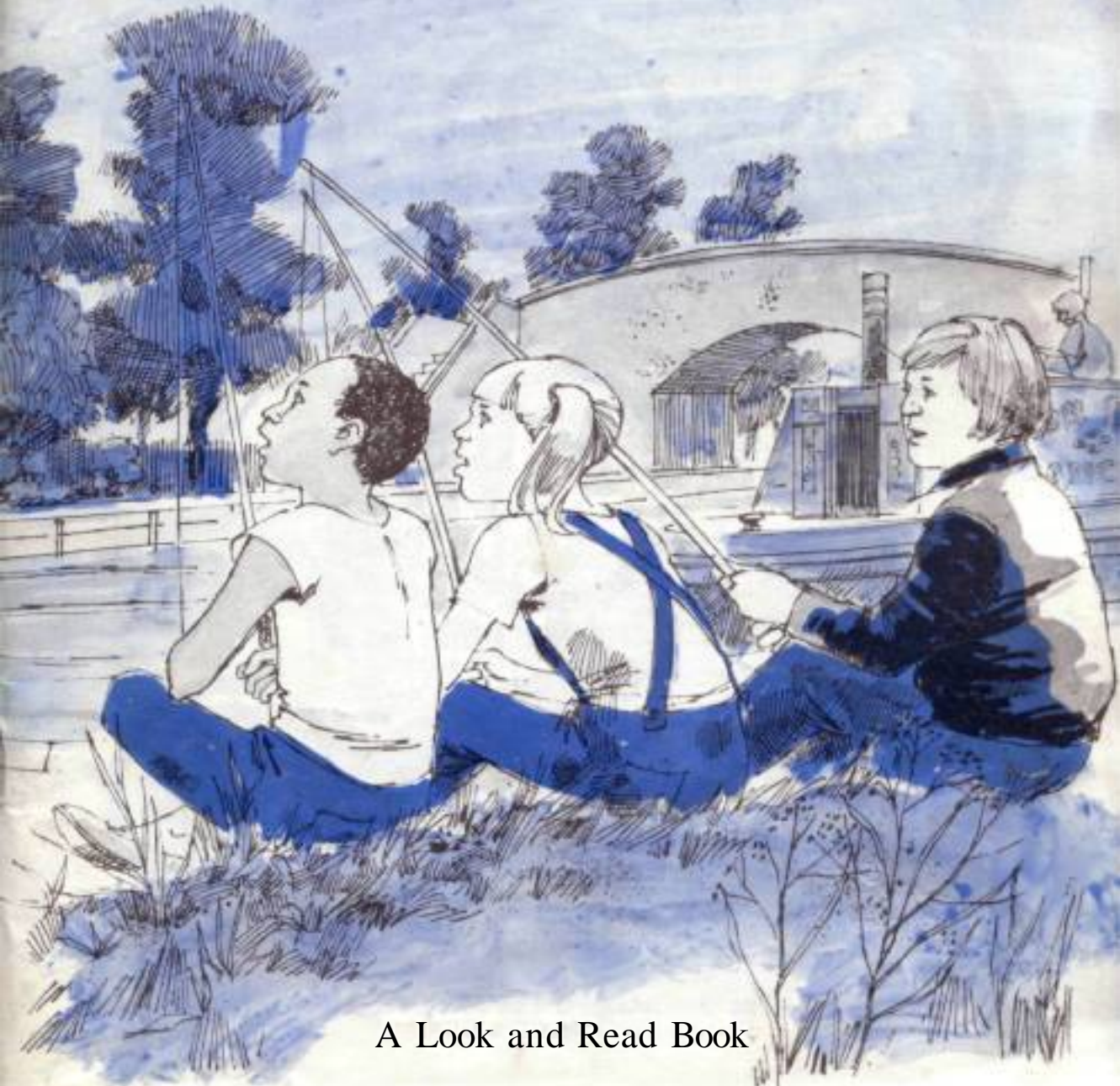


BBC Television for Schools

Sky Hunter

by Leonard Kingston



A Look and Read Book



This is Sharon.



