

The maître d' felt an unexpected tingle of <sup>new</sup>When Rachel Senator Sedgewick Sexton. The senator was a regular here and currently one of the country's most famous men. Last week, having swept all twelve Republican primaries on Super Tuesday, the senator was virtually guaranteed his party's nomination for President of the United States. Many believed the senator had a good chance of stealing the White House from the embattled President next fall. Lately Sexton's face seemed to be on every national magazine, his campaign slogan plastered all across America: 'Stop spending. Start saving.'

'Senator Sexton is in his booth,' the maître d' said.  
'And you are?'  
'Rachel Sexton. His daughter.'

*How foolish of me,* he thought. The resemblance was quite apparent. The woman had the senator's penetrating eyes and refined carriage – that polished look of resilient nobility. Clearly the senator's classic good looks had not skipped generations, although Rachel Sexton seemed to carry her blessings with a grace and humility her father could learn from.

'A pleasure to have you, Ms Sexton.'

As the maître d' led the senator's daughter across the dining area, he was embarrassed by the gauntlet of male eyes following her . . . some discreet, others less so. Few women dined at Toulous and even fewer who looked like Rachel Sexton.

'Nice body,' one diner whispered. 'Sexton already finds himself a new wife?'  
'That's his daughter, you idiot,' another replied.  
The man chuckled. 'Knowing Sexton, he'd probably screw her anyway.'

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*I missed you, too,* Rachel thought.

Her father's first name was Thomas, although he'd adopted his middle name long ago. Rachel suspected it was because he liked the alliteration. Senator seemed to Sedgewick Sexton. The man was a silver-haired, silver-tongued political animal who had been anointed with the slick look of a soap opera doctor, which seemed appropriate considering his talents of impersonation. 'Rachel!' Her father clicked off his phone and stood to kiss her cheek.

'Hi, Dad.' She did not kiss him back.  
'You look exhausted.'

*And so it begins,* she thought. 'I got your message. What's up?'

'I can't ask my daughter out for breakfast?'

Rachel had learned long ago her father seldom requested her company unless he had some ulterior motive.

Sexton took a sip of coffee. 'So, how are things with you?'  
'Busy. I see your campaign's going well.'

'Oh, let's not talk business.' Sexton leaned across the table, lowering his voice. 'How's that guy at the State Department I set you up with?'

Rachel exhaled, already fighting the urge to check her watch. 'Dad, I really haven't had time to call him. And I wish you'd stop trying to—'

'You've got to make time for the important things,' Rachel. Without love, everything else is meaningless.'

A number of comebacks came to mind, but Rachel

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