

The Big Hoose

Bang bang bang

That's the backdoor gaun.

'It'll be fur me!' Lewis isnae certain it *actually* is but it *usually* is and onywi, who else wull it be fur? Naebdy's *ever* visitin his parents.

Lewis opens the door tae see Ally, sae excitit he's no even goat aff his bike, right fit jidderin oan the pedal, awreadie turnt wan-eighty tae face the road. Ready tae set aff.

'Comin oot? Ah've foond sumhin!'

'Aye?! Whit is it? Is it guid? *Whur* is it? Tell me, eh?!'

Lewis hits him wae a wheen ae questions, aw the while pouin oan his Sambas, stufin the laces inside rather than tyin thum.

'Ye'll jist huv tae fin oot fur yersel! Follae me, guid sir!'

Ally wheels his haun above a heid ae curls, green airmy shirt billowin. He looks like a general oan horseback.

'Haud up, man! Gies a meenit while Ah git ma trainies oan! Mum! Dad! Ah'm awiy oot wae Ally! Back fur tea!'

Is that a muffled 'okaaay' comin fae the kitchen? Nae time tae make shair. Lewis slams the backdoor, bolts doon the path past the rabbit hutch, and digs his bike oot the hut, while Ally waits up oan the pavement, clearly desperate tae git gaun.

'Roughly whur we heidit, least tell me that?' pleads Lewis, pedalling up tae him.

'Doon by the kirk, that's aw Ah'm sayin.'

'Jeziz, whit a mystery!'

They cycle up the hill toward the village centre ae Netherhill, cuttin across the mini-roondaboot and glidin doon Main Street, Nigel's newsagents oan wan side and the primary scuil oan the ither. As they pass the high flats squeezed atween two cottages, the boys gawk up at oily black mairks streakin doon beige pebbledash like blood fae a heid wound. Naebdy kens who bides in thae flats these days. Mibbe thur empty efter that druggie wummin threw her baby unner the wheels ae a passin caur. Lewis nivver kent if that wis true or no... but that's whit fowk say.

A couple meenits later and thur in the ootskirts ae the village. Golden haybales glint behin the auld kirk. The tang ae slurry fills thur nostrils. It's a rotten reek, aye, but a guid wan anaw. Tells ye it's the simmer.

The countryside stretches oot weel beyond the Main Street and its schemes. Fields, forests, hills, mills, bings, burns, bourachs, bogs, yairds, crags, and quarries. Sum ae his fellow Netherhillians are aye moanin thair's heehaw tae dae ither than fitba or fightin. Dae they no unnerstaun thair's sae much tae see? Tae explore? Huv they nivver heard ae gaun oan a bloody adventure? Ally gets it, that's why thur pals. Mibbe even *best pals*. But ye cannae ever risk sayin sumhin like *here Ally, you're ma best pal by the wiy* kiz nae maitter whit it'd be sum riddy and thair's sum hings ye jist dinnae say...

An extract from the novel "The Big Hoose" by Ross Crawford