

kill the messenger



Written by bubba



Don't shoot the messenger...don't shoot the messenger. Why *not* shoot the messenger? Sometimes you have to shoot *someone* and the person you want to shoot just isn't a possibility. I'll give you a perfect example: last week was tax time and for about 10<sup>th</sup> year in a row, I owe more money than I can think about without having a panic attack. But, what do I do? It's unrealistic to think I am going shoot the IRS, 'The

Man', Uncle Sam or the Federal Government (I guess those are really all the same entity). So...the only plausible alternative is to shoot the person that told me - my accountant. Plus, she deserves it. Ok, ok...Cool your jets Secret Service and anyone else scouring my entries for signs that I'm a danger to myself or others...no one is getting shot, even if they should be. I'm not *really* going to shoot my accountant. I already gave her a verbal bitch slap, which I'm happy to transcribe below...word for word.

This whole ordeal with 'the accountant' started three years ago. It was the first joint-filing that my wife and I had filed. I was excited. You know...things are supposed to get good when you get married, right? Then you have kids and the federal government practically gives you carte blanche to take the money previously known as 'theirs' and park it on a white sand beach somewhere sunny that uses 1040's, 1099's and K1's as drink coasters. Isn't that what happens?? I swear somebody told me that...

Tax time has never been good for me. Well, maybe when I was a Groundskeeper I at Water World when I was 13 and made \$1.35 an hour. Fucking sweat shop. I guess I didn't carry a real burden at 23 either, after college when I first moved to LA and made \$8.75 an hour. Eventually I figured out how to make some money and in the true spirit of the universe's inherent need to maintain balance...when my income situation got better, my Aprils got worse. A lot worse. Most of my adult career life has been in the self-employed world. On one hand, it has always been good for line item write-offs. Never fun to write those fat tax checks myself however...especially the one I've invariably written at the close of the second week in April...every...single...year.



But back to marriage and all the financial benefits rumored to ride tandem. Maybe that's the case for most people. The obvious financial advantage to marriage is that two incomes are better than one. In that respect, being married is like winning a sweepstakes. But there is another side too...a dual income of two *professional* people brings with it an increased tax liability to you know who...Uncle whatever his name is...Sam. I expected better things when I got married. Bluntly put, I expected a friggen tax return for once in my life. For once...just once I wanted to not have to write a check. I wanted to get one. At about the same time as I got married, I got a new job. Even though I'd still be paying a healthy share to the war in Iraq, I at least wouldn't have to worry about writing my own checks to the IRS or Franchise Tax Board because America Votes would be doing it for me. *Excellent.*

Or not. Here's a quick review of tax day for the three years since I've been married:

**Year 1 - OWE.** Tax liability: In excess of \$40,000. You read that right. And if you're thinking that I mean that was an aggregate of the entire year, you are wrong. That was a balance.

**Year 2 - OWE.** Tax liability: In excess of \$8,000 plus the residual shock/numbness from year one.

**Year 3 - OWE.** Tax liability: Well just read below.





Year 3 is this year. Depending how you look at it, maybe things have appear to have gotten a little better. Bad news though - they also still suck beyond belief. The worst part? That each of these annual kick in the nuts has been a surprise. No joke - we never saw them coming. If you're now wondering how it is that we seem surprised every April and that perhaps we don't structure our businesses responsibly, you're asking the right question. Let me tell you what I've been wondering. Why do we have the same accountant that still acts like every April is a fucking Monopoly roll for the

Nunnery/Medina household? This year Rhonda even told me that our accountant said we would be getting money back...something about having two kids now and what not. I didn't believe it. Too much scar tissue there. Rhonda said I was being negative. I said let's bet. We did. Then I made the call and left a message. She called me back a few days later, about 4 hours before 2006 taxes were due.

**Our accountant. Let's call her 'Soon To Be Fired' (STBF):** Hi Bubba. I got your message. I actually had a question for you too.

**Me:** Nice. It's like fate and what not. You go first.

**STBF:** Um...well you can go first.

**Me:** Deal. Rhonda said you called and asked for our account number so our refund could be deposited electronically. I laughed, said she was high and that there is no way in the world we are getting money back. She said you said we were. Then I bet her \$100 bucks we weren't. So that's why I called, to get you to tell me that I win so I can collect.

**STBF:** Um...yes. You win.

**Me:** Perfect. What's your question?

**STBF:** *(nervous)* Well...it's true...what you said. You guys do owe some. So we need to file today and I wanted to let you know that. That you owe...um...some.

