as she disappeared up the hill toward the Capitol.

Snipe stepped beside George. “She real upset ‘bout not spendin’ th’ night.”

George flipped an electronic chip up and down with cockiness. “Not as upset as she’s gonna be when she tries to download her pictures.”

“What? Whatcha do, man?”

“I saw her checking me out on the internet before I asked to take her photos.” He pocketed the phone’s micro-SD memory card he manipulated to remove. “If she is diplomat – or intelligence – I’m clear. It may’ve been a chance encounter, but I couldn’t take any chances of any proof of it.”

The successful ploy against the Russian provocateur reminded him why he and Snipe ended up in front of Coldwell Banker in the first place – to avoid risk. He had started the day at his Capitol Hill office then hurried to the post office to mail Victoria a Chinese New Year gift. He needed to mail it to Beijing with personal funds from a public not congressional facility; he didn't need any more microscopic scrutiny after surviving a House ethics investigation over finances last year.

The Christmas window was right across the street from the USPS. After making it just in time before Noon-time closing on the last day of the year, George had begged his patient patrol to check out the display since he'd missed seeing it before rushing home to San Francisco after the House adjourned a couple of weeks ago.

Eyeing the multiple miniature scenes reminiscent of simpler times, George was waxing nostalgic about the state of the country and the election results to Snipe when he had spotted the mysterious movements of the Russian woman out of the corner of his eyes and tested her.

“Too bad,” Snipe quipped. “She wuz a real stacked gal.”

“Sure was. If it wasn't for that executive order and she wasn't a diplomat, she might've been worth a chance...but not this year – not in either year,” referring to the separate Gregorian calendar and the Chinese lunar year. As they started walking to a nearby restaurant for a brunch with local District officials he'd returned a couple of days early to attend, George resumed his brooding.

I not only need to watch my back as I map out my legislative agenda, I have to mount a cultural offensive to appease my family...2017 is the Year of the Rooster, my Chinese zodiac sign...and they all think I'm destined for bad luck this year because of custom – misfortune is supposed to plague people during the year of their birth sign.

With grudging acceptance George had taken some of the dozens of mystical and delicate artifacts his family shipped to his Capitol Hill townhome and placed them in their strategic locations throughout his Washington office before his trip to the post office. As he put each figurine in its recommended spot to unleash its particular power over and for him, he joked how his congressional offices and his townhome resembled Chinese gift shops because of his family's overprotection.

I will be happy to disappoint them, he argued. I've always blown past their worry. Like wearing red – that's supposed to be bad luck for Roosters, but I always wear it for good luck at the start of every Chinese New Year anyway, and it's always worked – he glanced at his bodyguard – especially two years ago.

I don't understand why I still need all the stuff my folks gave me when grandfather told me this year I have a ruling lucky star – Jiangxing – that's supposed to be special for us Roosters who are leaders and form teams.

That's what it's gonna take for me to push my wild proposal through for infrastructure funding without busting the budget and driving up the deficit before midterm elections in two years – a team with guts!

“Happy New Year!” A passerby interrupted George’s mental fussing as he and Snipe approached the diner. “Glad you’re back, congressman! I just know you’ll block any fighting and get great things done this year!”

“Thanks...thanks, sir...Happy New Year to you, too!” Wow, George balked, another manifestation of his thoughts – he reached into his pocket again, this time to fondle the Tai Sui talisman on the keychain his grandmother insisted he carry in the upcoming year for protection – and another chance encounter – or was it?

###

If the past two weeks of the legislative New Year were any indication of the tone of Congress and Trump’s presidency, George planned to attend his Washington, DC church more often for worship, prayer and just plain peace. Sitting in his usual rear corner pew during Sunday service on Martin Luther King’s actual birthday, the lawmaker meditated on the message of reconciliation clergy promoted to jumpstart Inauguration Week.

