

BILLY. I'm fed up of going in goal. I go in every week.

MR SUGDEN. You weren't just in goal, Casper. You were all over the goal. What are you Casper, an ape?

BILLY. You shouldn't blame me when I let 'em all through.

MR SUGDEN. Of course I blame you lad! You let three goals in, boy. You're too daft to laugh at, Casper. I'd like to drop you, Casper.

BILLY. Sir? Drop me from t' team, sir?

MR SUGDEN. No, Casper. Throw you up and drop you from a great bloody height.

Pause. BILLY tries to give MR SUGDEN the borrowed football kit back.

What's this?

BILLY. It's your shorts back, sir.

MR SUGDEN (*snatching them from him*). Shorts. I'm sick of you, Casper! I'll give you shorts, lad. Why is it every lesson the same old story? 'Please sir, I've got no kit.' Every lesson for four years! Next week no excuses, Casper. Why is it that everyone else can get some, but you can't?

BILLY. I don't know, sir. Me Mum says she won't buy me any. She says it's a waste of money. Especially now that I'm leaving.

MR SUGDEN. You haven't been leaving for four years, Casper! Anyway, you could have bought some out of your spending-money couldn't you?

BILLY. I don't like football, sir.

MR SUGDEN. What's that got to do with it?

BILLY. I don't know, sir. Anyway I don't get enough.

MR SUGDEN. Get a job then.

BILLY. I've got one, sir.

MR SUGDEN. Well then, you get paid don't you?

BILLY. Yes, sir, but I've got to give it to me Mum. I'm still paying her for me fines.

MR SUGDEN *bounces the ball on BILLY's head.*

MR SUGDEN. Well you should keep out of trouble, lad.

BILLY. I've not been in trouble, sir, not for ^{since last} ~~for~~ ^{time}.

MR SUGDEN. Shut up, lad! Shut up, before you drive me crackers.

BILLY *starts to leave.*

In a hurry, Casper?

BILLY. Yes, sir, I've got to get home, sir.

MR SUGDEN. Why, Casper?

BILLY. To see me bird, sir.

MR SUGDEN. Does your father know you've got a girl-friend, Casper?

MACDOWALL. It's his kestrel, sir.

BILLY. It's better than you any day, MacDowall.

MR SUGDEN. Kestrel, Casper?

BILLY. Yes, sir.

MR SUGDEN. That must be stimulating, Casper.

BILLY. What's that, sir?

MR SUGDEN. Stimulating. S.T.I.M.I.L.A.T.I.N., stimulating.

BILLY. Can I get home, sir? For me dinner.

MR SUGDEN. What about the showers?

BILLY. I've had one, sir.

MR SUGDEN *gives him a back-hander knocking him across the room.*

BILLY. I have, sir. I was first through. Ask anybody, sir.

MR SUGDEN. I'll do just that. Have you seen Casper have a shower?

BOY 1. No, sir.

MR SUGDEN. Have you?

BOY 2. No, sir.

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MR SUGDEN. What about you? Did Casper have a shower?

Two BOYS shake their heads. Pause.

Nobody seems to have seen you have a shower, Casper.

BILLY. Anyway me Mum says I haven't to have a shower, sir, I've got a cold.

MR SUGDEN. Let's see your note then.

MR SUGDEN *holds out his hand.*

BILLY. Can I bring one this afternoon, sir?

MR SUGDEN. That's no good lad. I want one now. Any boy wishing to be excused Physical Education or showers must *at the time* of the lesson produce a sealed letter of explanation signed by one of his parents or legal guardian.

BILLY. Oh go on, sir, I've to get home.

MR SUGDEN. You can get home, Casper, as soon as you've had a shower.

BILLY. I've no towel, sir.

MR SUGDEN. Borrow one.

BILLY. Nobody'll lend me one.

MR SUGDEN (*amused*). Well you'll have to drip dry then, won't you?

Nobody else laughs. BILLY gets undressed quickly, and runs into the showers. A wall is made by the BOYS. BILLY avoids the water as much as possible. He tries to leave.

MR SUGDEN. In a hurry, Casper? What's the rush, lad?

BILLY. Can I go now, sir?

The school bell rings.

MR SUGDEN. Go? You're two weeks late already.

MR SUGDEN *stations two BOYS by the shower entrance.*

Stay there and don't let him out.

