

CHAPTER 21: EXPOSURE aka WE KNOW (with three entirely different men)

With all the drama and bitterness developing between the newly formed parties you would think Hamilton would be a little more on guard with respect to his reputation and public persona. You would be wrong. ONCE AGAIN! Why does it seem like every outline begins the same way?

Not only has the affair with Maria Reynolds lasted almost a full year now, Eliza was also pregnant with their 5th child ... PERFECT! GREAT JOB, HAMILTON.

ENTER JACOB CLINGMAN: A Menacing new spectator (page 409)

- A friend of James "Garbage Person" Reynolds.
- Former clerk of House Speaker, Fredrick Muhlenberg in Pennsylvania
- He arrives at the Reynolds home one day to find Ham leaving (hmmmm)
- Then another time while visiting with Maria ... ALONE BTW (more on that later) Ham came knocking on the door. Upon discovering Clingman's presence he tried to cover by saying he was "ordered" by her husband to deliver a message. As if anyone would believe that Hamilton would take orders from James Reynolds. Ham. Please. You're a better liar than this.

Naturally Clingman asked Maria what that was all about and she bragged that Ham had paid Reynolds "upwards of eleven hundred dollars" !! Which by the way now = \$15,461.02. Reynolds also bragged to Clingman that he received money from Ham for speculation.

Because he was now curious, Clingman accompanied him on a visit to Ham. He waited outside and watched as Hamilton gave Reynolds \$100

- Let's pause for a minute to talk about how fake the name Jacob Clingman sounds. Was he the Saul Goodman of his time? Perhaps.

HAMILTON CLAIMS!

- That he tried to end the affair with Maria but each time he did she responded with weeps, groans and theatrics.
- Maria begged him to visit her again and James did as well arguing that whenever Ham is with her, she is cheerful and kind. And when he's been gone for sometime she becomes cold and wishes to be alone. UGH

OH GOOD WILLIAM DUER IS BACK

- Reynolds was under the impression that Hamilton made 30k from his "illicit relationship" with William Duer aka money for speculation - WRONG- but he GAVE THAT INFORMATION TO CLINGMAN ANYWAY.
- Reynolds was always smart to send his letters when Ham was feeling vulnerable. One being right when Hamilton was about to attend a meeting to rescue The Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures from William Duer's embezzlements
- The day after Duer was imprisoned both James and Maria tag teamed on Ham with their own letters and as Chernow says "acted their roles to perfection." James acted as the strong but sad husband who had lost Maria's affections because of the affair. And Maria played up the confused wife who was smitten with Ham and went on about how cruel James was to her.
- The excerpt from Maria on page 410 is very sad.
- Also, Chernow says Maria "spouted poppycock." I mean, you guys. Slow claps.

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- James tells Ham: “I find whenever you have been with [Maria] she is cheerful and kind.” Cue Fiona Apple! “If she's part of the reason you are how you are she's alright with me...”
- James Reynolds wanted yet another meeting with Hamilton and GUESS WHAT HAMILTON WENT TO MEETING!! You guys. Why. Whyyyyyy. Ham shows up and Garbage Person Reynolds demands even more money because there's even more distress and drama caused by Hamilton and only money will solve it. STOP.
 - Excerpt on Page 411. Chernow says that Reynolds pretended to be a “proud family man” who needed the cash for his family who was going through tough times. Nonsense, but he'd request money every few days.