He couldn't believe his Party colleagues had tried to gut the House Ethics Office before members were even sworn in for the next session – the aborted attempt sure did not look good with media mania over U.S. intelligence reports of compliance with Russian meddling in the presidential election. He couldn't believe Trump's rejection of his country's own agencies' information on Russian hacking. He couldn't believe the chaos characterizing the Trump transition, exacerbated by the president-elect's denial of confusion between his personal opinions and official policy in his TWITTER tirades. What George continued to believe was his own philosophy: perception is power – and he prayed for a sign to help maintain his sanity as he sought stability during the pending political storms.

After service he took his time greeting parishioners; hugging the elderly, shaking hands with other adults and bouncing babies on his hip. The congregation was his extended family on the East Coast, a family he sensed he'd need in a more intense yet different way in the upcoming year of uncertainty. He didn't leave the sanctuary until his nervousness over his upcoming subcommittee hearings on his infrastructure funding proposals was alleviated and he was pacified. Stepping out of the vestibule to connect with Snipe like a cedar column of calmness, George splintered – almost snapping at an unexpected sight.

“Happy New Year!” Margaret, designer-dressed in her full-figured Sunday best – a form-fitting, espresso-colored Eileen Fisher scrunch-neck, long-sleeve, fine jersey midi-length dress over matching tall, curve-heeled Bella Vita suede dress boots, and with a spacious, smooth black Bottega Veneta tote bag slung over her coat arms – pendulum-waving as she stood in front of a cautious but cordial Snipe. Breathing in the ameliorate atmosphere of fellowship he’d just experienced, George exhaled as polite as possible.

“Happy New Year to you too, Miss Davis. Didn’t know church is included in your outreach activities as Republican National Committee Vice Chair.”

“It isn’t!”

“Well...it’s a little early for Chinese New Year – that doesn’t start for a couple of weeks.”

“Ah know that!”

George wedged himself between Snipe and Margaret, close enough so only she and God could hear: “Then may I ask what the Hell are you doing here?”

“Ah wanted to take you to bruhnch and discuss yohr ahgenda fohr the yearuh!”

Margaret’s words slapped George. Sometimes she was as difficult to understand as her foreign-sounding Charleston dialect.

“Then you should’ve text me first or call my office-”

“What! Ehxcuse me?” Several church members turned their heads toward the couple as they continued to exit. The legislator grinned in their direction, locked arms with his quasi-Republican monitor and dragged her to a street corner out of everyone’s earshot.

“Maggie, this is personal-”

“Ah know that!”

“No, you don’t!”

“Yes! Yes, Ah do!”

“I could’ve had friends with me...or colleagues...even family-”

“Then you could’ve introduced me!”

“I’m going to try this another way, Maggie – What. Do. You. Want?”

“Like Ah said, Ah wahn’t to take you to bruhnch-”

“I’m not available, Maggie,” George lied. “I’ve already got plans for the day.”

Margaret was hurt but continued to hustle. “Then...what ahhout this evening...dinnuh?” Her saucer shaped green eyes propositioned him. “Ah do wahn’t to give you a buhlated New Yearuh’s gift.”

Going to church served his spiritual needs; going with Margaret would serve his secular necessities. Since he blocked her from hijacking his day, George didn’t feel he was giving in by consenting his night.

“Ok.”

“Oooooooooo! Ah’ll pick you and Snipe up around 5 – and dress casual! Dinnuh’s at my place!”

Margaret was known for many things inside the Beltway, but not for any culinary capability. As a family-taught master chef, George attempted to protect his and his guardian’s stomachs.

“Oh-h-h-h...you don’t have to go to any trouble to cook-”

“Ah didn’t. It’s catered.”

“Oh, OK!”

“You already said that.”

“I meant it’s OK you won’t spend so much energy preparing the meal...make sure you have enough stamina for the evening.”

“Oh, Ah will, Ah definitely will.”

“And Snipe can walk in the gym or watch sports in the lobby while we have dessert.”

“Huh?” Margaret seemed confused from her own offer.

“After dinner.”

“Oh – right...right! Well, Ah bettuh let you get going. Ah’m driving today – need a ride somewhereuh?”

Dinner was Southern style: black eyed peas, brown rice, cornbread, collard greens smothered with ham hocks, and sweet tea – a cultural combination meant to bring good luck when consumed on the first day of the year.

