



Hidden money

CEF English language level: B2: Intermediate

“Nothing is certain except death and taxes”. Benjamin Franklin

Hatsue and Yoshiko were the daughters of a very **wealthy** man. One day the sisters would **inherit** his fortune. They would also pay a very large inheritance tax bill. ‘It’s not fair,’ their father told them. ‘That money has already been taxed.’

‘But what can we do?’

‘We’ll take the money out now,’ he told them. ‘Then it won’t be there when I die.’

Where's the money?

Every month their father **withdrew** large amounts of money in cash. And when he died there was very little money left in his bank accounts.



But the National Tax Agency were suspicious. And when they investigated his bank statements they found regular withdrawals of large sums of cash.

“What happened to this money?”

“Oh, Dad spent it all,” said Hatsue.

“In cash?”

“Yes. It was his money! And Dad was very generous.”

“He took us all out to lunch every week,” confirmed Yoshiko. “And he always chose a good wine.”

Suspicious

The National Tax Agency remained **suspicious**. Even if Dad had bought the kids a restaurant every week, that wouldn’t explain the missing money.

They obtained a warrant to search Hatsue Shimizu's house. And it was there they discovered 6bn yen (£29m; \$58m) in new bank notes

‘They hid most of the money in cash in a garden shed attached to Hatsue's house,’ an Osaka tax official said. ‘We found 50 cardboard boxes packed with cash.’ More cash was found in Yoshiko’s home.

“Oh, that money!”

When the police found the boxes of bank notes, Hatsue looked surprised: ‘Oh that money!’ she said. ‘I forgot about that. I put it there when I was **tidying up** the house.’

For some reason the police didn’t believe her. They charged the sisters with the biggest **tax evasion** in Japanese history.

Glossary

estate - money, property, investments and other assets passed on when someone dies.

inherited wealth - money assets etc passed between generations

shed - small temporary building made of wood/metal etc

suspicious - to feel something is not right

tax evasion - to intentionally avoid paying legally required tax

tidy up - put in order, clear away

wealthy - rich

Many countries have an **inheritance tax** sometimes described as **death duties**. This is usually imposed on **estates** above a certain value. In the UK this once only affected **wealthiest** but increased property values mean more families now pay this tax.

Quick Check: True or false?

1. The sisters wanted to pay less inheritance tax.
2. All the cash was found in Hatsue’s property.
3. The sisters were charged by the police.

Comprehension

1. Why do the sisters hide the money?
2. Do you think a shed is a good place to hide money? Why?/Why not
3. How does Hatsue explain the money the police find?