PIECING IT TOGETHER ... FINALLY ... KIND OF

- Maria tells Ham that her husband wishes to speak with him in person. Whatever happened when they met must have been significant because from then on Reynolds grew much more confident in asking for larger and larger sums of money from Ham. \$30 here \$45 there etc ...
- Hamilton became so wary of Reynolds that he began to disguise his handwriting in letters.
- Reynolds has the nerve to tell Ham that his “romance” with Maria has destroyed their marriage (YOU DON'T SAY!) and that she now treats him so cruelly *EYE ROLL EMOJI* Six days later he demands another \$30.
- On May 2nd 1792, Ham received a letter from Reynolds that finally woke him up a bit. In the letter Reynolds explains that he had hoped Maria's infatuation with Ham will subside and since it had not he was now prohibiting Hamilton from seeing her anymore (umm ok) He scolded Hamilton for sneaking in through the back door of their home as if he would be ashamed to be seen associating with them.
- He then remembers Jacob Clingman “accidentally” coming upon him and beings to think his enemies were trying to entrap him. Welcome to the present Ham!
- Maria continued to try and win him back but he was no longer responsive. It wasn't until he felt a threat to his career (as opposed to his preggers wife) that made Hamilton come to his senses. (...the fences inside are not for real if we feel as we did, and I doooooooo can't you recALL when this all beGAN it was only you and meeeeeee, it was only me and youuuuuuuu...)
- “Hamilton probably thought the whole nightmarish episode had ended when it had only just begun. Incredibly, he had allowed this affair, enacted in the heart of the nation's capital, to proceed for almost a year. In a letter to a Federalist politician that September, Hamilton continued to present himself as a paragon of virtue, saying, ‘I pledge myself to every part of my conduct, whether as a private citizen or as a public officer, can only serve to establish the perfect purity of it.’ The treasury secretary, it turned out, did protest too much.” (page 412)
- On August 22nd, Eliza gave birth to their fifth child: John Church Hamilton. Tobias Lear decided to describe it as, “The boy... and the mother are doing unusually well.” OR you could describe Eliza as a superhero or maybe try to be positive about it but okay. Fine. Unusually well. CUE EYE ROLL EMOJI. About everything, at this point.

TWO PEAS IN A GARBAGE POD - Chernow says, “The Reynolds Affair might never have come to light if James Reynolds and Jacob Clingman had not been charged.” (page 413) Which is awful but doesn't it make you think of Lebowski? “New shit has come to light!” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gblv7W7rhx4>

- Reynolds and Clingman were charged with defrauding the US government of \$400 when they posed as executors of the estate of a supposedly deceased war veteran who has a claim against the government
- They even convinced a man named John Delbar to perjure himself in order to back up their story.
 - And it's INSANE. According to Chernow, these two garbage people pretended to be executors to the estate of a super fake sounding Ephraim Goodenough. THAT IS NOT A TYPO. GOOD ENOUGH! It's like they looked at each other and said, “That's good enough, it's the goddamn 1790s let's just write whatever” and then they did. Then they got this Delbar doofus to perjure himself and say he knew Mr. Goodenough.

- But now we all feel like jerks, right? Because Goodenough was actually a real person. He poached the name from a confidential list of soldiers who owed money to the government. They stole it from the Treasury. - that's a big deal!!! And super wrong!!!
 - Sorry.... That name still feels fake.
- Because the Dept of Treasury filed the charges, Reynolds and Clingman end up in jail. And Reynolds naturally suspects Hamilton is behind this. He wrote to Ham for help with no reply.
- Ham gets word that Reynolds is shooting off at the mouth in jail that he could "make disclosures injurious to the character of some head of a department" (p. 413) Ham sees where this is going.
- Jacob Clingman is released on bail because he turned to his former boss, Congressman Frederick Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania. He agreed to help out Clingman but not Reynolds because he heard he was a "rascal" *EVERYONE KNOWS YOU'RE GARBAGE, REYNOLDS!*
- Clingman couldn't leave it alone though and kept telling Muhlenberg that he had damning info against Ham and kept dropping hints that Reynolds had it in his power to out him in regards to speculation.
 - Muhlenberg recalled, "Clingman, unasked, frequently dropped hints to me that Reynolds had it in his power, very materially, to injure the secretary of the treasury and that Reynolds knew several very improper transactions of his." (page 414)
 - Muhlenberg said that Reynolds' "had it in his power to hang the secretary of the Treasury." (Page 414)
- Shifty Maria also kept some notes from Ham even after he asked her to BUUUUUUURRRNNN them.
- AND! Maria made moves! She made appointments with "high officials" like PA's governor Thomas Mifflin (No relation to Dunder Mifflin) and told him all about her relationship with Hamilton and guess what HE FELL FOR IT TOO and totally sympathized with her.

