

*Gale Tanner*

## **What I Came For Can Wait**

The McCrays were so unclean they stank. I could usually smell them coming when they showed up at the bank to withdraw Darius's disability payment. At one time, there had been five McCrays, but Tom, the father, had died drunk, and Cleopatra, the girl, had run off to nobody knew where. That left the mother Mollie June and the two basketball-tall sons, Darius and Cyrus. Almost everybody in Flora, Georgia, thought all three were simple, but I had dealt enough with Mollie June to know that she was a long way from simple. So when my nose recoiled and I looked up to see the McCrays standing in my office doorway, I realized that I'd just smelled trouble.

"We all wet," Mollie June said, and it was so. The dirt on their faces was streaked and smeared. Water dripped from their clothes onto the carpet. Mollie June's dishwasher hair was plastered against her cheeks like dirty bandages.

"Wegoansueyou," Darius said.

"I beg your pardon?" I said.

"Yo man put us outten the shelter this mornin," Mollie June said. "That how come we all wet. And with him disabled and all, he liable get sick." She nodded her head toward Darius.

"Wegoansueyou," Darius reiterated.

"What man? What shelter?" I asked.

"In yo garden park. Yo security man."

I understood. The Bank of Flora sat on a block of its own on one side of the Dixie Highway. On the other side, Clinton High, my predecessor and the grandson of the bank's founder, had planted the Mary High Botanical Garden as a memorial to his mother. In the Garden was a pavilion, and it must have been the pavilion which had sheltered the McCrays from the rain.

"But the Garden is locked at night," I said.

"Fenceaintworthshit," Darius said.

"Me and Dar us climb anything," Cyrus said. Like Mollie June, he pronounced Darius's name as if it were a taunt.

"Yo man come soon as he got cheer this mornin and put us out," Mollie June said. "He knowed all week we was sleepin there. Waited til hit was rainin, so he could put us in the rain. Outten spite."

"Heshitasssonbitch," Darius said.

"I thought you were renting one of Properties' mobile homes," I said. The Bank of Flora had a sister company, Flora Properties, that owned and managed real estate. It was Properties that actually owned the Garden. It also owned and operated a trailer park, Mobile Mansions.

"Trailerpieceshit," Darius said.

"Got put outten the trailer last week," Mollie June said. "Couldn't pay rent, lights, and eat."

"Stoleourgoddamntvman," Darius said loudly. Darius had a face like a sick rooster's: wild red hair on top, a nose that hooked like a beak, and cheeks blighted with acne, even though he was almost forty years old.

“Hush,” Mollie June said to Darius. Then, to me, “He mad cause y’all took our TV for payment. I told him, ‘Let em keep the damn TV, Dar us. Hit too heavy to carry and you can’t plug hit in on the street nohow.’”

I took a deep breath. “Mrs. McCray, why did you come to see me? What do you want me to do?”

“Don’t want nothing. Just figured you need to know what yo people done. You bein head man and all.”

I didn’t reply, hoping the McCrays would take the hint and leave, but they didn’t. Finally I said, “Tell you what, you go wait out front under the portico, and when I can turn loose, I’ll get my car and pick you up. We’ll figure something out.”

They turned then and went away, but Darius looked back over his shoulder and said, “WantmydamnTV.”

My assistant Eunice rushed in to apologize for not being at her desk. “You couldn’t have stopped them,” I told her.

Next, Olivia, my Executive VP, came in to find out what was going on. She and I had worked together for almost twenty years at three different banks.

“Hep, you know they’re just manipulating you,” she told me. “They couldn’t have gotten that wet unless they wanted to. I can’t believe that you are going to take them somewhere.”

“You don’t want them sitting out in front of the bank all day, do you?”

“Call the police and have them arrested,” she said.

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