

*The Grateful Dead or Dead Men Don't Pay Taxes*  
INSTALLMENT 1

Generic City, 1974.

Deflated heroine Miranda Davis is beginning to brighten after the recent loss of her beloved, albeit estranged, husband Danforth Ellington III.

BEA

So Tony's leaving today? Heading back to the Peace Corps?

MIRANDA

Tony! Oh my goodness. What time is it? He's going to miss his flight.

TONY

(entering the room) No, mom, I'm good. Hi, Aunt Bea.

BEA

Sweetheart, you're really old enough now to just call me Bea.

TONY

I know, but I like calling you Aunt Bea. Makes me feel like I'm Opie and I live in Mayberry where everyone is happy and there's no inflation or streaking.

BEA

Well, dear, Opie is Richie Cunningham now, so even he doesn't have an Aunt Bea anymore. (To Miranda) He sure was a cute kid, but I don't know about him now. You're in the biz, do you see his career going much further after *Happy Days* runs its course?

MIRANDA

Oh absolutely not. (To Tony) So, Anton, are you leaving now?

TONY

Mom . . . C'mon!!

MIRANDA

What?! Bea knows that's your real name. You should be proud. You're the namesake of...

MIRANDA / BEA / TONY (simultaneously)

...a great talent and brilliant writer.

BEA

(Aside to Tony) I told her at the time it was a ridiculous name.

If it wasn't for me, it would have been Constantin, you know.

TONY

TONY

I know. Thank you.

BEA

You're welcome. Now stop calling me Aunt Bea.

TONY

(to Miranda) Yeah, mom, I'm getting ready to leave. You sure you're gonna be okay? I hate leaving you like this.

MIRANDA

I'll be fine. I don't want you sticking around here anymore for me.

BEA

Plus, she's got me, so what could go wrong?

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Unfortunately, unbeknownst to Miranda, Bea, or Tony, across town in the grim offices of the Underpaid/Overdue Office, rigid UO Agent Earnest Mee is about to open his biggest case to date: the unpaid account of recently deceased Danforth Ellington III.

Stay tuned for the next installment in *The Grateful Dead or Dead Men Don't Pay Taxes . . .*