LET'S LET HIM KNOW WHAT WE KNOW

- Having no idea about the affair, Muhlenberg and James Monroe (another Virginian. We know where his loyalties lie) visited Maria to gather information about speculation. She started off not talking but then mentioned her husband "could tell something that would make some of the heads of departments tremble" (p. 415) and to boost her credibility showed them one of Ham's letters (THAT MARIA QUOTE THO)
- Reynolds was released from prison and had a brief meeting with Hamilton shortly after. After which he fled and vanished from Philadelphia altogether... BOI BYE.
 - Real quick. Hours after he was released from prison, he hired a "young female messenger" to show up at Hamilton's doorstep to set a meet. Chernow says he and Clingman paced outside, waiting for a response, and the girl said Ham would respond in the morning.
- His disappearance only made Muhlenberg and Monroe's suspicions grow
- The two of them along with Representative Abraham B. Venable of Virginia drafted a letter to Washington on their "findings" and that they suspected Hamilton was guilty of speculation. Before sending it off to G. Wash though they felt they should pay Hamilton a visit first and confront him.
- 3 men did visit him but it's not Burr, Jefferson & Madison. This is a big change up in the narrative from the history but it makes total sense for the show.
- So, on the morning of December 15th, Muhlenberg, Monroe and Venable arrived at Hamilton's office *BUH NUH NUH NUH NUH*
- They tell him they have discovered an "improper connection" between him and Reynolds and present to him his own letters.
- Ham immediately verified he had written them and then said if they would come to his house that evening he would eliminate all doubt as to his innocence. Nice move for Ham to redirect and place more of the power on himself.
- Oliver Wolcott Jr. Who prosecuted Reynolds and Clingman was also invited.

HA! YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT YOU'RE ASKING ME TO CONFESS

- That night, the men expected to hear all about government corruption and speculation. Instead, Hamilton told them everything about his affair with Maria Reynolds.
- In typical Ham fashion he went into great detail and going over everything from how James was basically pimping out his wife, to Maria's letters and James' blackmail demands.
- Once they realized his betrayal was of the marital kind, they told him he didn't need to go on any longer. But naturally he did until the whole story was out.
- Chernow describes this info purging from Ham as if he were "both exonerating and flagellating himself at once" (p. 416)
- The group was stunned to have just witnessed this confession and apologized for invading his privacy. The letter they had planned to send to Washington got shelved.
 - "The small delegation seemed satisfied with Hamilton's chronicle, if not a little flustered by the awkward situation." (page 416)
 - Arguably the best part? "Their accusatory letter to Washington was shelved." GO. HOME.
- Afterwards Muhlenberg confessed to Wolcott that he was sympathetic towards Hamilton and wished he had not heard his humiliating confession.
- Monroe on the other hand ... continued to have meetings with Jacob Clingman on the subject who complained to Monroe the next months that Hamilton had been cleared of any corruption charges. And they told this to Maria as well who "wept immoderately" upon hearing the news.
- Hamilton began to wonder whether then men would actually keep their word about not telling another soul what they saw. He asked the men to make copies of the documents they had shown him.
- Problem here was that he allowed THEM to make the copies. Monroe brought this to John Beckley who was a fierce Jeffersonian loyalist and made a set for himself to keep.
- Even worse, the man with the originals was James Monroe who then said he "deposited the papers with a friend". That friend was more than likely, Jefferson. Later that month Monroe published his final installment of "The Vindication of Mr. Jefferson" and in it alluded to his knowledge of the Reynolds affair to serve as a warning to Hamilton. For the rest of Hamilton's time as Treasury Secretary he lived with the knowledge hanging over him that his enemies were privy to the damaging information about his private life.

THE END OF MR. AND MRS. REYNOLDS

- Shockingly, James and Maria's marriage did not survive this. In May 1793 Maria changes her name back to Mary and filed for divorce in New York. Her lawyer? Aaron Burr. Also YAS GIRL RECLAIM YOUR NAME. Or not? I don't know. You're an onion.
- She accused James of having committed adultery himself a year earlier with a woman by the name of Eliza Flavinier from Dutchess County. The timing of this accusation is interesting as it is around a month after Hamilton stopped paying blackmail money to James suggesting that Maria had now outlived her usefulness to him.
- The same day the divorce was made official Maria married Garbage Person #2 Jacob Clingman. Oy vey.
- Since Burr represented Maria in this ordeal he too became privy to the private affairs Alexander Hamilton

LET FUTURE HISTORIANS WONDER

- While there are no letters between Alexander and Eliza that reference the affair he slipped in a commentary on adultery in the middle of an unpublished essay on the need for American neutrality ... as you do
- In it he talks of his faith in marital fidelity and how adultery not only damages families but also has a lasting negative impact on the adulterer as well as the deceived spouse

- The passage (p. 418) is full of metaphor and comparisons to the United States as your “wife” and wandering to a foreign country would be detrimental to that loyalty ... *eye roll*

Chernow ends by making it clear that the Reynolds affair was completely inexcusable and the situation was even worse for Hamilton because of his high powered position and the fact that he repeatedly missed opportunities to end it despite the enduring loyalty shown to him by his pregnant wife.