

# **A TAXING REVENGE**

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***KATRINA IS SITTING AT A DESK WITH A FILE AND GLASS OF WATER IN FRONT OF HER. LAURA ENTERS WITH A LOT OF CHAOTIC PAPERWORK.***

**LAURA:** I think I'm next.

**KATRINA:** Thankyou for coming in Ms Fisher. Please have a seat and we can get started. My name is Katrina Rollins. I'm responsible for your file.

**LAURA:** And I'm happy to help.....But it's not like I had a choice when I got the letter...There's no saying 'no' to the taxman....Is there?

**KATRINA:** No, Ms Fisher....I don't suppose there is.

**LAURA:** I'm nervous...You probably haven't noticed. It's probably stupid and I'm sure I'm blowing the whole thing out of proportion. Aren't I?

**KATRINA:** No.

**LAURA:** No? Surely there are people worse than me. Aren't there? Shonky entrepreneurs and people like that. Once you've had a chance to really look at it. You'll see that's its very, very minor.

**KATRINA:** Avoidance of income tax isn't exactly "very, very" minor.

**LAURA:** No...No...Not "very very"....Of course not...It's a crime...Not a bad crime...Not that crimes are ever good....But it's an unintentional avoidance. I overlooked it. Unintentionally.

**KATRINA:** From your file it would appear you overlooked it for 5 years.

**LAURA:** Just the return. I paid tax.

**KATRINA:** But did you pay enough tax Ms Fisher? That's the real question.

**LAURA:** Is it?

**KATRINA:** Definitely.

***(PAUSE)***

I need to confirm some details for the file.

**LAURA:** Let me go back to your earlier question....I think I've definitely paid enough tax. Katrina...I think I'm guilty of nothing but being a little haphazard in my accounting arrangements. We've all done that...Haven't we?

**KATRINA:** No.

**LAURA:** Well...No, you haven't...But you're....I mean, if you didn't keep your tax in order.....It would be like a dentist forgetting to brush his teeth.

**KATRINA:** Would it?

**LAURA:** Can you see what I'm getting at? It's not like you could avoid tax because....It's your job.

**KATRINA:** And, Laura, as it is my job...Should we get on and let me do it. Now....Your name – Laura Mary Fisher.?

**LAURA:** Is that glass of water for me?

**KATRINA:** Not originally.

**(LAURA DRINKS THE WATER)**

**LAURA:** Thanks. Yes Laura Mary Fisher...That's me

**KATRINA:** Born 27<sup>th</sup> June 1977?

**LAURA:** Two years after the Whitlam government was dismissed. Wondering how I know that? My parents were politically active....But...they're not radicals or anything...And I'm definitely middle of the road myself.

**KATRINA:** Really?

**LAURA:** Vanilla. Mainstream. White bread. No skeletons in the closet ....Nothing under the bed...Or at the bottom of the harbour-

**KATRINA:** We're the same age.

**LAURA:** Are we?

**KATRINA:** Does that surprise you? You said "Are we?" as though it was surprising.

**LAURA:** I didn't mean "Are we...How surprising?" I meant "Are we....Isn't that great...We have so much in common."

**KATRINA:** Such as?

**LAURA:** Our age....And an interest in my tax.

**KATRINA:** Do you think I look older than you?

**LAURA:** No. Not at all.

**KATRINA:** Because I feel older than 30.

**LAURA:** Do you ? Well you're wrong because you look very young.. In fact, are you sure you were born in 1977 because I would have said 1987....

**KATRINA:** Making me 20. You're overcompensating to avoid offending me.

**LAURA:** No.

**KATRINA:** Oh I think...Most definitely yes.

*(PAUSE)*

Still at 23 MacRobertson drive?

**LAURA:** Yes.

**KATRINA:** Still working at "The Hair and Nail Shack"?

**LAURA:** Yes.

**KATRINA:** What do you think of my hair and nails?

**LAURA:** I'm the receptionist. I don't know a follicle from a cuticle.

**KATRINA:** But you must have an opinion?

**LAURA:** They're very nice.

**KATRINA:** Not always so backward in coming forward ....Surely?

**LAURA:** Definitely ...I'm always very backward in coming forward...I'm known for it.  
Is my tax situation worse than I thought?

**KATRINA:** What did you call it? Oh yes...Very, very minor-

**LAURA:** It's not very, very minor...Just not major....Its at the minor end of major....You're making me slightly nervous.

**KATRINA:** My apologies Laura. That's the last thing I'd want to do. Should we get back to it?

**LAURA:** Yes. Happy to...Happy to serve the government....

**KATRINA:** You attended Hadfield West High School from 1989 to 1994?

**LAURA:** Is that on my tax form? That seems a weird thing to be on a tax form...It's very "big brother" all of this government stuff. It's all connected ... It's quite creepy.

**KATRINA:** That's absolutely correct, Laura. It's all connected and do you want to hear of another connection? I also went to Hadfield West High School.

**LAURA:** You didn't...

**KATRINA:** I most definitely did.

**LAURA:** When?...Because if you're the same age as me....How long were you there? And I didn't know a Katrina ...I knew a....Kat...

**KATRINA:** Kat Kennedy.

**LAURA:** No....

**KATRINA:** Yes.

**LAURA:** But she was-

**KATRINA:** Fat?

**LAURA:** I was going to say 'enormous'.

**KATRINA:** I've lost weight.

**LAURA:** A lot. Because you don't look like you were ever overweight -

**KATRINA:** Overweight....That's the polite terminology of today's "Hair and Nail Shack" receptionist is it? The Hadfield West High School student of yesteryear used to call me "Fat Stuff" or "Fat Kat".