This is Jackie.



This is Butch.



This is Trevor.



This is Mr Trim.



Who is this ?



Who is this ?



Who is this ?

The illustrations are by Mark Peppé

Chapter one Strangers on the canal

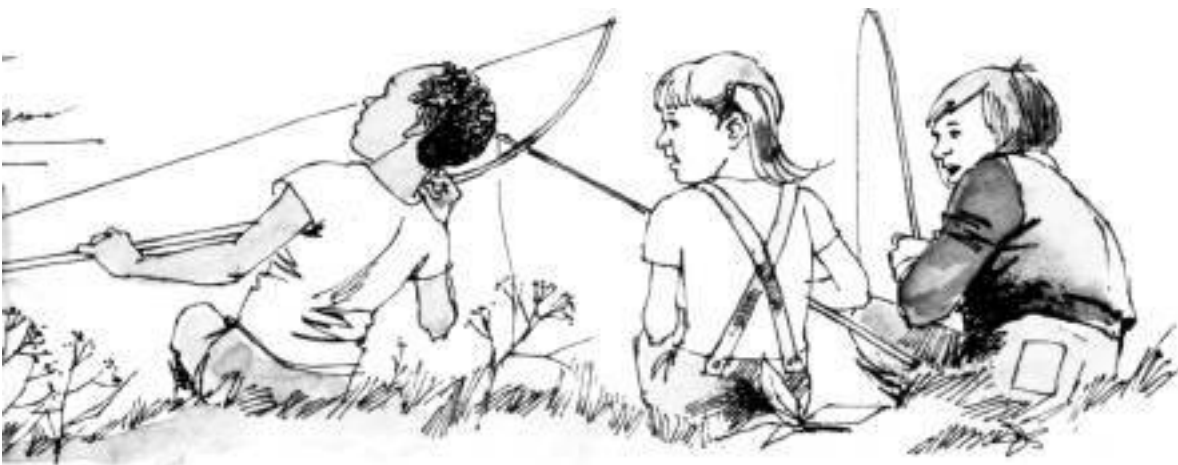
It all began when Jackie Blake went to stay on the canal. Jackie and her friends, Trevor and Butch, live in London near the canal. Jackie's cousin, Sharon, lives on a canal boat called a narrow boat. She lives in the North of England, and always comes to London in her boat for the summer. Sharon paints water-cans for narrow boats. She paints them in bright colours, as they were in the old days, and sells them at a craft shop by the canal. When Sharon arrived, Jackie and the boys went to stay on the narrow boat for a holiday.



One day, Jackie and the boys were fishing on the canal towpath. Nothing much was happening. Then suddenly Jackie saw a strange bird. It was flying high above them. Butch said it was a duck. 'Ducks fly above water, don't they?' he said. 'So it's a duck. Definitely!' Butch was always saying 'Definitely!'. But Jackie did not agree with him. 'No,' she said. 'It says kek-kek-kek, not quack-quack!'¹ 'I tell you, it's a duck!' Butch shouted. 'It's Concorde,' said Trevor and laughed at Butch. They all stopped talking and just watched the bird. It was beautiful.



Suddenly, a man and a woman ran into them. The two strangers were running down the towpath. They were looking up at the bird, too. They did not see Trevor's fishing line and the man got caught in it. 'Watch it!' shouted Trevor. The man was fat. He was carrying a big basket and a piece of raw meat. He could not get out of Trevor's line. The woman was dressed all in black. She was just as angry as Trevor. 'You shouldn't be fishing on the towpath! Go away! Get out!' Trevor pulled on his line and the fat man fell into the canal. Then they both shouted at the children. The beautiful bird had gone. The strangers were very angry but they went away. 'What a pair of creeps!' said Trevor. 'I hope we don't meet them again,' said Jackie. 'Definitely!' said Butch.



