

Accountant's Diary

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From the moment I was born, I was an accountant.

My name is Bill Peimant. My first words were tax, invoice, and dada—although for that last one I may have just said data. I had always dreamed of being an accountant, and working at White & White Accounting was my goal since birth. I was hypnotized by their logo, a black square on a white background. I remember sleeping in bed, hugging my binder, looking up at my walls covered in posters of White & White Accounting—their balance sheets, their earnings reports, their workplace harassment notices—five-year-old me couldn't help but stare at the bureaucracy. When I graduated from Harvard four years later I applied to White & White Accounting and was immediately accepted. At the time, getting PHDs was a hobby of mine, and it seemed to have worked wonderfully for my career, so I frequently advise others to try out the pastime.

A day after I was hired, I received a tour of the White & White Accounting office, and I will never forget the beautiful image of infinite cubicles, printers, and eye bags. I was then directed to *my* cubicle, and on the way I came across a beige plant that caught my interest. It was so perplexing, so impossibly corporate, I could not take my eyes off it. As I was not allowed to take it to my cubicle, I set up a spreadsheet to track its movements around the office, which I would update across the following days.

After 34 minutes sat in my cubicle, a fellow coworker kindly dropped two and a half reams of paper's worth of files on my desk. I thanked him for the entertainment he had just provided me with, and he, for some reason, gave me a rather strange look. The work was hard, and I embarrassingly admit it took a whole 12 minutes to finish the stack. I walked over to my boss Mr. Hanon to ask for more work, and he did not reply, only giving me a strange look similar to the file-dropping coworker earlier. He was puzzled, like a picture painted onto a jigsaw.

"Uh, I'll send something over," he said, slightly confused. "Just... get back to your desk." He flipped through the pages, making sure the work was real.

It was.

So I exited my boss Mr. Hanon's office, and walked back to my desk. After sitting there for about 7 minutes, the same file-dropping coworker stopped by and dropped off another lovely load of paper.

It was done in 10 minutes.

My boss Mr. Hanon looked at me even stranger the second time, when I was back at his office with the second stack of papers. He didn't say much, flipping through the pages I had given him, again making sure the work was real.

It was.

“...thank you, Bill,” my boss Mr. Hanon said, moderately perplexed. “Please, go back to your desk and we’ll... we’ll find something.”

So I exited my boss Mr. Hanon’s office and went back to my desk. And again, the file-dropping coworker gave me another magnificent mound of papers to work on.

It was done in 8 minutes.

My boss Mr. Hanon flipped through the pages when I placed them on his desk, making sure the work was real.

It was.

“Bill, this is...” he began, quite dumbfounded. “This is a lot of work. Go back and we’ll give you more.”

So I went back.

Once back at my desk, the file-dropping coworker plopped down another handsome heap. It was done in 5 minutes.

“Bill, how the hell are you doing this?” he asked, significantly mystified, when I went back to his office with the third stack. “Just go back to your desk,” my boss Mr. Hanon said.

Again, the file-dropping coworker dropped off another pulchritudinous pile which took 3 minutes.

“BILL!” My boss Mr. Hanon screamed when I entered his office, utterly bamboozled. “What are you doing?”

“Accounting work, sir,” I replied.

“Just go back to your desk.” He said.

The file-dropping coworker dropped off another supercalifragilisticexpialidocious stack.

It took less than a minute.

So I walked back to Mr. Hanon’s office.

“BILL! WHAT IS GOING ON??” Mr. Hanon was yelling at me, unmitigatedly discombobulated.

“I’m finishing the work, sir.” I replied. But he seemed overwhelmed by the papers I had given him, flipping through all my work that day to check for errors, finding none, and unable to explain how.

“This doesn’t... make sense,” he said. “There are reams and reams of this. No one is supposed to enjoy accounting work, let alone stay awake long enough to complete it all.”

My boss Mr. Hanon put his head in his hands, unknowing of what to do. He was devastated.

He had no work left to give me.

“Just go home,” he said, having given up completely. “Just go home, Bill.”

So I did.

It took 15 minutes.

The next day, upon arriving at White & White, I was called into my boss Mr. Hanon’s office upon entry. He looked angry, and there was a web of post-it notes on the wall with red string connecting them, all leading to a center post it note that said something about stealing a job — I didn’t read it completely as I was then told loudly to sit down. My boss Mr. Hanon looked frustrated.