*Silence...tons of it. Like a full minute.*

**Me:** That wasn't really a question.

**STBF:** The question was about filing electronically. We're just going to do that but that means the money will be moved out of your account by tomorrow.

**Me:** Guess you know my next question.



**STBF:** I actually did whittle it down some. Um...do you have anything else you might want to claim?

**Me:** They're due today.

**STBF:** Yes. Ok then. We'll go ahead and...

**Me:** So uh, you still haven't asked a question yet and I haven't heard an answer to the one you know I have. Want to keep doing this or what say we just rip the band aid off... Or pull the blade out. Yank the scab off. Tear the...

**STBF:** It's like \$8,000

*More silence. Like church.*

**Me:** Always thought accountants used exact numbers.

**STBF:** \$8.637.04

**Me:** Did I ever tell you I was a business major?

**STBF:** No. I thought you worked in politics.

**Me:** Yeah...I do. Don't have a business degree. That major was an impulsive decision for me...more to fill the parental approval vacuum than anything else. Didn't work though. I got kicked out. Eventually I graduated with another degree...went on to grad school...did some other things and yes, I have worked in politics for awhile now.

*Silence. Uncertainty. Maybe fear.*

**Me:** I guess my point is that, though I wasn't a business major long, when I took accounting classes we wouldn't refer to \$8.637.04 as 'like \$8,000'. There was a science and exactness to it. In fact, if there was any rounding going on in this particular case, it would be rounding *up*. So 'like \$9,000.' You have a similar experience in your accounting classes?

**STBF:** Yes. I'm sorry. It's just that the initial quarterly's made the federal look like...

**Me:** Stop. Is there another punchline here?

**STBF:** Um..yes, I mean no...but what you say, or I think you are saying...is about if there is a state portion too?

*Silence. Waiting. Uncomfortable.*

**STBF:** There is. It's like...

**Me:** STOP. Think about this.

**STBF:** It's \$3,456.78

*The most uncomfortable minute of silence there has ever been.*



**Me:** Guess what I did yesterday?

**STBF:** Pardon me?

**Me:** I bought a house. A new house. Another house.

**STBF:** Oh...

**Me:** That's right. Down payment, closing costs...all that. You own a house?

**STBF:** I do.

**Me:** Was it stressful when you bought it?

**STBF:** It was, but we...

**Me:** I really don't care. Was it stressful when you bought your second house?

**STBF:** We only have one house.





**Me:** So I'm kind of the resident expert on stress for this little conversation. Great check this out: It's real fucking stressful.

*Nothing.*

**Me:** Do you think we have our finances structured irresponsibly?

**STBF:** No. You're structured the way most people are who have...

**Me:** Stop. Are most people you work for getting fucked this year? Because maybe there is another common denominator we should look at here...you know, you.

**STBF:** I'm sorry. I know this is a big deal for you.

**Me:** (*winding up*) I appreciate that you know it is a big deal to me. I also recognize that you don't know that 'like \$8,000' isn't really 'like \$12,093.82' which is the exact gravity of this fucking scythe you are swinging at my neck right now.



**STBF:** It's not going to help to get upset with me. I'm just the messenger.

**Me:** The messenger? What are you even talking about? You have had our taxes for MONTHS and they are now due TODAY. You want to let me know that IN EXCESS of \$12,000 is being transferred out of our account today by telling me it's 'like \$8,000'? What account are you even talking about?

**STBF:** Yelling isn't going to change anything. Perhaps we...

**Me:** Stop. You're right. It isn't going to change anything and I should know that from the past. Every April is like Russian Roulette with you except for one thing - I ALWAYS get shot in the fucking head. BLAM! The back of my skull blows apart and I collapse into myself like a dying star expecting to see a big white light with my grandma, Bob Marley and my first dog Fluffy welcoming me in. But instead I see you, still short, still annoying with an oversized adding machine waving a fucking sign at me that says 'See you next year!'

*More silence.*

**STBF:** Would you like me to send someone to your house to get your signatures?

**Me:** I'd like to throw up.

**STBF:** They need to be signed today.

**Me:** I'd like to throw up on you.

*Silence.*



**STBF:** I would do the electronic transfer. Sign the vouchers and file so there isn't any penalty. Then you guys can decide what to do.

**Me:** I have a good idea already.

**STBF:** Ok, I am sending my assistant over to get signatures.

**Me:** If you have any kind of soul at all, you'll give my wife the \$100 to pay me for the bet she lost.

**STBF:** Well, ok. Maybe I can...



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