Later on, they heard a scream. Trevor saw the strangers through the trees. The fat man was holding his hand and jumping up and down.

'Looks like trouble,' said Trevor.

'Let's go and see,' said Jackie.

They ran over the canal bridge and got through a gap in a fence. They hid and watched the strangers.

The woman tied something round the man's hand.

The big basket was beside them.

Inside it, the children could just see a pair of eyes with yellow round them and a big hooked beak.

'Kek-kek-kek,' said the basket.

'It's that bird,' whispered Jackie to the boys.

'It's your own fault,' said the woman.

'My fault?' said the man.

'I gave it my dinner and it started eating me!

How is that my fault?'

'You let it escape,' snarled the woman.

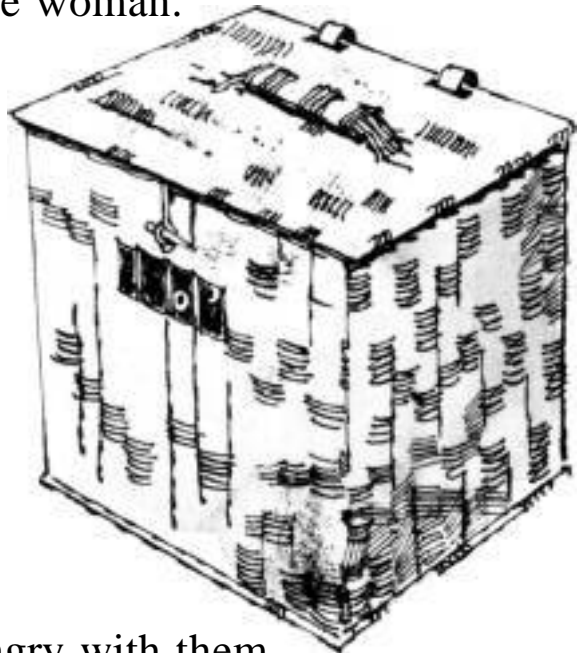
The man was still jumping up and down.

So Jackie went up to him.

'Can we help?' she asked.

But the strangers seemed angry with them.

'What do you want?' asked the woman.



'What kind of bird is that?' asked Trevor.

The children tried to look in the basket, but the woman pushed them away. They could see the bird had brown and grey feathers.

'It's. . .it's. . .a parakeet,' she shouted. 'Leave it alone!'

'A parakeet?' said Jackie.

'Go away! And don't you go telling people about this!' the woman said fiercely.

'Why not?' asked Butch. 'If it's your parakeet . . . '

The woman seemed to go mad.

'Badger!' she screamed. 'Get rid of them!'

The fat man ran towards the children.

'Out! Out!' he shouted. Suddenly, he fell over.

Jackie and the boys started laughing. Then he went mad.

'Just you wait until I catch you!' he shouted.



The children got back through the fence.

But the gap was too small for Badger. He got stuck.

But he went on shouting.

'If I ever see you again . . . just you watch out!'

But the children were not going to see him again.

Or were they?

Chapter two **For sale**

The children went back to Sharon's boat.

They were very excited.

'What does a parakeet look like?' Jackie asked.

'It's a bit like a parrot, I think,' Sharon said.

'Parrots are all bright colours,' Trevor said.

