

The Grump

*The Grump that stole Christmas came early this year.
He came in a pickup to bring us good cheer.*

*T'was there at the house when the truck, it drove up,
And out swaggered th' meanest lil' pup,*

*A peach-fuzzed, bespectacled guy with this gal.
And oh what a look she had on her brow.*



*All business, no fun, it was clear that these two
Were there to do me in with their taxation voodoo.*

*The sign on the door said "Tax Assessment" [beware!]
So I put on a smile, straightened my hair.*

*But with one look at me, they challenged me with:
"You th' contractor, the GC, the builder of this?"*

*"Oh, no," I said, proudly, "I'm the homeowner, that's all."
And conversationally: "We're sure proud of it, ya'll."*

*He ignored what I said. An irritation, so fast.
And if looks could kill, she'd be having a blast.*

*So with a practiced little sneer, and a pimple upon it,
The man tapped his nose, like a snot-crusting grommet.*

*Clipboards, blueprints, tape measures and
more.*

Slide rules, calculator and camera to bore ...

*As deep down inside what wee savings we
had.*

*They brought them all out, and yet they were
mad.*

*At the thought of a guy like me, with a nice,
modest house.*

Like a fat tomcat who'd cornered the mouse.

*But the very next question, and the last thing
they asked.*

Was the one that hit me with no time to bask.

*It poked me like a fat thumb right in my eye.
'Cause it's the home comfort system that most
strokes my pride.*

"What kinda heat ya got in there?"

*Was all that she asked as both of them
stared.*

To see if I flinched, and, yes, when I did.

*They watched as I wriggled and twisted and
slid.*

*Back in my brain to connect with the cause.
For such a question, with no time to pause.*

"Hot water" was all I could say.

And then it hit me, and still echoes today.

*Of course! As important to them as how many
bedrooms or bathrooms or square footage
inside.*

*Was the best way to tax us, like tanning our
hides.*

As plain as day for all to see.

*Blunter than fecal matter, with no trace of
glee.*

*We're not s'posed to have comfort. We should
wither and rot.*

*'Cause furnaces and heat pumps, the scorched
air lot*

Is what they permit with no extra tax.

*A conspiracy!, Class action!, Discrimination! I
wax.*

And so this year as the Yule music plays.

We wait for the news of the fine we must pay.

Yes, a fine for sure. Little else could it be.

We bought a boiler for under our tree.

*So when you want comfort, there's no other
choice.*

Go with hot water, but watch for the voice.

*Of the Grump that stole Christmas, with tax-
book in hand.*

*And when they ask the question, try to be
bland.*

*Be unflustered, unphased; don't bandy about.
Don't twist or wriggle or shout.*

Just say, with a smile as you meet their stare.

Oh, why of course, it's Scorched air!

Taxpooredly yours, John Vastyman. ■

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focuses on the plumbing and mechanical and
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