



TIMELESS

In This Moment

BOOK 2

GABRIELLE MEYER

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Books by Gabrielle Meyer

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When the Day Comes

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This is a work of historical reconstruction; the appearances of certain historical figures are therefore inevitable. All other characters, however, are products of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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To my parents,
George and Cathy VanRisseghem.
Your faith in Christ and your belief in me
are two of the greatest gifts I've ever been given.
Thank you for everything.
I love you.



But do not let this one fact escape your notice,
beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand
years, and a thousand years like one day.

—2 Peter 3:8

1



APRIL 18, 1861
WASHINGTON, DC

Most days, I could pretend that my life was normal. I was a twenty-year-old woman searching for my place in the world, trying to decide my future. The only difference was that I had *three* normal lives, and on my twenty-first birthday, just eight and a half months from now, I would have to choose which one to keep and which to forfeit. Forever.

As I stood in my home on Lafayette Square, pulling long satin gloves onto my hands, it was easier not to think about the daunting choices set before me, or the other paths I occupied. I had become adept at living in the moment—a skill many people wished they could master, though it had come at a great cost to me.

Here, I was the daughter of an important US Senator and had served as his official hostess since my mother died. We were also on the cusp of the American Civil War.

But at the moment, we were late to the White House.

“Papa,” I called from the foyer as Saphira, my maid, handed

me the second glove. “Mrs. Lincoln does not like when we’re late.”

Papa finally left his office and joined me, pulling on his own gloves. “I’m surprised she didn’t cancel,” he said, his usual good mood snuffed out by the stress of the week.

“She’s waited her entire life to be in the White House.” I reminded him, knowing how much Mary Todd Lincoln reveled in being the First Lady. “She’d hardly let a little thing like a war dampen her plans.”

Papa smiled for the first time in days. “I’m sorry to be late, Margaret. I was distracted.” He accepted his cape from Joseph, our butler and man-of-all-work. There was agitation and worry in the tilt of Papa’s distinguished eyebrows, and I suspected it was more than distraction that had made him late.

“Is something wrong?” I asked.

Papa tried to wipe the worry from his face. “Nothing to concern you with, my dear. Just work.”

“When you are one of President Lincoln’s advisers, work is not just work.”

Saphira lifted my blue velvet cape over my shoulders, but I didn’t take my eyes off Papa. He was never difficult to read. He’d been a minister and a military man, once upon a time, and held himself with confidence and purpose. Now he was a senator and close confidante of the president. But I’d never seen his shoulders stoop so low or his face fill with such grief.

“I do not wish to ruin your evening.” He put his hand at the small of my back and guided me toward the front door. “The carriage is waiting, and this is supposed to be an enjoyable dinner party.”

He nodded for Joseph to open the front door, allowing me to glimpse the gloomy evening. The day had been cold and dreary, with constant raindrops falling upon the roof of our townhouse and turning the streets to mud.

“You do not need to shelter me from the truth,” I said as I

set the hood of my cape over my dark brown curls, intricately woven together by Saphira's talented hands.

"You are right," he agreed, offering a placating smile. "But this is my problem, not yours."

Wet mist hit my face, though Joseph lifted an umbrella over my head. He and Saphira were two of the three servants we had employed since arriving in the capital. We'd only been in Washington for five months, but I had quickly acclimated, since I also lived there in 2001. Much had changed, but many things were still the same. And it was much better than living in the wilds of Salem, Oregon, where Papa had moved us last year to run for the Senate.

The rain splattered mud everywhere and caused the white stucco of nearby St. John's Church to look like it was weeping. I hiked up my silk skirts, hoping to avoid the mud as Papa held my elbow and helped me to the carriage.

The driver jumped off the top of the vehicle and opened the side door. I accepted his help as I stepped into the carriage and arranged my voluminous skirts around me. The width of fashionable hoopskirts, especially here in Washington, had become extravagant—as had most things among the upper echelon of Washington society. I couldn't imagine what my fellow medical students at Georgetown University Hospital in 2001 would think of the clothing I wore in 1861. I shuddered to think of walking into the ER in my hoopskirts and silk gown.

Papa took the seat across from me as Joseph closed the door and the carriage began to move toward the White House. If it hadn't been raining, we would have walked, but the mud was so thick, our shoes and clothing would be ruined by the time we got there.

"This rain is such a nuisance," Papa said, trying to change the subject, but I could still see the concern in his eyes.

I leaned forward and put my hand on his knee. "You can trust me, Papa. What is troubling you?"