“Do you like your job?” He asked.

“Yes, very much,” I said. Because I did.

“If you want to keep it, stop finishing work so fast,” he said, and his voice was forceful. He seemed angry, and I did not know why. But I would listen to his orders.

Then, he made me stand up and leave his office. And as I left while he mumbled about a chip in my brain, I realized my stress hormone levels were slightly higher than normal, so I made two pie-charts and updated my beige-plant-tracking spreadsheet to calm myself down.

That day, when I received work, I made sure to take it slow. I forced myself to complete the three reams of paper I had received that day in twenty minutes. Afterwards, to pass the time, I updated my beige plant-tracking spreadsheet. But once that was done, I had nothing left to do.

It was not fun, rather quite grueling, waiting in my cubicle to pass the time.

So I searched for a source of entertainment, and found that my cubicle’s walls were far more interesting than I thought. They were a beautifully uniform color of grey, that I could not resist staring at. They were so neutral, so absolutely bland, and I was enchanted by their emptiness.

So I stared at the wall for about four hours, which I assumed was roughly how much time my boss Mr. Hanon was expecting me to take. But afterwards, I felt a bit bored and wanted more work to entertain myself. So I walked up to my boss Mr. Hanon’s office to ask for more.

Opening his office door, I found another man standing beside his desk, and my boss Mr. Hanon was not there.

“Do you know where my boss Mr. Hanon is?” I asked.

“Your boss? He’s in a meeting right now.” He replied.

“Oh, my mistake, I’ll come back later.” I began to close the door.

“Why do you need him?” He asked. I reopened the door.

“I’ve just finished my work, I’m asking for more.”

“You’re asking to do more *accounting* work?” The man seemed intrigued. I nodded. “What was your name again?” He asked.

“Bill Peimant,” I replied.

“Pleased to meet you, Bill. I’m Kevin Black, CEO of White & White Accounting.” Mr. Black the CEO held out his hand to shake mine, and as our palms made contact, the office door burst open and my boss Mr. Hanon ran in.

“NO, MR. BLACK, DON’T TALK TO HIM! GET AWAY!” My boss Mr. Hanon yelled at Mr. Black the CEO, grabbing the back of my shirt and throwing me out of his office. I face-planted into the ground, and his door slammed shut behind me. Then I stood up and brushed myself off, and pressed my ear against the door. Leaning against the wooden door, I overheard him yelling *He’s nobody! Just a calculator!* and then his door opened again and I fell back into his office.

“He’s back!” said Mr. Black the CEO. Because I was. My boss Mr. Hanon seemed mortified by this development. Mr. Black the CEO must have opened the door, as my boss Mr. Hanon now attempted to close it again, trying to slam the door shut and remove me from the room. He only succeeded in repeatedly bashing my head between the door and the doorframe.

I tried to alert my boss Mr. Hanon that my head was blocking the door from, but he seemed to not hear me. I looked up at Mr. Black the CEO’s face, who was wide-eyed in horror, and then my boss Mr. Hanon tried to slam the door so quickly I lost consciousness.

The next day, walking towards the office door, and with three stitches in the side of my head, I bumped into my boss Mr. Hanon, who was carrying a box filled with his belongings. I congratulated him on finding a new work opportunity, and he gave me a thankful scowl back. Opening the office doors and walking inside, I sat down at my desk, and, as usual, a coworker came over and dropped off a stack of paper, and I began work. Mr. Black the CEO stopped by to inform me I was now the boss of the branch. I knew it meant I could do endless paperwork to my heart’s content. I could make all the pie charts I had ever dreamed of. I could have all the beige plants. And when I had this realization, something strange happened.

I felt happy.

I felt...

Emotion.

And so I thanked Mr. Black the CEO for making me feel emotion for the first time, and he didn't seem to know how to react. Then he left and I began work for the day. All was great.

But as the hours continued, something grew to feel out of balance. The air was not right. I couldn't understand what was tipping me off, so I stood up, and caught notice of a figure I had not ever seen before, standing at one of the printers. He was facing the other way, and was squaring a stack of paper. He began walking out of sight.

"Wait!" I said.

He turned around. He looked similar to me, but seemed to move differently, act differently, hold himself differently.

"Who are you?" I asked him.

"I was just hired." The man said. "My name is Deb Bitt."