

## Deleted Scene from *AMERICA'S FIRST DAUGHTER*: COLONEL RANDOLPH CONFRONTS PATSY

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*From Thomas Jefferson to Colonel Thomas Mann Randolph, Monticello, 22 October 1790*

*I understand with much pain that you are dissatisfied with the agreement which, on behalf of your son, I entered into with you for the purchase of Edgehill. As to the contract, be it off, if you wish it, no matter what the laws of the land are. Nature knows no laws between parent and child, but the will of the parent. If you desire to keep the land, your son decided in the first moment to comply with your desire. But if you are only dissatisfied with any particular article, model the whole to your own mind. In any event I hope this will have no effect on your affections to your son, which are of more consequence to his happiness than all the lands of the earth. He has done nothing in it, but to declare the contract should be molded to your will.*

I flush to read this letter, decades of anger boiling up all over again. Someone might see it as evidence of my father's meddling; his desire to have his daughter near leading him to drive a wedge between a father and son already divided. But it wasn't my father's fault; it was mine. It was to please me that Tom wanted to settle us at Edgehill. And it was to please me that my father pursued the matter with such vigor. Both men might have avoided a quarrel with Tom's father if not for me, but Colonel Randolph was the only one who seemed to know it.

On the very day that Papa negotiated the contract, I was there, at Tuckahoe, visiting with Tom's sisters. When the business was done, and my father went to ready the carriage, I heard Colonel Randolph's voice behind me in the newly painted parlor.

"My dear Martha," Colonel Randolph said, and it took a moment for me to realize he meant me.

"Sir?" I asked, schooling my features to a pleasant smile.

"Your father's a great man, you know that?"

I smiled. "Yes, I do."

"He's in President Washington's inner circle. Secretary of State. Minister to France before that. I imagine he's done a lot of negotiating in his time. Brought pressure to bear on kings, am I right?"

Wariness prickled over my scalp. "I suppose you are..."

Colonel Randolph clasped his hands at the small of his back and thrust out his pot belly. "Do you suppose that when a man like that takes a respite from his public business, he ought to be troubled to negotiate with his family over a few acres at Edgehill?"

Guilt bit at me. "I suppose we have imposed upon his generosity—"

"And mine," Colonel Randolph said, flatly. "I know your father hates nothing so much as unpleasantness, so we're going to spare him that, me and you. I'm going to tell you something—something you're going to promise to keep to yourself until your father goes back to New York, because you're a good daughter. Promise me."

My mouth went a little dry at the darkness that filled his eyes. "I promise, of course."

Colonel Randolph gave me a flash of tobacco-yellowed teeth. “When your father leaves, here’s a message you can convey to my worthless son. You tell that boy you married that I’ve changed my mind on the price for Edgehill. It’s gone up. And it’ll keep going up until he’s learned his lesson.”

“His lesson?” I asked, confused. Defensiveness on behalf of my husband had been clutching my hands together so hard they hurt.

“Tom had better learn that if he ever tries to intimidate me or humiliate me by sending Mr. Jefferson to speak for him again, I’ll hunt him down like a rabid dog, put my boot on his neck, and leave that grand baby of mine in your belly little better off than a fatherless bastard.”

My lips parted in shock both because the words—and the threat—were so vile.

Colonel Randolph may not have meant a word of it, but it was still a threat to kill his own son. And over something so trifling as a patch of land! If anyone was a rabid dog, it was Colonel Randolph, who was so vicious as to make a lady swoon away. But I stayed on my feet. He’d threatened my husband and my child, and somehow that made me hold his gaze with a calm I’d learned at the center of other, far more terrifying storms.

“Don’t you stare at me, you insolent girl.”

I straightened my shoulders and met his eyes. “Where would you prefer I direct my gaze?”

His teeth snapped together, and for a moment I thought he might strike me. Instead, he seethed. “Oh, you *are* a Jefferson. Sunny disposition, but ice water in your veins.”

If he thought to insult me, he was much mistaken. “Perhaps you should deliver your own message to your son.”

“I would if I wanted it to come to violence,” Colonel Randolph said. “But my daughters tell me you’re a mighty peaceable woman.<sup>[1]</sup> So I’ll entrust the message to you to do as you see fit.” Then he turned on his heel and left me there in his hateful new wife’s painted parlor.

I never did tell Tom that message.

Never wanted him to know what sort of man his father truly was.

But I suppose I was a fool to think he didn’t already know that Colonel Randolph would be the ruin of all our hopes and dreams.