

Bloking bloke

NELL, the narrator of Anne Enright's *The Wren*, can't imagine real words coming out of her boyfriend's mouth. 'When I think about him talking, all he says is: Bloke, bloke bloke bloke. Blokey bloking bloke, bloke-bloke bloking.' The boyfriend in question, Felim, a tall, taciturn farmer's son, built like 'a plastic model of what-goes-where', turns out to have an interest in choking and taking non-consensual photographs of women. Alarm bells ring, or should do, when he calls Betty Davis 'Miles Davis's first wife'. Nell is a recent Trinity graduate, living in a grim Dublin houseshare and making money writing blogs about luxury holidays she's never been on ('Ngunwi beach, famed for its sugary sand and still, aquamarine sea, lies at the very northernmost tip of tropical Zanzibar . . .'). From time to time, she goes home to her mother, Carmel, to be fed and quizzed about her life, which is unsatisfying for both parties because Carmel is relentlessly practical and calls self-reflection having 'too much imagination'.

Felim is bad but none of the novel's

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