There was nothing he could tell me that would shock or surprise me. I knew more than he did about the coming war—things he could never imagine—because I also lived in 1941 and 2001. When I went to sleep here, I woke up in 1941, and then I woke up in 2001 the day after that, with no time passing here while I was away. I knew how the future would play out for America.

I just wish I knew how it would play out for me.

I wanted to tell Papa that our nation would survive, though the cost would be devastating and we would lose our beloved president and friend. But he didn't know I was a time-crosser and would not understand. Besides, I didn't want to risk changing history by telling him the truth.

He must have seen the determination in my face, because he said, "It's becoming increasingly obvious that there are spies in Washington sending information to Jefferson Davis in Richmond, and we have no idea who they are or how to find them. It's almost impossible to strategize when we don't know who is carrying our plans to the south. Now that Virginia has seceded from the Union, the risk is even greater."

Everyone had been preoccupied with war for months, but this week was different. It had been six days since Confederate soldiers in South Carolina fired upon Fort Sumter, three days since President Lincoln called for seventy-five thousand volunteers to defend the Union, and one day since Virginia joined the Southern cause. We'd known it was coming, yet it felt like the final blow. Virginia lay just across the Potomac River from Washington, and at any moment the Virginians could cross the river and overtake our defenseless capital. With only a handful of soldiers to protect the president, they could easily win this war before it even started.

Papa placed his hand over mine and gave it a light squeeze. "I can see the news distresses you. Put it from your mind, Margaret. It is not your burden to carry."

“It is no more distressing than the other news we’ve had this week.” Just beyond the windows of the carriage, the White House came into view, shining like a beacon of hope amid the storm clouds. If I was going to learn anything more from Papa, I needed to hurry. “Do we know where the spies are getting their information? Are they in the White House? Congress? Could one of them be at the gathering tonight?”

“I’m afraid it is entirely possible, but I don’t want you to worry.”

“How could I not worry? What if I inadvertently give information to the wrong person?”

“You don’t know anything you shouldn’t. Besides, as I’ve said, this is my problem, not yours.” He stared at me for several moments, dropping his chin to really look at me. “You’re not going to let this go, are you?”

I leaned forward, a smile tilting my lips. I knew my dimples undid his resolve. “I can help. I have connections, Pa—”

“No.”

“If the spies move within our social circles, I can find them.”

“It is far too dangerous. These spies are risking their lives, and they would not hesitate to take yours. You know nothing about espionage.”

“Most of the people spying for the war effort know nothing about espionage.” I leaned a little closer, my corset tightening. “Where do you suspect the Southern spies are getting their information?”

He sighed. He’d battled my strong will before and knew I wouldn’t give up. “We don’t know if they are getting information through their work or if it’s coming through social connections. What we do know is that they are passing along vital information that only the people closest to the president know—so they are working at the very top.”

The carriage rolled to a stop at the front door of the White House and jolted as the driver climbed down. My mind spun

with the possibilities of who might be spying on the president and his cabinet. Did I know them? Was it someone I was close to? Would they be sitting next to me at dinner tonight?

The driver opened the door, and Papa stepped out, looking relieved to end the conversation. He extended his hand to me, and I allowed him to help me alight from the carriage under the large portico of the White House.

When my skirts were settled about me, Papa tucked my hand into the crook of his elbow. “Forget I mentioned any of it, Margaret.”

I could not forget what he’d said. If spies were working in the social circles I moved in, I needed to be careful.

“Don’t look so serious.” Papa lifted my chin with his gloved hand. “If we’re fortunate and God Almighty shines His favor upon our cause, the war will be over before it starts. Everyone knows the South is bluffing, and when the fighting gets underway, they’ll soon realize we are serious. They’ll come to their senses, and we’ll have a resolution we can all live with.”

Even as he said the words, a cold wind sliced through the White House portico, portending a future I knew to be far different.



A doorman opened the front door and allowed Papa and me to enter without asking for our names or invitations or searching us to see if we had weapons. Papa had told me the doormen kept concealed pistols on their person, but they allowed anyone and everyone to enter the White House. At any given moment, there could be a hundred or more strangers waiting in the halls for an audience with Mr. Lincoln, sometimes for days on end. It was also common to see Tad and Willie Lincoln, the president’s young sons, running wild and unchaperoned through the large house, upon the roof, or in the yard and nearby neighborhood.

How different the security of the White House was in 1861, as opposed to 1941 or 2001.

