

x. *Eddie Adder*

There are not many,
who begin without a penny
and end by making money grow on trees.
Eddie Adder is one of these.

In his early teens
as an office boy
with Fagan Kelly and Molloy,
he swiftly learnt the ways and means
of the charming smile and the watchful pen.

Starting with an advantageous loan
secured with skill and acumen,
he went out on his own
and, in due course, became a billionaire.

He was invited to endow a chair,
by an admiring university
and, with his famed ability
to reassure the anxious and perturbed,
he knew what might be best allowed to lie
discreetly undisturbed
as a forest of cranes rose to the sky.

His critics, through the years,
had spoken with foreboding eyes
of how his meteoric rise
would end in tears,
but confidantes and devotees
tranquilly betrayed
not one glimmer of unease
as Eddie's smoothly programmed cavalcade
swept aside all blame.

Then one day a lone accuser came
calling for his rights in open court:

*I carry a compendium of files
with cheques for curious amounts,
a trail of foreign bank accounts
and an auditor's report
on the never-ending wiles of the accused.*

Eddie's counsel rose to his full height:

*My client is saddened and bemused
and intends to vigorously fight
every last outrageous claim.
So it was with deep regret
this morning, in early hours,
that he instructed me
to ask that the hearing be reset
for a later more convenient date.
He has been suffering of late
from a pitilessly throbbing knee
which has undermined his powers
of narrative and subtle argument.*

From the crowded gallery
Eddie's victims, in the throes
of righteous discontent,
howled in wounded majesty:

*We who have suffered seethed and wept
are entitled to know where his keys are kept
and everything his doctor knows.*

An order was made to leave no stone unturned,
until Eddie's whereabouts
was known, and soon, amid triumphant shouts,
the hearing was adjourned
to a private clinic – on the seventh floor
with an startling drop to the ground.

His accusers gathered round
and Eddie saw it was too late.
He raised his head
and drew from his deep store
of charm and plausibility:

*Do not underestimate
how fervently I sympathise
with the need to earn one's daily bread,
but every fool must realise
that the curse of gullibility,
along with the accompanying strife,
is one of those sad realities of life.*