

A Kestrel for a Knave - Session 1 Handout

A Kestrel for a Knave

'An Eagle for an Emperor, a Gyrfalcon for a King:
a Peregrine for a Prince, & a Saker for a Knight,
a Merlin for a lady, a Goshawk for a Yeoman,
a Sparrowhawk for a Priest, & a Kestrel for a Knave.'

-- Selected from the booke of St Albans, 1486, and a Harleian manuscript.

A Tall Story

One day I wolke up and my muther said to me heer Billy theres your breakfast in bed for you there was backen and egg and bred and butter and a big pot of tea when I had brekfast the sun was shining out side and I got drest and whent down stairs we lived in a big hous up moor edge and we add carpits on the stairs and in the all and sentrall eeting. When I got down I said wers are Jud his goind the army my muther saide and hees not coming back. but your dades coming back in sted. there was a big fire in the room and my dad came in caring his cas that he tulke a way with him I havent seen him for a long time but he was just the sam as he went away I was glad hed come back and are Jud had gon away when I got to school all the teacherr were good to me they said allow Billy awo you gowing on and they all pated me on the head and smiled and we did interesting things all day. when I got home my muther saide I not gowing to work any more and we all had chips beans for awur tea then we got redy and we all went to the picturs we went up stairs and had Ice cream at the intervells and then we all went home and had fish and chips for awur super and then we went to bed.

Extract from the fight at the table, after Billy retrieves Kes from the bin (p151/160):

[Mam] 'I know, but you know how much he thought about that bird.'

[Jud] 'He didn't think half as much about it as I did about that ten quid.'

'He thought world on it though. Take it away from t'table then, Billy.'

'It wasn't worth ten quid was it?'

'I know, but it wa' a rotten trick all t'same. Take it away from my face then, Billy, I've seen it.'

[Billy] 'You're not bothered about owt you.'

[Mam] 'Course I'm bothered. But it's only a bird. You can get another can't you?'

Article: Chris Packham

(<https://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/10736397.chris-packham-admits-stealing-kestrel-started-his-love-of-nature/>)

Daily Echo, 14th October 2013

Chris Packham admits stealing kestrel started his love of nature

By Andrew Napier

HAMPSHIRE wildlife expert Chris Packham has admitted he stole a kestrel chick from its nest when he was a teenager.

The Southampton-born star of Springwatch and Autumnwatch revealed that the illegal act had sparked his lifelong interest in the natural world.

The 52-year-old was speaking on BBC Radio 4's Desert Island Discs in which he also disclosed that he does not want to have children because he dislikes himself too much.

He revealed that he illegally took the young bird in 1975 when he was 14 and cared for it for months before it died.

Chris, who has a degree in zoology from Southampton University, said: "I think that what happened as a result of me taking that bird out of the nest was incredibly important and defined the rest of my life. I loved that bird and that was the first time that I learned to love something."

He told how he nurtured the bird and would get up early to feed it and run back from school to feed it.

He said he only took the chick after he was refused a licence to have one legally.

However later that year the kestrel became ill and died in Chris's arms.

He said: "It affected me profoundly. I could not speak for days."

On his lack of desire for fatherhood, he said: "I don't like myself enough to want to reproduce myself. I am very self-critical and I think that is a healthy thing, because I want to continually improve what I try to do."

Final lines of book (p160/160):

'When he arrived home there was no one in. He buried the hawk in the field just behind the shed; went in, and went to bed.'

Extract from the Barry Hines Afterword, from Penguin books 1999:

'...Over the years I have received many rewarding letters from readers, saying how much they enjoyed the novel and in some cases how it has actually changed their lives. For example, a young man from Manchester uses A Kestrel for a Knave in his work with young offenders and is setting up an appreciation society for the novel. I received a letter from a man with a similar background to Billy Casper, who wrote that the book made him realize it was possible to achieve something in life however difficult the circumstances. He later went on to become a lecturer. He said that the question 'What's tha mean Germans bite?' has become a catch phrase between him and his brother. I think the general appreciation of the book is best summed up by a man who wrote, 'I read A Kestrel for a Knave when I was 12 or 13 and was haunted by it. I knew a few Billy Caspers - I was very nearly a Billy Casper myself. I found the love of music as my escape... 'Kes' mirrored some of the things that were going on around me. Billy's hawk was my music' He went on to say that he became a musician and enclosed with his letter his first CD entitled. For a Knave. (Barry Hines, Afterword Penguin books 1999)