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Beans

by Patricia Grace

Every Saturday morning in the winter term I bike into town to play rugby. Winter's a great time. We live three miles out of town and the way in is mostly uphill, so I need to get a good early start to be in town by nine. On the way in I don't get a chance to look around me or notice things very much because the going is fairly hard. Now and again where it gets a bit steep I have to stand up on the pedals and really tread hard.

But it's great getting off to footy on a Saturday morning with my towel and change on the carrier, and pushing hard to get there by nine. It's great.

By the time I get to the grounds I'm really puffing and I know my face is about the colour of the club house roof. Phew. But I'm ready to go on though. I can't wait to get on the field and get stuck into the game of footy; I really go for it. I watch that ball and chase it all over the place. Where the ball goes I go. I tackle, handle, kick, run, everything. I do everything I can think of and I feel good. Sometimes it's cold and muddy and when I get thrown

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down into the mud and come up all mucky I feel great, because all the mud shows that I've really made a game of it. The dirtier I get the better I like it because I don't want to miss out on anything.

Then after the game I strip off and get under the shower in the club



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room, and sometimes the water is boiling hot and sometimes as cold as frogs. And whatever it is, you're hopping up and down and getting clean, and yelling out to your mates about the game and saying is it hot or cold in your one.

I need a drink then. I get a drink from the dairy across the road and the dairy's always jammed full of us boys getting drinks. You should hear the noise, you should really hear it.

The going home is one of the best parts of all. I hop on my bike and away I go, hardly any pushing at all. Gee it's good. I can look about me and see everything growing. Cabbages and caulis, potatoes and all sorts of vegetables. And some of the paddocks are all ploughed up and have rows of green just showing through. All neat and tidy, and not much different to look at from the coloured squares of knitting my sister does for girl guides. You see all sorts of people out in the gardens working on big machines or walking along the rows weeding and hoeing: that's the sort of place it is around here. Everything grows and big trucks take all the stuff away, then it starts all over again.

But, I must tell you. Past all the gardens about a mile and a half from where I live there's a fairly steep rise. It's about the steepest part on the way home and I really have to puff up that bit. Then I get to the top and there's a long steep slope going down. It's so steep and straight it makes you want to yell and I usually do. That's not all though. Just as you start picking up speed on the down slope you get this great whiff of pigs. Poo. Pigs. It makes you want to laugh and shout it's such a stink. And as I go whizzing down the stretch on my bike I do a big sniff up, a great big sniff, and get a full load of the smell of pigs. It's such a horrible great stink that I don't know how to describe it. We've got a book in our library at school and in it there's a poem about bells and the poem says 'joyous'. 'The joyous ringing of bells', or 'bells ringing joyously', something like that. Well 'joyous' is the word I think of when I smell the pigs. Joyous. A joyous big stink of pigs, it's really great.

It's not far to my place after I've taken the straight. When I get home I lean on my bike up against the shed and I feel really hot and done for. I don't go straight inside though. Instead I flop myself down on the grass underneath the lemon tree and I pick a lemon and take a huge bite of it. The lemons on our tree are as sour as sour, but I take a big bite because I feel so good. It makes me pull awful faces and roll over and over in the grass, but I keep on taking big bites until the lemon is all gone, skin and everything. Then I pick another lemon and eat that all up too because I don't want to miss a thing in all my life.

We have an old lady living next to us. She's pretty old and she doesn't do much except walk around her garden. One day I heard her say to Mum, "He's full of beans that boy of yours. Full of beans."