We were directed through the entrance hall to the Red Room at the back of the house, but before we reached it, a set of doors opened down the hallway, and the Lincolns appeared. A gentleman was at the president's side, speaking quickly. Abraham Lincoln bent to hear, his face solemn and serious as he nodded.

President Lincoln was not a handsome man, but he was kind and wise. I'd known him most of my life, since he and Papa had been close friends from their days serving in the Illinois House of Representatives. But no matter how many times I was in his company, I never tired of the awe I felt, though it was always followed by dread. To know he would die in less than four years—and I could do nothing to stop it—tore my heart in two. It was one of the things my time-crossing parents in 1941 had taught me from an early age. I could not knowingly change history. If I did, I would forfeit my life in that path.

The president noticed us standing there and lifted his head, causing the man beside him to stop talking and look our way. My gaze caught with the stranger's. I had never seen him before. He was new to the White House—or at least, he was new to me.

The Lincolns greeted my father, and then the president turned his tired smile upon me. "It's nice to see you again, Miss Wakefield," he said, taking my gloved hand in his.

I curtsied with deference. "And you, Mr. President." Then I turned to Mrs. Lincoln and offered her a curtsy as well.

"May I present Mr. Graydon Cooper?" the president asked.

I was deeply conscious of Mr. Cooper, though I'd focused on the Lincolns. When our gazes collided again, this time much closer, I couldn't help but admire him. He was dressed in a fine black tailcoat with a white vest and black trousers. In his late twenties, he already possessed an air of sophistication and charm many of the stodgy politicians in Washington lacked. His dark brown hair was thick and wavy, short on the sides and

a bit longer on the top. But it was his eyes, which were a deep, velvet brown, that arrested my attention.

“Mr. Graydon Cooper,” President Lincoln continued, “may I present to you Senator Edward Wakefield and his daughter, Miss Margaret Wakefield?”

“How do you do?” Mr. Cooper shook Papa’s hand and then bowed over mine. Though he had recently been in a deep and serious conversation with the president of the United States, his eyes were smiling now, as if he knew something I didn’t. His voice held a cultured British accent, and his grip was surprisingly strong.

“How do you do?” I responded as I curtsied, mindful of his warm touch through the layers of our gloves. He was a splendidly handsome man, though from the confidence he exuded, I suspected he knew it.

“Mr. Cooper was just appointed to a position within the War Department,” the president explained, obviously happy at the announcement. “He’ll be one of Mr. Cameron’s aides.”

“We’re quite pleased with him,” Mrs. Lincoln added in her Kentucky drawl. She was festooned in a beautiful rose-colored silk gown and elaborate headdress. “Mr. Cooper is new to Washington, so I hoped you young people might get acquainted this evening.” She looked between Mr. Cooper and me with a self-satisfied smile. “I’ve put you together at supper. I hope you don’t mind.”

I had never known her to be a matchmaker, but she had a sparkle in her eyes. She was not popular in Washington, but I liked her.

“I don’t mind,” Mr. Cooper said, meeting my gaze again.

“Speaking of supper.” Mrs. Lincoln moved toward the doors to the Red Room. “It’s time we greet our guests and lead them into the dining room. Mr. Lincoln and I were late, and we’ve held up the meal. Shall we?”

“I was late?” Mr. Lincoln asked with a chuckle. He touched

the lace at his wife's sleeve with his gloved hand. "Perhaps you and Mrs. Keckley should start your work earlier in the day."

She ignored his comment about her dressmaker and pushed her way into the Red Room. There, in her abrupt fashion, she announced that everyone must follow her into dinner.

Mr. Cooper offered his arm to me, his eyes still smiling. "It appears we've been paired, Miss Wakefield. If we're to sit together, may I escort you into dinner?"

Why did his question feel more like a challenge? One I wanted to accept? "You may."

I slipped my hand into the crook of his arm, and we walked into the State Dining Room. A large, gaudy chandelier hung from the center of the ceiling, and a white tablecloth lined the table, which was laden with fine china and crystal goblets. Yellow flowers graced the center of the table, matching the yellowed wallpaper and discolored rug. This room, like almost all the others in the White House, was drafty and rundown. Mold grew in the corners, and the furniture was in a sorry state of disrepair. Mrs. Lincoln lamented the condition of the home and often discussed her plans to make it the showpiece it was meant to be, but many naysayers thought it a frivolous expense, given the oncoming war. It was one of the many things that made her unpopular, even with men and women in her own political party.

