

Pumpkin Patch
by
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Pumpkin Patch

Setting: A community garden in an urban neighborhood.

Characters: LaToya, a black woman, 30s-40s

Sasha, a white woman, 30s - 40s

PUMPKIN PATCH

A community garden, rich with tall plants and pumpkin vines and three pumpkins. A black woman in her 30s-40s, LATOYA, stands up, with a plastic shopping bag of vegetables dangling from her wrist and hefts up a large pumpkin. A white woman in a garden hat, SASHA, also in her 30s-40s, carries a shovel, walks up the path towards Latoya.

Hi.

SASHA

Hello.

LATOYA

Beautiful day.

SASHA

Gorgeous.

LATOYA

SASHA
This is my favorite time of year in the garden. Everything so ripe.

LATOYA
Gem of the neighborhood.

SASHA
I'm glad you think so. (beat) Can I help you?

LATOYA
I've got it, thanks.

SASHA
I didn't actually mean it like that.

LATOYA
If you could just move out of my way.

SASHA
What I meant was, who are you and what are you doing?

LATOYA
I'm just taking my pumpkin.

SASHA
It's a beauty.

LATOYA

Finest pumpkin I've ever seen.

SASHA

I think so, too. But that's not your pumpkin.

LATOYA

Sure it is. See, look, it's in my arms. And it's heavy, so if you'll excuse me.

Latoya tries to get past Sasha, but she won't budge.

SASHA

Put it down please.

LATOYA

Look, lady, get the hell out of my way.

SASHA

I'm the coordinator for this community garden. I know all the gardeners, and I don't know you.

LATOYA

I'm just picking some stuff for my cousin. He's out of town.

SASHA

Right. Of course. What's your cousin's name?

LATOYA

Uh. William.

SASHA

William doesn't have a plot here this year. Jerry planted the pumpkin patch.

LATOYA

That's who I meant. Cousin Jerry.

SASHA

We've been having a problem with people stealing produce out of the gardens.

Latoya's arms are getting tired. She sets down the pumpkin.

LATOYA

It's a community garden. I'm part of the community. I've been part of the community a lot longer than you. You all move in and think you own the neighborhood.

SASHA

I've been here long enough.

LATOYA

Yeah, well, I used to have a plot here, years ago, after it used to be just rubble from a building somebody torched. My aunt helped make this place.

SASHA

But you don't have a plot here now.

LATOYA

Look, it's just one pumpkin.

SASHA

Plus a bag full of...

LATOYA

A couple tomatoes. Look at those plots. There's fruit all over the ground, just going to waste. They're not taking care of them either, look at all those weeds. I thought maybe they were abandoned.

SASHA

And the eggplant?

LATOYA

Nobody needs that much eggplant. And they're beauties.

SASHA

They're Lester's beauties. Not yours. We work hard to grow these vegetables. We dig, weed, water. You've done nothing.

LATOYA

I'd like a plot, but money's tight.

SASHA

The plot fee is only twenty-five dollars, but we can work something out. Sign up for a plot next year, and you can grow whatever you want.

LATOYA

I don't have time.

SASHA

Put the vegetables back.

LATOYA

They're picked now anyway. If I put them down, they're just gonna rot.

SASHA

You can't have them.

LATOYA

You want them?

SASHA

I grew my own.

LATOYA

No sense wasting these. I'll just take them with me.

Sasha pulls a cell phone out of her pocket.

SASHA

Look, either you leave without the vegetables, or I'll call the police.

LATOYA

For what?

SASHA

Theft. It's against the law to take something that doesn't belong to you.

LATOYA

You'd have me go to jail for picking a couple tomatoes?

SASHA

And an eggplant. And a pumpkin. Which you did not grow, or even ask permission to take. It's not just the tomatoes and pumpkins. Someone dug up my echinacea right out of my plot. Someone else took Tanya's rudbeckia. The gardens get raided every season, and I've had enough.

LATOYA

You want to make an example of me, so you call your attack dogs.

SASHA

The police.

LATOYA

What do you care? I'm just an ignorant black woman. Plenty of us in jail already. What's one more, right?

SASHA

Just don't take the vegetables.

LATOYA

And if I do, you think the right solution is to lock me up, make me lose my job, my apartment, get kicked out on the street? For a couple tomatoes that were gonna fall on the ground and rot?

SASHA

I am not the person doing the wrong thing here. Look, you can have some tomatoes. I'll give you some from my own plot. But you have to leave the pumpkin.

LATOYA

Hell no. Go ahead. Call the police. You can't prove it's not my pumpkin. There's no receipts out here. I say it's mine, you say it's not.

SASHA

Who do you think the cops will believe?

LATOYA

Oh, I know who they'll believe. You got all the race cards right in your pocket, don't you?

SASHA

It's not your pumpkin. Don't you get it? Jerry planted that abandoned plot, watered the vines all summer, fertilized them, picked off the beetles. There used to be a dozen. And now we've only got three left. I told him he'd get his heart broken. Every year, I tell the gardeners, don't grow watermelons, don't grow pumpkins, or don't grow anything that will disappear. But he planted them anyway.

LATOYA

He should have listened to you. 'Cause you know what it's like around here. You know what we're like, what I'm like. You've got us pegged. All us black folks is thieves. Make sure you lock your house up tight at night, missy. You tell Jerry to lock up against those Negroes.

SASHA

Jerry's black.

LATOYA

Then you tell Jerry that a sister needed to have one of his pumpkins to make a little pie.

SASHA

Tell you what. I'll call him and ask him to come down here, so you can request permission to take his pumpkin.

LATOYA

I don't think so.

Latoya picks up the pumpkin again.

LATOYA (cont'd)

I need to go. Get out of my way.

SASHA
Put the pumpkin down.

LATOYA
It's my pumpkin now.

SASHA
It's not your pumpkin.

Latoya approaches Sasha, who grabs her shovel tighter.

LATOYA
Don't even think about raising that shovel at me.

SASHA
Put down the pumpkin.

LATOYA
Touch me with that shovel, and you'll be looking for your teeth all over this garden.

SASHA
Thief.

LATOYA
Move.

SASHA
Thief!

Latoya pushes past Sasha, who drops the shovel and grabs the pumpkin.

LATOYA
Don't touch me.

SASHA
Give me that.

LATOYA
Let go.

SASHA
That is not your pumpkin.

They tussle. Sasha ends up with the pumpkin.

SASHA (cont'd)
Get out of my garden.