“Bettuh late than nevuh!” Margaret said as she removed their emptied plates.

“Never had this before for a New Year’s Day,” George said. “Amazing how food is used for fortune in different societies. I’ll hit a double jackpot this year!”

“How so?”

“With a traditional U.S. New Year’s dinner today and a Chinese New Year dinner in two weeks, I can’t help but have a fantastic year!”

“Sure was good, Miss Margaret.” Snipe signaled by starting for the door. “Know ‘need a lotta time to work it off.”

“Whereuh are you going, Snipe?”

Both men cringed like two caught scheming schoolboys. “T’ th’ gym, ma’am...”

“Who said you had to leave?” Margaret pirouetted with the plates toward the kitchen. “It’s a new yearuh – we areh going to try something new!”

“Maggie!”

“You an’ the’ congressman go ‘head, ma’am – c’n work-out while y’ talk!”

“We can talk in the caruh!”

“Car?”

“Yes, that’s how we get to the something new – we drive thereuh!”

“What are you referring to?”

“It’s a surprise!” Which is how both men felt as Margaret drove and they slunked in their respective seats, too embarrassed to look at each other. They continued to slump during the ride to where ever with Margaret chatting like a political parrot.

“What do you think about the rumors of Michelle Obama as the next DNC Chairuh? Of course, that’s a nothuh reason why they may stay in Washington aftuh leaving the White House since that othuh rumor got blown out of the wathuh when Trump won...Hillahry Clinton ahppointing Bahrack Obama to the Suhpreme Couhrt!...Now that would’ve been a battle fohr the ages...the same Senate that wouldn’t hold hearings on Obama’s nominee would have had to look him in the face as a nominee...and could you imagine if he had been cohnfihmed – they would’ve been ahnothher D.C. powuh couple! Suhpreme Couhrt Justice Bahrack Obama and Dehmocraht National Cohmittee Cahiruhwoman Michelle Obama! Ah’m just amazed Dehmocrats would have that much vision, since they reahly didn’t fuhly embrace the Obamas until theiruh backs wereuh up ahgainst the wall...pohlitics is just so strange...Ah think Trump got elected fohr the same reason Obama won the fihrst time-”

“And what reason is that?”

“Hope!”

“How so?”

“The RNC didn’t commission me to say this...but Ah saw the same reason in different groups when they voted...in 2008 Obama convinced voters of hope for job security and national security when he took over an economy that almost imploded and millions of jobs disappeared...in 2016 Trump convinced voters of hope for job security and national security when he takes over an economy that is still reinventing itself...Ah’ve got contacts in states that tell me a lot of Blacks, Asians and Hispanics in cities voted for Trump because his business background gave them hope, just like the White rural voters-”

“Class and color. You’re saying it came down to class and color?”

“Yes! College educated, professional and middle-class Blacks didn’t vote for Trump, but uneducated, working class Blacks did-”

“Maggie! Don’t assume Blacks voted for Trump because they were illiterate!”

“Ah’m not! Ah’m saying a lot of Black voters without college degrees but with high school, technical and vocational degrees have no jobs and believe Trump will deliver!”

“What do your contacts say about the Hispanic vote?”

“They are more Republican than you think and more individualized. Puerto Ricans in New York tend to be Democrats...but not some Mexicans in California, Texas...and Cubans in Florida – look what happened to Marco Rubio...what Trump said about Mexicans didn’t stop him from winning Florida.”

George braced himself and his own response. “And Asians?”

“You tell me.”

“No, Madam Vice chairwoman – you tell me.”

Margaret tried her best to be tactful, a trait she had to force herself to express. “It depends on whereuh they’reh from, like with Hispanics.”

“And Chinese...Chinese Americans?”

“Like Ah said...it depends on whereuh they’reh from...Taiwahnese tend to fahvor Trump since he’s against the mainland.”

“And us ABC’s?”

“ABC’s?”

“Yes – American Born Chinese.”

“O-o-o-o-o! Ha ha...That’s cute...neveh hurd that befohr!”

“One surprise deserves another. Are we there yet?”

