

Three Bears

If you go down to the woods today (and I strongly suggest that you do, for they're such wonderfully peaceful places and the exercise will do you good) then you may encounter a surprise of quite monumental proportion. For change has seen fit to come upon this once substantial area of undisturbed forestry whose only previous conurbation was a small and delightfully quaint cottage owned by a family of bears. Sweeping changes of life-changing significance, particularly if you happen to walk upon all fours and find yourself clad in a layer of coarse brown fur.

It's the spectre of progress you see, which has made not so subtle alteration to the landscape and resulted in this sprawling economic bombshell of manufacturing plants which you now see before you, stretching as far as the eye can see.

"Porridge production is fast becoming a growth industry in the marketplace and it's the early bear that catches the worm", says Theodore P. Bear (Chairman of the Board of Directors, and Teddy to his friends) as he sits perched behind his oversized marble desk, chain-smoking hand-rolled Cuban cigars whilst a small emaciated manicurist from the Philippines gingerly trims his toe claws.

It's a comfortably affluent lifestyle that Teddy's wife, Florence, has become most accustomed to, clad as she is in her man-skin coat (not real man of course as that would only enrage the human rights people) with a multitude of dazzlingly expensive rings and jewellery adorning her freshly permed fur. Spending her days idly watching daytime TV and wanting for nothing, she tries very hard not to ponder the existential conundrum of her now utterly barren and vacuous existence and instead concerns herself with whether or not the addition of a second swimming pool would be too extravagant a gesture.

If you can make yourself heard over the cacophony of death metal emanating from beneath his door, you should ask Baby Bear what he thinks of it all, though it's likely that he'll only emerge from his cluttered hovel long enough to scream something about being sixteen and not a baby any more, before stomping back into his room and rebelliously slamming the door in your face. Teenagers can be such handfuls these days.

No tour is complete though without chatting to the poor security guard stationed on the factory front gate. The wrong side of thirty, with long blonde hair still flowing down her back, she'll stare at you with the kind of morose, dejected expression that

remains exclusive to those individuals forced to endure untold hours of community service as penance for their past crimes.

“Problems with security?” she’ll smirk half-heartedly in response to your seemingly idiotic question. “Look pal, if I couldn’t break in there at the very top of my game and steal the odd bowl or two, then frankly you’ve got no chance!”

On second thoughts, don’t go down to the woods today, as they’re perhaps no longer the idyllic escape they once were. Try the beach instead, I find the sea air is so very invigorating at this time of year, don’t you?