



This Student Life

The economics of disability

SCENE 1

Neil and Dave have just arrived at work

Neil:

So that's it! It's official. I have high levels of dyslexia.

Dave:

That's what it says in the letter, is it?

Neil:

Yeah. Look. It means I'll be able to apply for Disabled Students Allowance. What's he want?

Dave:

Who? Oh. Rachman? He's calling me over. Pop in the shed and put the kettle on, I'll catch up with you.

Neil:

He don't look very happy.

Dave:

He never looks happy.

SCENE 2

Katie is walking in the park. She bumps into Donna.

Donna:

Katie?

Katie:

Donna? What are you doing here?

Donna:

I was just taking a bit of a walk. It's a lovely day.

Katie:

Is it? I suppose so.

Donna:

What's the matter? Is something wrong?

Katie:

No, no. I just needed to get out of the flat. Sometimes I feel like the walls are closing in on me. D'you know what I mean?

Donna:

Oh yes. I've had Ted at home for a week. I know exactly what you mean.

Katie:

Oh, I'm sorry, I should have asked. How is your husband?

Donna:

Well, nowhere near as bad as he thinks he is. I'm sure he'll be fine. He went back to work today.

Katie:

Oh good. You must have been worried, though?

Donna:

D'you fancy a coffee?

Katie:

I would but I haven't got any money on me.

Donna:

Oh don't worry, I'll pay.

Katie:

No I can't.

Donna:

Why ever not?

Katie:

Because.

Donna:

Because what? I'd like to buy you a cup of coffee. As a friend. And because I could do with somebody to talk to. You'd be doing me a favour.

Katie:

You just don't understand.

Donna:

Well it sounds as if you could do with somebody to talk to as well. Come on. I insist. Is Jade sleeping?

Katie:

Yes at the moment. But I don't think for much longer. I've got a bottle for her. Okay, but I'm definitely paying next time. I promise.

SCENE 3

Back on the building site

Dave:

Neil?

Neil:

Yes, Dave. The tea's coming.

Dave:

Neil? Do you remember Friday?

Neil:

What's this quiz time? Course I remember Friday, it was only two days ago.

Dave:
Who was the last person out of here?

Neil:
I was. Why?

Dave:
Did anything happen before you left?

Neil:
Like what?

Dave:
Nothing?

Neil:
What are you on about? I locked up like you told me and then I met you in the pub, where we spent some of your winnings which you had gone to pick up. Why?

Dave:
So, nothing else happened?

Neil:
Well, there was a delivery.

Dave:
Ah, a delivery. And what was delivered Neil?

Neil:
Just some concrete.

Dave:
And did you check the delivery docket?

Neil:
Sort of.

Dave:
Why would we have wet concrete delivered last thing on a Friday night?

Neil:
Er, hmm.

Dave:
Let me try another one. What happens to concrete if it isn't kept wet or used?

Neil:
Oh no.

Dave:
Oh yes. Do you know what we have to do today?

Neil:
I'm gonna like this am I?

Dave:
Probably not. There is now a big, solid mountain of concrete at the back of the site. Because it was such a lovely weekend it is rock hard. You and I have got to go over there with two Kangos and break it all up. For which we should be grateful.

Neil:
Grateful?

Dave:
Yeah, cos if you weren't so incompetent, you would have signed the delivery docket, which would have made that concrete our responsibility. As it was I just saved both our jobs by lying that the delivery driver must have come through whilst the gate was unmanned.

Neil:
I'm sorry Dave. I never thought.

Dave:
No. Not your strong point is it?

Neil:
Do you still want tea?

Dave:
Of course I still want tea. Do you know how stressful it is lying through your teeth?

SCENE 4

Donna and Katie are in the outside café.

Katie:
I never thought I'd be interested in things like the economy. You know, I just never thought about it before. But now ...

Donna:
So, are you thinking of going on to do economics?

Katie:
It's mad isn't it? I was gonna do psychology. But, you know, all this stuff, it's just convinced me. Have you read this chapter by Ian Frisby?

Donna:
I think it's Fribbance. Yes, I've started it.

Katie:
What do you think of it?

Donna:
It's okay. But I'm not really that interested in facts and figures. I leave that to Ted. I'm more of a people person. That's why I'm still determined to go on and do psychology. I'd like to be an educational psychologist.

Katie:
I would have said that was what I was interested in, but not the educational psychology bit so much, but, you know, people. I had a thought about being a child psychologist or something like that. I'm not sure what you do with an economics degree. But it just seems important to know about these things.

Donna:
Well, it's what the politicians say, isn't it? It's the economy, stupid.

Katie:
What do you mean, stupid?

Donna:

Not you. But that's what decides who people vote for.

Katie:

Oh. I don't vote.

Donna:

Why not?

Katie:

I've never been interested in that sort of thing. I think one reason was that it never affected me. Or, at least, I thought it didn't. I used to read all these stories about benefit scroungers and just believed them. It's a bit different when you're one of them!

Donna:

You're not a scrounger, Katie.

Katie:

Well, I'm not so sure. First Neil buys me tea, now you buy me coffee. Has she nearly finished?

Donna:

Yes, looks like it. It's nice holding a baby again. I'd forgotten what it's like.

Katie:

Do you want me to take her?

Donna:

No, she's fine. I missed my grandchildren growing up because my daughter moved to Australia just after her first child was born. I haven't even met the second one.

Katie:

Well, you can keep Jade if you want.

Donna:

I don't think you mean that.

Katie:

Sometimes I do. Not when she's being so cute, like today. She's just trying to impress you.

Donna:

Well, she's succeeding.

Katie:

It's interesting though that your daughter is in Australia. It kind of shows how globalised we all are now. I'd love to emigrate.

Donna:

Really?

Katie:

I've never been out of this country. I'd booked to go abroad when I got pregnant. Me and Cheryl, my best friend, we were planning a sun, sea and sex holiday, not necessarily in that order.

Donna:

Gosh. That's not how it was in my day.

Katie:

It's not how it is in my day, now. Not with Jade. I see precious little sun, live miles from the sea and sex. What is that again?

Donna: *(laughs)*

Katie. Really. You youngsters have no inhibitions at all.

Katie:

I'm sorry, I'm embarrassing you. Let's change the subject. How about this conference. Neil seemed really keen.

Donna:

Yes, there's something next week, I think. If I can break away from Ted for an hour, I'm going to go.

Katie:

Do you have to book?

Donna:

I think you were supposed to, but it's not too late.

Katie:

What is it exactly?

Donna:

It's an introduction to podcasting. It sounds like fun.