BILLY scours the mud off his arms and legs. MR SUGDEN swings the heater control to cold. BILLY yells and tries to get out past the boys stationed by the shower entrance.

be top weight would it? I don't fancy t' other though. No form. Not even a jockey on it in here. It'll have some lad on it you can bet. No, I wouldn't bother with that one.

BILLY. You don't think they'll win then?

MAN. How've you got 'em – doubled?

BILLY. They're not mine, they're our Jud's.

MAN. He'll be all right if they do.

BILLY moves to one side to consider a risk of his own.

BILLY. Heads I place the bet. Tails I don't.

Tosses coin.

Heads. Shit. Best out of three.

BILLY tosses the coin again.

Tails.

BILLY grins and walks round a little thinking what to do next.

MAN. I can't see 'em winning myself though.

BILLY smiles broadly and rushes out with the money.

BILLY. Thanks, mister.

Scene 12

The field behind Billy's House, 2.30 pm

BILLY is busy with the lure and Kes.

MR FARTHING (*entering*). Casper.

BILLY. Bloody-Hell-fire.

BILLY winds up the lure. They both address the bird from a distance.

MR FARTHING. You think a lot about that kestrel, don't you, Billy?

BILLY. 'Course I do. Wouldn't you if she was yours? Me and me Dad reared a young fox-cub one time. Then let it go. It

were a little blinder. And magpies, jackdaws. I had a young jay once; that was murder though, they're right hard to feed, and it nearly died. I wouldn't have one again, they're best left to their mothers.

MR FARTHING (*addressing Kes*). How is she, Casper?

BILLY. Sometimes she's alright, but sometimes she goes mad, screaming and bating as though she'd never seen me before.

MR FARTHING. Bating? What's that?

BILLY. Trying to fly off, in a panic like.

MR FARTHING. I thought you said you'd trained her. Isn't she tame?

BILLY. Is she heck tame. She's manned that's all. She's fierce and she's wild, and she's not bothered about owt, not even about me. It's a kind of pride, a kind of independence. She looks you in t' eye and says 'Who the Hell are you, anyway?'

MR FARTHING *and BILLY exchange looks.*

Do you know, sir, I feel as though she's doing me a favour, just letting me be her friend.

MR FARTHING. That's you respecting her.

BILLY. The most exciting time was when I let her fly free for t' first time. I'd been flying Kes on t' creance for about a week, and she was coming to me owt up to thirty, forty yards, and it says in t' books that when it's coming this far, straight away, it's ready to fly loose. I daren't though, sir. I kept saying to myself, I'll just use t' creance today to make sure, then I'll fly her free tomorrow. But when tomorrow came I did the same thing again. Tomorrow. Tomorrow. I did this for about a week than I got right mad with myself 'cos I knew I'd have to do it some day. So on t' last night I didn't feed her up, just to make sure that she'd be sharp set next morning. I hardly went to sleep that night, I was thinking about it that much.

I wake up and I think right, if she flies off, she flies off, and it can't be helped. I go down to t' shed. She's dead keen an all, walking about on her shelf behind t' bars, and screaming out when she sees me coming. I take her out in t' field and

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try her on creance first time, and she comes first time, an' she comes like a rocket. I think, right this time.

I unclip creance, take swivel off an let her hop on to t' fence post. There is nowt stopping her now. She just stands there with her jesses on. She can take off and there is nowt I can do about it. I am terrified. I think, she's forced to go, she's forced to, she'll just fly off and that'll be it. But she doesn't. She just sits there looking around while I back off into t' field. I go right into t' middle, then hold my glove up and shout her.

Come on Kes! Come on then!

Nowt happened at first. Then, just as I go walk back to her, she comes. You ought to have seen her. Straight as a die, about a yard off t' floor. And t' speed! She comes twice as fast as when she had creance on, 'cos it used to drag in t' grass and slow her down. She comes like lightning, head dead still, and her wings never make a sound, then wham! Straight up onto my glove, claws out grabbing for t' meat. I am that pleased I don't know what to do with myself. Well, that's it. I've done it. I'd trained her. I trained her.

Pause.

MR FARTHING. Well done, Billy.

BILLY. It was a smashing feeling. You can't believe that you'll be able to do it

MR FARTHING. There's something weird about hawks when they fly, isn't there?

BILLY. You what, sir? Hawks are t' best flyers there is.

MR FARTHING. No, I mean . . . well, when they fly there's something about it makes you feel strange.

BILLY. You mean everything goes dead quiet?

MR FARTHING. That's it.