Mr. Cooper held out my chair, and I thanked him. He seemed to be studying me. For some reason, it put me on edge, though I had nothing to hide—not really. He smelled of a heady cologne I didn't recognize, and when he drew close to take his seat, I had to force myself to think about something other than his nearness. There were spies to uncover, and a handsome stranger was a terrible distraction.

Mrs. Lincoln presided over the dinner table. "Let us not speak a word of war this evening." She looked at her husband pointedly. "Tonight," she continued, "we will strive to forget

about the rebels in the South, and those still among us in this godforsaken city, and enjoy ourselves like civilized folks.”

“Hear, hear,” several men said as they raised their crystal goblets.

I studied the men and women around the table. There were twenty of us, all important in Mr. Lincoln’s world. Could one of them be a spy? It was impossible to know without listening to conversations, taking note of strange behaviors, and watching for unlikely alliances.

No one held my attention as much as the man beside me, though. He did not raise his goblet to toast like the others, nor smile in agreement, and it made me pause. If he was loyal to the Lincolns, serving in the War Department, shouldn’t he have shown the same enthusiasm as everyone else? Instead, his face remained neutral, almost calculating.

Who was this man? Where had he come from? Almost everyone in President Lincoln’s close circle was a person I had known or known of for most of my life. Mr. Cooper was completely new to me. Not to mention, he was a foreigner.

A bowl of steaming tomato soup was set before me, redolent with the scent of basil, yet I suddenly had no appetite. Nerves bound up my stomach as I wondered about Mr. Cooper’s allegiance to the Union. Was he a risk to the country and the president I loved?

“Do you enjoy these sorts of affairs, Miss Wakefield?” Mr. Cooper asked, interrupting my thoughts.

“I don’t mind them. Do you?” I asked in return.

That same smile tilted his eyes—the one that suggested he knew a joke I didn’t. “I think this one might turn out to be quite enjoyable.”

“I have a feeling you might be right.”

“I’m rarely wrong.”

I laughed at that—I couldn’t help it. He seemed completely sure of himself, though I could tell he was teasing.

He smiled with me. “I believe you enjoy these social responsibilities, but I’d wager you would much prefer to do something with more substance or purpose. Perhaps you have a cause you like to champion, one that might not be socially acceptable.”

His comment took me off guard, though I tried hard not to show it. I would prefer to be studying medicine or treating the sick and injured—but those were jobs I did in 1941 and 2001. Here, in 1861, I was not free to follow my passion. Not yet.

I could not let him know he was right. It would be easier to tease him back and ask a leading question of my own. “Are you a mind reader, Mr. Cooper? Perhaps part of a circus act before you joined us in Washington?”

He picked up his silver spoon and dipped it into his soup, the smile still in his eyes. “A circus act? No. A mind reader? Perhaps.”

“Then I will strive to think of nothing when I’m in your presence.”

“That would be a shame.” He had a way of making me feel like I was the only other person in the room with him. “I see great intelligence in your eyes. You are an old soul, Miss Wakefield. Wise beyond your years. I would hate for you to hide that from me.”

My mood grew serious as we studied one another. Could he see the truth behind my eyes? I *was* an old soul. I’d lived for over sixty years, in three different paths, gaining wisdom and knowledge. I had three different bodies but one conscious mind. I looked identical in each time—twenty years old—but what happened to me in one path didn’t affect my physical bodies in the others. If I was sick with measles in one, I was healthy in the other. If I fractured a bone in one, my bones in the other were completely intact. The only thing that remained the same was my mind, gathering memories, information, and knowledge from each path.

Could Mr. Cooper truly see all that just by looking into my eyes?

It wasn't possible, yet the way he watched me now, as if he could see deep inside my soul, made my stomach turn with butterflies and my cheeks fill with heat.

"Have I made you nervous?" he asked as he lowered his soup spoon into his bowl, still watching, evaluating.

I put on a practiced smile, one I'd mastered on the campaign trail with my father to hide my true feelings. "I am quite relaxed."

"You are lying." He smiled and took a sip of his soup before dipping the spoon back into his bowl. "But it doesn't matter. I shall discover your secrets either way."

"And I shall discover yours."

"What makes you think I have secrets?"

"Everyone has secrets, Mr. Cooper."

He nodded and lifted his goblet in a mock salute. "Then we shall see who uncovers the other's secrets first. May the best man—or woman—win."

I lifted my own goblet and nodded, feeling a surge of excitement and energy.

This would be fun, though it could also be very dangerous.