“Ahalmost!”

“You haven’t answered my question. What do your contacts tell you about Trump and ABC’s?”

Margaret was silent for several minutes as a repeat attempt at discretion.

“Well?”

“Ah’m only interested in one ABC’s position...we’reuh hereuh.”

She pulled into a parking spot for a Chinese Lantern Festival in suburban Virginia, with George looking around at the nocturnal rainbow-illuminated arch entrance in stunned amazement, ending his political interrogation.

“Snipe, Ah have tickets fohr you, too, but could you wait fohr us outside the cahr befohr we all go in?” The sentry nodded, bundled up and hopped out as if it was for his life.

Awkwardness pierced the atmosphere between the two remaining stone-faced passengers, both looking at everything except each other, realizing today was the first time they’d seen each other or spoken since the November elections.

“Ah’m – Ah’m sohrry Ah couldn’t get you any money fohr yohr campaign-”

“I won. Isn’t that all that matters?”

“No...no...no, it’s not.”

“Well, Maggie, that’s all that matters to me.”

“Reahllly?”

“Let’s be real, Maggie. Your boss backed Trump and you didn’t. Now he’s going to the White House and you’re not. You’re gonna be working with someone Trump appoints, but we both know not for long. So, I’m asking you again, what do you want, Margaret Susan Davis? To be more exact – what do you want from me?”

With surrendering eyes, Margaret said: “This is the opening day for this Chinese Lantern Festival and...Ah ...Ah...Ah just wanted to spend it with you.”

Impressed with Margaret's cultural crossover attempt, George searched her face with his dark intense almond-shaped eyes like a periscoping python, then unlocked his door and his options. "Do I have a choice?"

###

Late the next morning George propped himself up in his own bed, reflecting on some things Margaret said the previous night as he projected the upcoming day. It was the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday and over 72 hours before the Inauguration.

Despite Margaret's temptation, he had resisted capping-off what turned out as a fun evening among hundreds of irradiated wild paper animals with their own bestial activity afterwards. He thought he'd dream of the floodlit-lantern tigers, pandas, elephants, monkeys and fish like he did when he was a child without a care in the world; instead, he woke up with the care of the world dominating his mind.

While sipping his daily steamy cup of cleansing water, the glassy eyed look of the young Russian woman questioning the election's results seared his memory, igniting a burning desire to do something – anything – as the leader she singled out.

Leader – that's it! A Democrat sponsored bill now in Congress calls for eliminating the Electoral College and elect the President and Vice President by direct vote – what an opportunity! George fired off a text to M. L. Kennedy, asking if he could speak at his student rally on Howard University's campus later that day.

I will announce my bipartisan support for the bill and I will pledge to prod my Party to bring it to the floor for a vote. What a maverick move before Trump is even sworn in – and one answer to the Russian woman’s question along with my own: how do I promote my agenda to heal this country so it won’t fall apart or fall to an external power?

A swarm of people clustered together in Howard University’s main courtyard. Bound to protect themselves from the biting cold and the political climate, they were more anti Trump than pro MLK Day, converging from various communities.

College students were front and center, hailing from all regions across the country: trendsetting Northeasterners, moderate Mid Atlantic’s, engaging Southerners, Bible belt and agrarian Middle Americans, industrialized Mid Westerners and relaxed but energized West Coasters.

International students spurred by the incoming president’s campaign pledges of specific travel bans joined the demonstration out of concern about disruptions in returning home during their studies.

Continuing the political transcendence were students from other colleges and universities throughout the regional District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia which Millennials described by its acronym – the DMV – which one non-student described as “skittles” instead of the Baby Boomer’s “chocolate city” nickname.

Coretta, M. L. Kennedy's sister, surveyed the rainbow crowd from her brother's side. Older than Martin but not as thin nor tall, she was both protector and mediator for her younger brother. Her innate managerial and organizational skills without a college degree kept the nonprofit M. L. setup to manage the CHANGETHECONSTITUTION campaign operational while he pursued politics and his law degree. It was Coretta who arranged the layout of the rally, convincing the university to allow the microphones on the elevated Founders Library steps overlooking the main courtyard for security reasons.

