

Two teddies and a woman commit welfare fraud

An extract from *The Devotions of CSO Keeffe*

It was a dark and stormy afternoon (wind, rain) and Ted, Big Ted and Cat, who could usually be found in Bed or at least in bedwear, have ventured as far as a south Dublin GP's office in search of some answers. Cat has a medical card, the Teds do not - , teddies are not eligible. Ted has a corporeal complaint; Ted is going to use Cat's medical card, because they don't have fifty euro to spare. In the room are some others who are waiting too. It's not clear how many of these others are also committing what could be called fraud if you were to ask a particularly unsympathetic person.

CAT I'm thinking of trying to be a workaholic, - I need something to knock me out of this stupor, and I've always wanted to contribute to economic growth. I feel like I missed out on the spirit of the Celtic Tiger.

TED Do you hear yourself? You don't believe that, have you been watching those financial advice Youtubes again? Have you been reading Lifehacker?

Ted turns to Big Ted

TED Last time Cat took to the Bed she was on Lifehacker 24-7, ...

BIG TED I know I was there.

TED ... only ever taking breaks to run some tests on her personality elsewhere.

BIG TED I know I was there.

CAT I was very alienated from myself you see.

Big Ted becomes very still, he stops moving altogether; he doesn't move a limb. Big Ted doesn't like to talk about madness. Big Ted clams up. Big Ted can't help it. Big Ted doesn't try to help it. Cat and Ted continue.

CAT And it wasn't that I feared death so much as I feared that I would only have ever had nothing before the nothingness of death.

TED Like you wouldn't have done all the things you wanted to do before you died?

CAT A lot of the worry was about wasted time.

Big Ted remains frozen, breathing deeply and quietly, not moving much, other times not moving at all.

CAT Are you okay Ted?

TED Is time moving more slowly or quickly for you right now?

BIG TED Slowly

CAT You're bigger than both me and Ted by a foot and closer to the Sun by a foot, so do you think that it evens out?

TED What!?!??

BIG TED What are you talking about?

CAT The higher up you are the more quickly time goes?

TED What?

CAT I read it on the Daily Mail.

BIG TED Stop reading the Daily Mail.

TED Yeah Cathy it's really bad. They're awful and they steal content.

CAT I don't believe in intellectual property.

BIG TED You don't believe in intellectual property because you've only ever made half-things your entire life.

CAT Jesus Big Ted.

....

CAT It could be good for your CV, to be a workaholic.

TED That's a dark thing to say to me and it already a dark situation that we're in.

BIG TED He could be dying.

TED I could be dying.

CAT We're all dying.

TED I could find out today that I'm dying.

CAT Even if you are dying it would take 3 to 5 business days to find out.

TED Maybe we shouldn't have all come here today.

BIG TED If you die in an accident have you always been dying still or is death then a more discrete event?

CAT I don't believe in free will.

BIG TED What do you believe in?

CAT I believe in everything ten to ninety percent.

BIG TED What things do you believe in ten percent.

CAT Use both your imagination and your knowledge of my character and don't make me announce the rotten things I believe in ten percent to this room of strangers.

TED You'd be liable to have blood on your hands if you did. Some of these are very decrepit

CAT Shush

TED Look at that lad.

Ted gestures at an elderly man.

Cat and Big Ted turn puce with their healthy senses of shame. Big Ted thumps Ted.

CAT I believe in free will ten per cent.

A child stands up.

CHILD "Time is life itself, and life resides in the human heart."

BIG TED That child is a princely philosopher.

CHILD'S ATTACHED ADULT : It's this book he's reading. It's having a great effect on him.

TED Surely you mean a philosopher king?

BIG TED He's only about ten.

CAT "The only satisfying solution is the essentially religious realisation that we are not other than [time]."

In one gesture the child smiles and sits down.

TED What was that?

BIG TED That was beautiful.

Ted's shoulders begin to shake, Ted is laughing an unclean laugh.

TED What was that!??

CAT *I can't help that
My voice has
The texture of farce
And so do my eyebrows
And sideways mouth.*