

Fish Heads by Api Taylor

"It's payday. We've just been paid, and we're rich," laughed Paora.

"Yeah and it's your turn to buy the kai," reminded John.

"Get some fish heads," said Hemi.

"Mmm fish heads," said John.

Mmm fish heads, thought Paora, smacking his lips. "Things are expensive these days," he said, "but five dollars ought to be enough eh?"

"Yeah," said Hemi, "Get four and we'll boil them in the pot."

"Ha," laughed John. "Remember the last time we cooked fish heads. The posh Pakeha lady next door complained about the smell and rang someone in the Health Department."

"Yeah," said Hemi. "I saw her running about the house with a spray can in her hand."

"I don't think she ever got rid of the fish smell," said Paora. "She's been giving us dirty looks ever since we cooked up them fish heads."

He left the flat and walked down the road to the fish shop. It was a good idea, he thought, to have moved into the flat with the boys. He'd felt lonely in the city by himself. Like him his flatmates were Maori boys from the country who'd come down to the city looking for work. They thought and felt alike and it seemed to these boys that the Pakeha in the city thought and felt opposite to them in every way.

"Fish heads," he said, and he smacked his lips again as he walked into the shop and grinned as he thought of the feast to come.

"I'll have four fish heads thanks." He smiled and placed the money on the counter.

"Sorry," said the man. "We chuck'em out."

"What?" said Paora.

"We haven't got any fish heads. We chuck'em out," came the reply.

He walked out of the shop, but instead of returning to the flat, he continued down the road to the next fish shop. There were no fish heads there. Nor were there any in the next fish shop. He tried all the shops he knew but none had fish heads.

Each time he asked his voice got quieter and quieter, and for some reason he began to feel silly asking people for fish heads.

He was disappointed. He'd been looking forward to a feed and he knew his mates would be sitting at

home with their mouths watering. Suddenly at the end of the street he saw a sign which read FISHERIES.

Ah, he thought. If they haven't got any fish heads then there aren't any fish in the sea.

He found the loading bay at the back of the building. He hoped he'd be able to speak to a Maori, for he felt that if he asked a Maori for fish heads he wouldn't feel silly.

"What dya want?" said the man.

Hell. It's a Pakeha, thought Paora. "I'd like to buy four fish heads," he said quietly.

"No sorry, you can't have four fish heads," said the man. "We've only got two. Will that do?"

Two, he thought. That's not enough. Still it's better than nothing. "I'll take them," he said.

He waited as the man went to get them and after five minutes he began

to think something was wrong and he'd not be able to get the heads.

The man returned. "Here," he said, as he placed them on the table.

Paora looked. Before him were two of the biggest fish heads he'd ever seen. They were huge. He reckoned them to be three times bigger than his own head and almost as wide as his body.

Those beauties will cost a packet, he thought, and I've only got five dollars. "How much?" he asked.

"We wouldn't dream of charging for fish heads," said the man. "I know what it's like to be hard up. Here take them."

There's enough stink in these two fish heads to keep that posh lady next door spraying her house for a month, thought Paora, and he walked out of the building chuckling to himself.

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 on the pedals and really tread hard.

But it's great getting off to rugby 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 clubhouse roof. But I'm ready to go on though. I can't wait to get on the field and get stuck into the game; I really go for it. I watch the 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 feel good.

Sometimes it's cold and muddy and when I get thrown 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-room and sometimes the water is boiling hot and sometimes as cold as anything. And whatever it is, you're hopping up and down and getting clean, and yelling out to your mates about the game 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 the best part of all. I hop on my bike and away I go, hardly 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 this fairly steep