Situated on a hill, the historic Black college was accessible from major streets encircling the campus in a dense inner-city neighborhood. All of the central buildings – Andrew Rankin Chapel, Douglass Hall, Fine Arts, Blackburn Student Center and Locke Hall – allowed an escape from the main yard to their rear, save one: the library. Its posterior was protected by what students dubbed “the Valley”, due to its steep drop in elevation leading down into a cluster of medical, dental and nursing schools. While university officials sometimes permitted events in the lower area, its proximity to an escapable roadway for possible attackers made it less suitable to Coretta to rotate speakers on and off any stage with safety.

With the entrance of the library as a backdrop – and an emergency entrance if necessary – the speaker podium faced a circular area where several walkways converged into a spacious center crammed with activist students clamoring to hear how speaker after speaker like M.L. Kennedy branded a divisive president.

“Just two days ago Trump tweeted criticism of Congressman John Lewis when he said he wouldn’t attend the Inauguration...Trump said the congressman should focus on crime ridden, crumbling inner cities like his district...how uniformed can the president elect be?”

“Some of the wealthiest Blacks in Atlanta live in Lewis’ district...not only are some of Lewis’ constituent’s wealthy...his district includes the prestigious, predominantly white Georgia Tech University...and that is not all...Atlanta’s Hartsfield International Airport is located right in Lewis’ district! Trump doesn’t know his own country!”

“And he doesn’t even know history...he accused Representative Lewis of all talk and no action...Lewis is a civil rights activist of the 1960’s – 1960’s! He led sit ins, got beat up, got arrested, formed the Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee...Where was Donald Trump? I mean, where was Donald Trump not only in the ‘60’s, but just last summer, when Lewis led a sit in on the floor of the House of Representatives to force Republicans to hold a vote on gun legislation? How more active can Congressman Lewis get?”

“At least Lewis still respects the activism that got him elected...and Donald Trump disrespected the spirit of activism and unity by maligning Lewis right before Martin Luther King Jr. Day!”

As the crowd applauded M.L. checked a text alert, held-up his hand for silence and screamed: “Our featured speaker is now U.S. Congressman George Li of San Francisco! He says he has a special announcement! He’ll close out the rally!”

Amid the raucous response, M.L. continued to stir up the crowd to change the Constitution as an act of nonviolence in honor of the day’s namesake. Coretta was muted, noticeable in speech and movement. When the next speaker took the microphone, she jerked her brother to her side.

“Mind telling me what’s going on?”

“Meaning what?”

“Congressman Li – since when did he join CHANGETHECONSTITUTION?”

“I’ve talked with him-”

“When?”

“You know when!”

“Two years ago. Heard from him since?”

“Look, he contacted me – I know that means he’s finally on board.”

“So, he’s going to endorse the ballot?”

“He didn’t say-”

“He didn’t say? And you gonna let him speak?”

“Look, it you got a problem-”

“If I gotta problem? No, you’ve gotta problem if he won’t back the ballot and you lose, ‘cause you’ll be outta the nonprofit, outta Mama and Daddy’s house, and if you don’t straighten up – outta law school!”

###

Saturday morning after the Inauguration found Margaret perched at her RNC desk reviewing her op-ed on the New York Times website to counter the anti-Trump tone of the day’s Women’s March before her departure to attend a brunch:

“The first duty of the new First Lady is the same for every woman – family.

She has to take care of a husband and a son every second of every hour of every day – like millions of women do.

She has to make sure her husband dresses, eats and acts properly and she has to chide him out of public view when he deviates – like millions of women do.

She has to protect her child, make sure his emotional state is not disrupted by snatching him out of school – and from the only home he’s ever known – in the middle of the academic year so he could benefit from the comfort of continuity during change – like millions of women do.

She has to defend her professional reputation, take legal action when defamed by wrongdoing, opportunists, even liars – and challenge them in court, knowing her family would be tarnished if she didn't fight – like millions of women do.

