

**Un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, sept, huit, neuf**

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by [Bow](#)

## Summary

Nine moments in the arc of Eliza and Alexander's relationship.

*un*

Angelica Schuyler is looking for a mind at work, but her sister Eliza won't know what she's looking for until someone serves it to her on a platter. That's what Angelica tells her, anyway. She may have uttered the words in frustration, but Angelica tends to be right when she's insistent.

*deux*

She's glad she let Angelica talk her into coming downtown. Arms linked into her sisters', Eliza takes in the scene, her eyes flitting from the workers to the soldiers to the students milling about the commons. All around her people appear to be living active lives of their own design, speaking to one another with passion, striding with purpose. Eliza wishes she could have that kind of direction in her own life. But she'll have to be content with her place here: anchored between her sisters, three women in candy-colored dresses, on a clandestine stroll they'll have to hide from their father.

*trois*

She spots him from across the ballroom. The room feels close from too many candles and bodies, and when she sees him, all the heat rises to Eliza's face. But he doesn't even glance in her direction. Right away he's drawn toward the center of the room, toward the spotlight where Eliza's brilliant sister holds court. He is transfixed by Angelica, and Eliza senses that she's lost something she didn't even realize she wanted.

But then Eliza watches as Angelica leads him to the quiet corner of the room where Eliza is waiting. By the time Alexander Hamilton has kissed her hand, Eliza knows that she is helpless.

It turns out Angelica was right again: now Eliza knows what she's looking for.

*quatre*

His first letter arrives the next day. Eliza breaks the seal and reads giddily, greedily, as Alexander professes his love for her. By the time she reaches the end of the page, she is smitten. Angelica counsels her to be careful. She says Alexander is the type of man who would do whatever it takes to survive. But caution is lost on Eliza. She knows all she needs to: she loves him, and he is hers.

*cinq*

As she waits for her new husband to come to her that night, Eliza remembers the day piece by piece. How Peggy squealed at the sight of Eliza in her wedding dress. How Angelica wiped away a tear or two, then swatted her sister on the shoulder and kissed her cheek in congratulations. How she felt a pang of sympathy for Alexander, with no family of his own to stand up with him, in contrast to her shining sisters. The look on her husband's sweet face just after they were wed: direct and hungry, eyes glittering behind his long lashes.

His hips press against hers insistently; he's a man who knows what he's after. He breathes hard. He kisses her lips and the side of her face like it's something he needs. His hand strokes through her unbound hair, the fingers combing through the strands so intensely that it is almost painful.

Afterward, he's still. He cradles her head against his chest and, for a moment, the frantic intensity he carries with him dies away. She wonders if she has managed to quench it. But the next morning, he is back at his desk before she has left their bed, nonstop as ever, with the fierce look back in its place.

*six*

She has one hand on her belly and the other on Alexander's left shoulder, rubbing in small circles, in a gesture that sometimes calms him--a bit, for a time. But today it's not working. He sits beside her on the sofa and whips between extremes: hunger for battlefield glory, joy at the prospect of fatherhood, shame over his poverty, eagerness to rise above his station, anxiety for his wife during her confinement.

She takes his hand in both of hers. It's a boy, she tells him. She can imagine their son with her husband's smile and his fierce intelligence, his dark eyes.

Alexander smiles down at her. He puts his hand gently over hers on her stomach. And that will be enough.

*sept*

It's Philip's ninth birthday, and he is sitting in front of his mother at the piano. She keeps time for him and bends over him to correct his playing.

She places the fingers of her right hand over his, guiding him through the melody until his little fingers know how to move as well as hers do. She squeezes his hand, then steps back to watch him play on his own.

She is giving him the soft things her husband never had--languages and music, a comfortable home.

"Un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, sept, huit, nuif," she sings, and he repeats it after her. His voice is sweet and high. At nine years old, he is still a child, but he's growing up fast: her husband's son.

*huit*

Alexander publishes the Reynolds Pamphlet, and it is impossible to meet his eyes now. Eliza has never craved fame or attention, and yet here are her most private agonies made public, revealed to the world by her own husband. Eliza cloisters herself at home, and Angelica sails from London to comfort her. Angelica sneers at him, curses him, calls him an Icarus in a way that makes the word seem like the harshest indictment of character.

*nuif*

When the dust has settled as much as it ever will, Eliza Hamilton sits down on the edge of a stone bench. She takes a packet of letters out of her cloak and loosens the twine that binds them. She begins with the first letter he ever sent her. She still knows its contents nearly by heart, remembers the rush of joy she felt on its long-ago arrival. But Eliza, too, will do what it takes to survive. She dips the folded edge of the letter into the flame of her lantern. The paper takes a moment to catch fire. She waits for it. Then she watches it burn.

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