BILLY. Other folks have noticed that an' all. Me Dad used to say it's the same with owls. He said that he'd seen 'em catching mice in our yard at night, and when they swoop down you feel like poking your ears to make 'em pop.

Scene 17**The Field, 7.00 pm**

BILLY *is working the lure in the field, a handkerchief tied to the end of it. Calling to Kes all the time. He shortens the chord and swings it round so fast that it unravels. Then he lets it go and shoots it up in the air. He runs to it as it falls to the ground. This happens several times.*

BILLY. Kes! Kes! Come on then Kes!

 Come on Kes! Come on then!

 Kes! Kes! Kes!

 Kes! Kes! Kes!

 Kes! Kes! Kes!

BILLY *runs to . . .*

Scene 18**Billy's House, 8.00 pm**

BILLY *bursts in through the kitchen and into the living room. The radio is playing. JUD is drinking tea. MRS CASPER is sitting at the table reading a magazine.*

BILLY. Where is it? What have you done with it?

MRS CASPER. Where've you been till now? Shut that door, Billy, there's a terrible draught behind you. Get some tea.

BILLY. I said where is it?

 JUD *continues to read the comic, dipping biscuits into his tea, then suddenly:*

JUD (*shouts*). What're you staring at?

MRS CASPER. What's going off, what's all t' bloody shouting about?

BILLY. Ask him, he knows what it's all about.

JUD. Yes lad, and you'd have known if I'd got hold of you earlier.

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MRS CASPER. Know what, what are you both talking about?

BILLY *is very distressed.*

Now what's the matter with you?

BILLY *can only point to* JUD.

What you done to him now, Jud?

JUD. It's his fault, if he'd put that bet on like he was told there'd have been none of this.

MRS CASPER. Didn't he? I told him before I went to work this morning.

JUD. Did he bloody hell.

MRS CASPER. I told you not to forget, Billy.

JUD. He didn't forget, he spent t' money.

MRS CASPER. And what happened, did they win?

JUD. Win! I'd have had a fair whack to draw if he'd kept his thieving hands to himself!

MRS CASPER. Oh, Billy, you've done it once too often this time.

JUD. They both won you know. A hundred to eight and four to one, they came in. I knew it an' all! 'Tell-Him-He's-Dead', was a cert, and I've been following that 'Crackpot' all season. It was forced to win sometime. I could have had a week off work with that money.

MRS CASPER. Well, what's he crying about then?

BILLY. Because he's killed me hawk instead, that's why.

MRS CASPER. You never have, have you, Jud?

BILLY. He has, I know he has, just because he couldn't catch me.

MRS CASPER. Have you, Jud?

JUD. All right then, so I've killed it. What are you going to do about it?

BILLY *screams an agonising cry and collapses onto the floor or sofa. He then rushes round to* MRS CASPER. *He*

tries to bury his face against her. She holds him off, embarrassed and pushes him to the floor.

MRS CASPER. Give over then, Billy. Don't be so daft.

JUD. It was its own stupid fault! I was only going to let it go, but it wouldn't get out of its hut. And every time I tried to shift it, it kept lashing out at my hands with its claws. Look at them, they're scratched to ribbons!

BILLY. You bastard! You big rotten bastard.

JUD. Don't call me a bastard, else you'll be next to get it.

BILLY. You bastard! You fucking bastard!

MRS CASPER. Shut up, Billy, I'm not having that kind of language in here.

BILLY. Well do summat then! Do summat to him!

MRS CASPER. Where is it Jud? What have you done with it?

JUD. It's in the bin. Where it belongs.

BILLY runs out to the dustbin, feels inside and finds the dead hawk. BILLY returns to the living room, possibly with the dead bird. If it remains in the dustbin BILLY tries to get MRS CASPER to the bin, if there is a bird, BILLY waves it around the room.

BILLY. Have you seen what he's done, Mum?

MRS CASPER. It's a shame love, but it can't be helped.

BILLY. Come and look at it though. Look what he's done.

MRS CASPER. It was a rotten trick, Jud.

JUD. It was a rotten trick what he did, wan't it?

MRS CASPER. I know but you know how much he thought about that bird.

BILLY. It's not fair on him, Mum. It's not fair.

MRS CASPER. I know, but it's done now, so there's nowt we can do about it, is there?

BILLY. What about him though, what are you doin' to him?

MRS CASPER. What can I do?

BILLY. Hit him! Gi' him a good hiding! Gi' him some fist!

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