

It won't come as any surprise to anyone to hear that the ridiculous poet, Augustus Whittlesby, and my American heroine, Emma, are going to wind up having to form a temporary alliance to write a masque for a weekend at Malmaison. (If it's on the cover flap, it doesn't count as a spoiler.)

In the final version, the chapter ends at the point where Emma invites Augustus to call her by her first name. In the original, it went on a little bit longer....

“No,” said Mme Delagardie decidedly. “If we’re to work together, we ought to deal plainly with one another. Oh,” she added, “and you’d best call me Emma.”

“Emma?” He had heard it frequently enough before, from Jane, and, more recently, from Adele de Treville, but it sounded different in her voice.

“I do not respond to Emmie, Ammie, or Emily,” she said firmly. Her words were bold enough, but her hands betrayed her, fidgeting with the ruffle on her reticule. Emma Delagardie, fashionable widow and practiced flirt, was nervous.

There was something oddly endearing about it.

“Then you’d best call me Augustus,” he said mildly. “I don’t respond to Caesar, Auggie, or Gus.”

Mme Delagardie let out her breath in a rush. “There. You see? Honestly. Always best.”

“Always?”

“Well... mostly.” She cocked her head. “Auggie?”

“Don’t ask.” Honesty only went so far.

This is my very favorite Garden Intrigue outtake. In this scene, formerly part of Chapter Two, Augustus has just spotted Georges Marston at the Balcourt home. Unfortunately, Miss Gwen sees him, too.

I wanted to keep this scene, really I did. I went through all sorts of contortions to try to fit it in somewhere, anywhere. Alas, there was no real reason for it to be in the text-- other than my personal amusement-- so, with a snip here and a snip there, it was cut from the story and Miss Gwen was introduced elsewhere.

But that's what Outtakes are for, right?

“What’s that buzzard doing here?” Miss Gwendolyn Meadows, the least effective chaperone since Juliet’s old nurse, stalked up to Augustus’ left shoulder. Augustus could only be relieved that she was glowering over him, rather than at him.

She slapped her fan ominously against one palm. "When I expel a man from the house, I expect him to stay expelled."

"What is this noise that besets me?" declaimed Augustus. It didn't take much artistic effort to look pained. There was little love lost between him and Miss Wooliston's chaperone. "A burning thread of inspiration trails before me and I must follow where it leads!"

"To Marston?" Miss Gwen snorted. Her snorts had been known to blow small countries off course. Augustus would have held on to his hat had he had one. "Just see you don't singe your fingers. Not that you're the sort that has anything to worry about. You're not his type." She looked Augustus up and down, from his tight, knit breeches to the billowy folds of his shirt. "You don't do much for me, either."

"For which I nightly give thanks on my knees fasting," muttered Augustus.

Miss Gwen nodded approvingly, sending her purple plumes bobbing. "There's nothing wrong with application to the Almighty. If you're lucky, maybe He'll send you some proper outer garments. Ha!" She jabbed him with her fan, right in the sensitive spot between his ribs.

Augustus emitted a very unmanly squeak.

Miss Gwen smirked. "Enjoy your evening, Mr. Whittlesby."

She sailed away, looking for another soul to torment. If she weren't such a damned good agent.... For all her eccentricities, Miss Gwen had a spine of steel and a nerve to match. Augustus rubbed his wounded midriff. Unfortunately, her fan appeared to be made of the same material.