**LAURA:** *(LOOKS AROUND)*  
Do you mean me?

**KATRINA:** I have an excellent memory.

**LAURA:** But that was 17 years ago....I don't remember half the things I said yesterday. Memory like a goldfish.

**KATRINA:** Let me assist.. 1992 Home Economics. We baked cakes for Mother's Day and you and your friends stole 4 of the cakes and then accused me of eating them....In front of the entire class?

**LAURA:** No.

**KATRINA:** Or the time you cut my head out of the class photo and stuck a pig's over it and pasted copies of it on the timetable.

**LAURA:** That wasn't my idea-

**KATRINA:** Really?

**LAURA:** You're making that sound very bad.

**KATRINA:** How would you make it sound?

**LAURA:** Stupid....Very, verystupid..... But look at you now.....You've got a great....You've got a job...You've lost weight...Are you married.... Because if you're married

**KATRINA:** Do you think I should get over it?

**LAURA:** Would that be wrong?

**KATRINA:** Every night I came home from school and prayed that something would happen...I'd break my leg...I'd get sick....Anything so I wouldn't have to go to school. Anything so I wouldn't have to hear you and Natalie Meadows come up behind me while I put my bag in my locker and discuss whether it was possible that I had got even fatter overnight. One day in PE she jumped out behind me and put tape over my mouth – she said it was to help me stop eating.

**LAURA:** Are you sure that happened? *(PAUSE)*  
And I don't remember that business with the locker. Was it more than once?

**KATRINA:** Every morning for a year and a half.

**LAURA:** Well if it's any consolation....Natalie lives in a caravan with 6 children and a husband who's trying to make it as a country and western singer.

**KATRINA:** It's not.

**LAURA:** Really? Well it's also actually not true. I thought it might make you feel better. But...the thing is...That was our peak. Life's no picnic when you've peaked at 17, let me tell you.

**KATRINA:** At 17, I weighed 76 pounds....

**LAURA:** You went on a diet.

**KATRINA:** I got anorexia. I was sick until I was 25....On and off.

**LAURA:** God. Are you blaming me for that? Because I have to tell you Natalie was more the ring leader. She was a bad egg-

**KATRINA:** Blame is irrelevant. I would simply appreciate an admission that you made my teenage years an absolute misery. I would like you to acknowledge that you were a bully.

**LAURA:** Well...I wasn't really a bully. More misguided....High spirited ...A loveable moron? Anyway why didn't you just tell your parents?

**KATRINA:** I didn't want them to feel sorry for me or be embarrassed or ashamed ... I didn't want them to know that I was greeted every morning by you and Tom Morgan asking the school bus driver if the bus needed an extra push after I got on.

**LAURA:** Your memory is unbelievable.

**KATRINA:** I won't ever forget it.

**LAURA:** God, Tom Morgan was an absolute dick.

**KATRINA:** And you were a bully, Laura. No more. No less. A bully. Not high spirited or misguided or an idiot or a moron. A bully.

**(PAUSE)**

Do you even understand what I'm saying? Does it even register?

**LAURA:** Yes. I think I do. And it's definitely not good. **(PAUSE)** It's just that I never thought of it...Like that.... Which is probably really wrong, isn't it? But it was unintentional and I am sorry. And I mean that. And it has nothing to do with the tax thing....It all sounds terrible and I apologize.

**KATRINA:** Don't apologize. It doesn't mean anything.

**LAURA:** Doesn't it? When I was little, my grandmother used to say "Sorry means everything's alright".

**KATRINA:** It doesn't.

**LAURA:** But imagine how much happier we'd be if it did.

**KATRINA** I want you to have some understanding of what you put me through. To see what it was like for me.

*(THERE IS A SHORT SILENCE)*

**LAURA:** Do you think you could be a bully and not even know it? Then you wouldn't be a bad person.... You'd just be.... Stupid. And it's better to be stupid than mean... Isn't it?

And now... We could move on. Couldn't we? And the best thing would be if you realized you didn't go to Hadfield West and we didn't really know each other... And it'd all been a big case of mistaken identity. That would be such a relief after all.... Wouldn't it? Because then we could just be people who met today... I wouldn't be the person who bullied you at high school.... I'd just be another... Potential tax evader.

**KATRINA** It wouldn't be the truth.

**LAURA:** But imagine how much happier we'd be if it was.

*(PAUSE)*

**KATRINA:** I have another appointment Laura. We should return to your tax. I need to review your case, make a deliberation and recommend a ruling.

**LAURA:** I hate to bring this up and I hope I'm not out of line..... But under the circumstances... The amazing twist of fate that brought us together so unexpectedly.... I just wondered if it would be better to have my case assigned to another tax officer?

**KATRINA:** Better? Yes. Possible? No.

**LAURA:** Would I be wrong to feel slightly more nervous? About my tax?

**KATRINA:** Not at all. Between us, Laura, you might be completely justified in feeling very uneasy. It might even keep you up nights.

When I saw your name come up on our audit list... I personally requested the case. I wanted to handle it myself. I wanted to be confident that whatever happens with your tax ruling.... You're left in absolutely no

doubt about who is responsible. I wanted my fingerprints all over the outcome.

Do we understand each other?

**LAURA:** I think so. But...Possibly, I'd be happier if we didn't.

**(PAUSE)**

Would I be out of line in mentioning again that Natalie Meadows was the ring leader? I could give you her address.

**LIGHTS DOWN**