

# Well, Now, Who Doesn't Like Corn?

By Tanaqui

“Stanley?” Mimi fixed her husband with a stern look and held out her hand.

“What?” Stanley tried to plaster an innocent expression on his face as he hastily shut the kitchen drawer. Too hastily: a betraying corner of the envelope still protruded.

Mimi coughed pointedly. “You know in this house we don’t stuff unopened bills into drawers and pretend they never arrived. Not any more.”

With a shamefaced sigh, Stanley opened the drawer, extracted the letter and handed it over. Mimi’s eyebrows rose when she saw who it was from. They rose even further when she slit open the envelope and pulled out the contents.

“You have got to be kidding me.” She shook her head as she silently read on down the letter. “The DC office gets nuked and they still manage to reconstruct *your* IRS records? *And* add interest and penalties for the nine months we didn’t even have a federal government, and the twelve months we were in the middle of Cheyenne-occupied territory? Unbelievable....”

“See. It’s like I always say.” Stanley leaned back against the counter and folded his arms, his expression a little smug. “Nothing but bills and bad news.” He supposed he should be more worried, but Mimi had gotten him out of his tax debt once already. He had every faith she could do it again.

Faith that seemed entirely justified when Mimi looked up at him and, with a steely glint in her eye, said, “Yes, well, we’ll see who gets the bad news....”

oOo

Cameron Foster had always had ambitions, ever since he joined the IRS straight out of college back in fall 2005. Of course, he hadn’t quite expected to climb the career ladder *this* quickly, filling the shoes of countless IRS agents who’d been incinerated in the September attacks or died in the aftermath. And he really wasn’t at all sure he was ready to act as an Appeals Officer. Especially when faced with a crowd of angry townfolk in some hick farming town deep in Western Kansas, who’d insisted the IRS send someone out to review the demands issued last month.

“This is Mrs Mimi Richmond.” Mayor Anderson ushered Cameron into an office where a dark-haired woman, dressed in a business suit but with a sunburned complexion and work-roughened hands, was waiting. “She’ll be acting for the people of Jericho.”

“You’re a CPA?” Cameron couldn’t keep the surprise out of his voice as he shook her hand. The name Richmond was at the top of his list: some farmer who’d owed more than \$180,000 before the September attacks. The debt probably should’ve been even greater if they’d been able to pursue him for more than just three years of misstated tax returns. Not exactly the record he’d expect of someone married to an accountant.

“Uh-huh” The woman indicated the chair opposite. “Why don’t we make a start, Mr Foster?”

oOo

Cameron's head was spinning. The last three hours had been quite... educational. He looked down at the list he'd made on the pad in front of him. "So... when we take into account repayment of the cost of housing and feeding a battalion of the US Army for thirteen months—the cost of housing to be set against the Richmond tax debt, and the cost of the food to be divided amongst the rest of the town... deductions for the lack of all federal services for nine months, and all federal services apart from defense for thirteen months... reparations for damage to the local property and the local economy caused by the presence of government-hired contractors... two years' back pay for yourself..."

He looked up at Mrs Richmond and she offered him a sweet smile that entirely belied the savaging she'd just given him. "...I think you'll find any tax debt owed by anyone in Jericho is completely offset," she finished for him.

Cameron nodded numbly. He was pretty sure his superiors weren't going to be happy about this, but Mrs Richmond had been quite forceful, and she had made some valid points.

Standing and beginning to pack his papers away, he couldn't help asking the question that had been eating away at him for two of the past three hours—ever since Mrs Richmond had first mentioned her own employment by the IRS, and silenced his objections to offsetting her back pay by pointing out that assuming cessation of employment on grounds of death in service while failing to determine the facts of the case—namely, that she was not, in fact, deceased—could lay the IRS open to a nasty suit for wrongful termination.

"Mrs Richmond—?"

"Yes?"

"Um, you just came here to do an audit, right?" When she nodded at him, he plunged on, "Why didn't you, you know, when things started getting back to normal.... I mean, before the Civil War proper got started... why didn't you try to go home?"

A pained look crossed her face, before her expression softened. She gave him a pitying look. "I used to live in DC."

"Oh." Cameron suddenly wished the floor would open up and swallow him. You almost never met someone stranded by the bombs who'd stayed where fate had dumped them. Most made their way home at the first opportunity; if home didn't exist any more, they usually pitched up at the refugee camps—slowly turning into real cities—their neighbors had ended up in.

If she'd lived in DC, he couldn't imagine why she'd stuck it out *here*. She hadn't married her redneck farmer until a few months back, after all. Cameron, in her place, would've been on the first truck out.

Even as he shamefacedly met her gaze again, he blurted out, "Columbus, then? Or Cheyenne, even? I mean, you must have known the Federal Government would need IRS agents?"

Again, she hesitated. Then she smiled to herself, suddenly looking much younger, and much less severe. "I guess I just acquired a liking for corn...."

**Disclaimer:** These stories are based on the Junction Entertainment/Fixed Mark Productions/CBS Paramount Television series *Jericho*. They were written for entertainment only; the author does not profit from them nor was any infringement of copyright intended.