And somewhere she has to find time to take care of herself through annual checkups, daily diet, exercise, attending church, participating in social groups with other family members without appearing vain or conceited or self-centered. The First Lady's work is never done – just like the millions of women who march today.”

An excited staffer burst into Margaret's office, nearly tripping the vice chairwoman on her way out.

“Where are you going? We've got a network morning show that wants a live interview!”

“Ah...Ah was just going to freshen up.”

“With your coat on?”

“Ah didn't have time to take it off-”

“Here – let me hang it for you!” Without waiting, the staffer ripped off her outerwear, seized her purse and ushered her to a conference room.

“We've been trying to get on this Saturday morning show for a while,” the staffer gushed to a skeptical Margaret; just last week the same coworker barely spoke to her.

“Good morning!” The same interim communications director who had taken bets in private on Margaret’s longevity now greeted her like a champion. “We’re doing a live hook up – as usual, you look flawless! Just let the crew test your lighting before the cameras roll.”

A production assistant plunked Margaret down in a studio chair as a makeup artist, technician and camera operator swirled around her. More used to hijacking than being hijacked, she felt uncentered and started a deep breathing exercise George once shared before her interview:

ANCHOR: Good morning and welcome back...it’s 9 am Eastern Time and you’re looking at the scene of today’s Women’s March in Washington where thousands are expected to gather in part to protest the presidential election results by joining a growing Resistance Movement to Donald Trump’s White House...

Joining us now live is Republican National Committee Vice chairwoman Margaret Susan Davis who wrote a very poignant piece published in today’s New York Times supporting First Lady Melania Trump...Ms. Davis, thanks for joining us!

MARGARET: Good morning...and thanks for an opportunity to share my views.

ANCHOR: Ms. Davis...your view, not the RNC?

MARGARET: If the RNC didn’t agree, I wouldn’t be talking with you from RNC headquarters.

ANCHOR: Good point...so, if you have RNC support, why didn't you mention the First Lady by name?

MARGARET: Thanks for asking me that...Ah wanted to describe how Melania Trump is no different from all her predecessors, regardless of their name...as a woman.

ANCHOR: So, why aren't more Republican women participating in any counter rallies?

MARGARET: How do you know they aren't?

ANCHOR: We certainly haven't seen any upfront.

MARGARET: That doesn't mean no Republican women are not engaging...as a Republican, Ah think Ah speak for all women who know if this political process has to survive...if this country is going to reconcile..if we are going to move forward...women need to take the lead – no matter what political party we are!

ANCHOR: Margaret Susan Davis...RNC Vice chairwoman...thank you.

MARGARET: Thank you for hearing me out.

As the day continued, live interviews for Margaret snowballed from one-on-ones in the morning on all major networks; to live split-screen debates on mid-day and afternoon cable shows; and taped interviews until late afternoon for Sunday Morning talk programs. It wasn't until the staff which had questioned her loyalty insisted on treating her to dinner that she realized she'd forgotten all about her brunch commitment earlier in the day.

Reece continued to wait in the downtown Trump Hotel lobby with bristling anxiety after hosting a group of his hard-core constituents for a victory luncheon. He had planned to introduce Margaret to quash rumors of his sexuality and his marital status since he was rarely seen with any female companions in person or online. He considered her appearance as payback for transporting her home to Charleston after her miscarriage several months ago, and for staying with her until she recovered; it was the least he could have done since she lost what he believed was their child.

Grandfather and Father Williams were also in the foyer. The elder Williams was seated in a plush chair; Reece's father stood next to his hyper son.

"Women are never on time," Mr. Williams stated as if fact. "Your mother was late for her own wedding – not to me, of course."

Reece sliced his father with sharp looks. "How many times has Mum been married?"

“Twice.”

“I never knew that.”

“Only reason I’m telling you now is so you’ll be prepared for whatever this woman does – and continue to wait.”

Ignoring his father’s advice Reece whipped out his phone again and texted. No response. He called. Voicemail. He slammed his fist on the top of his grandfather’s seat, shoved his phone back in his pocket and stormed away, stomping over one of the mini confederate flags one of his Virginia constituents from his rural military district had dropped earlier.