

The Old Lady and the Taxman.

"You know what? I had a telephone call from a man this morning. Nasty, loud, grating voice he had. Said he was from the HMRT or something. I said 'What's that then? He said 'I'm the taxman and I'm calling you about the tax you owe us.' 'Oh, dear,' I said. 'I didn't know I did.' 'Really?' he said, all sarcastic like 'You know you owe us it and we expect you to stop delaying and pay up now.' 'Oh dear,' I said. 'I'm sure I don't owe anybody anything. Except a cup of sugar to my neighbour.' 'Don't play games with me,' he shouted. Honestly, he was shouting down the phone at me. It was horrible, If my Ernie was still alive he'd have given him what for.

Anyway, then he said, 'If you don't pay up, and right now, we'll have to put the whole thing into recovery.' 'What's that mean, then,' I said. 'It means, lady, that you'll be in real trouble. They're a law unto themselves, they are. Recovery. A law unto themselves.' 'What will they do.' I asked, getting a bit worried. 'They'll personally bankrupt you. That's what they'll do. They'll send the bailiffs in and take away anything you've got of value to pay your bill!' he said. Well, actually he was still shouting. Sounded very angry.

'I haven't got anything of value,' I told him. 'Then they'll take your home!' he snarled. I said 'Oh dear. I don't think the other residents will like that.' 'Waddya mean - the other residents?' he bellowed. 'The other residents of this home, the Bide-a-Wee Residential Home for the Elderly,' I told him.

For some reason he went dead quiet. Which was a nice change. Then he said all smarmy like, 'Am I speaking to Miss Alice Bates?' 'No, I said. You're speaking to Mrs. Elsie Bates. And if my Ernie was still alive you'd regret it, young man.' And that was it. The phone went dead. He was gone."

Note to readers: This is the very kind of telephone call you'll get if you fall behind in any payment to HMRC. The attitude and the words used above are theirs.