



FOR CHRISTMAS ONE YEAR BOB MARTIN'S SECRETARY, WHO'S working out front with the TV on, gave him a clock for his office. The ticker that goes around the quickest has a golf ball on the end; the one that keeps track of the minutes is a flag; the one that counts the hours is a golf club. Tick tick tick till April 16th.

A client comes in and sits down in the room, which is done in shades of mustard. Martin estimates that the wallpaper's about ten years old, and says he'd like to move out of this Providence office — "it's a little dungeon down here." The 1995 tax rates are Scotch-taped to the wall and a haze of cigarette smoke, which seems the same vintage as the decor, hangs in the air.

The client puts some forms on the desk and Martin pulls out a pencil. "Do you have any kids?" he asks. "Do you give to charity? Church? You put money in the basket but God doesn't give receipts?"

Martin says that people come to him because they're not quite sure of all their deductions, and because they fear the IRS. "The IRS enjoys the fear," he

says. "You file because of the fear."

He works 12 hours a day from February 1st until April 15th, 6 hours on Sunday. "Tax returns are like gypsy moths," he says, pointing to the papers filed on the silt-colored wall-to-wall carpet. "The more you get 'em out, the more they multiply. You get one done and two more come in."

As the client answers his quick questions, Martin scratches his pencil around some papers. "Okay, here's your lottery number — play this number. That's your refund." After the client leaves, Martin plugs her figures into the computer to check his estimate. "Two dollars off," he says, with satisfaction. "I've got most of the tax

rates built into my head.

"It's just a job," he says. "I don't hate it and I don't love it. It's what I'm trained for.

"Play golf — *that's* what I like to do. That's why I have golf balls on my desk, because it makes me think of pleasant times. Such as April 16th."

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