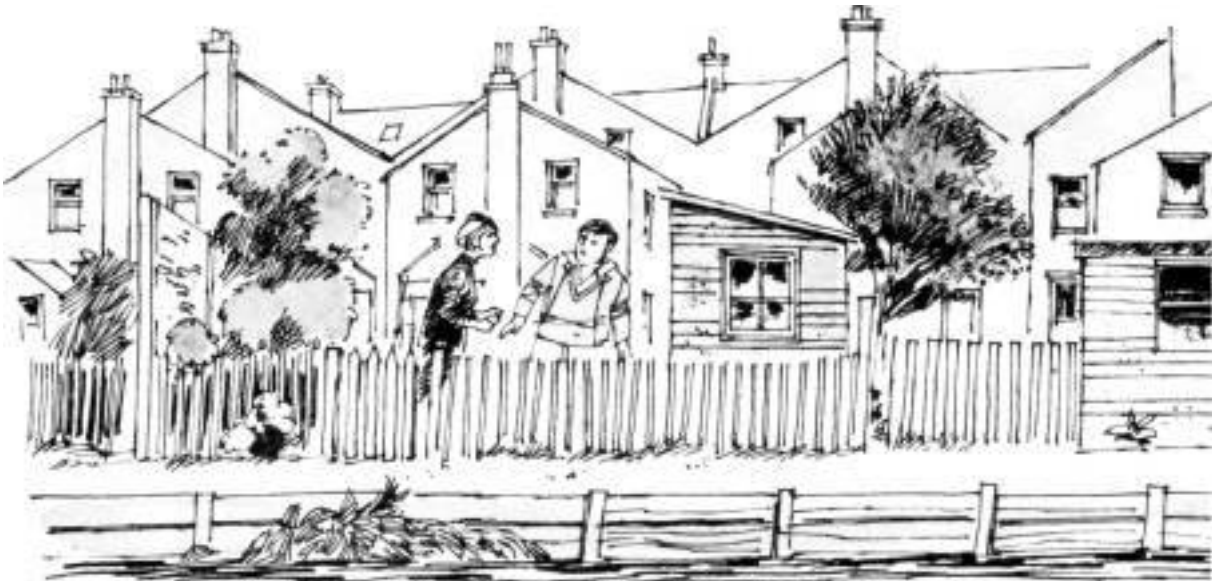
Sharon showed them a picture of a parakeet. It was not like the bird in the basket! It was bright green!

'But its beak was hooked, like that parakeet's,' said Butch. 'So it could be a rare kind of dark brown parakeet. Definitely!'

'Some people would believe anything,' said Trevor.

'Come on, kids, stop chattering,' said Sharon.

'We must take my water-cans down to the Craft Shop.'



You can tell me about that strange bird later.'

So they took the boat to the Craft Shop. On the way, they went into a lock. On the other side of the lock, there were some houses beside the canal. A man and woman came out of a house. They were arguing.

'Look, Sharon!' shouted Jackie. 'It's them!'

She pointed to the fat man, Badger, and the woman dressed all in black. The woman was very angry.

They could hear her shouting.

'I've never met a crook like you. You're no good at all!'

The children got very excited again. But Sharon was in a hurry to get to the Craft Shop. So the boat went on down the canal. They stopped for the night by the Craft Shop. The children kept on thinking about the strangers. Who were they?



The next morning, the children helped Sharon at the Craft Shop. After dinner, they went out to spend their pocket money. They were going to Mr Trim's shop. Jackie liked Mr Trim. His shop was full of old tables and chairs, old books and old toys. Everything was very cheap. Trevor called it a junk shop. But Jackie said, 'Mr Trim sells real antiques, not junk.' On the way, Butch went into a newspaper shop for some chocolate. Jackie and Trevor were looking at the cards in the shop window. Suddenly, they saw this card:



'Five hundred pounds!' said Trevor.

'For a chest of drawers!'

'You see,' said Jackie. 'I told you Mr Trim doesn't sell junk!'

They showed the card to Butch.

'What does e.g. mean?' he asked.

'E.g. spells egg,' said Trevor. 'The contents must be eggs!'

'Don't be silly,' said Jackie. 'E.g. means "for example". It's just another way of saying it.'

'That's what I said,' said Trevor with a laugh, 'egg-sample!'

Suddenly, they heard a voice behind them.

'Eggs! Did you say eggs?'

A very grim-looking young man was right behind them. He had a pair of binoculars.

'What kind of eggs?' he said, looking very fierce.

He seemed to suspect something.



'I was only joking,' said Trevor. He pointed to the card.
The man stared hard at it.

'What's this? Do you kids know anything about
this card?'

He looked hard at them.

'Well, not really,' said Trevor.

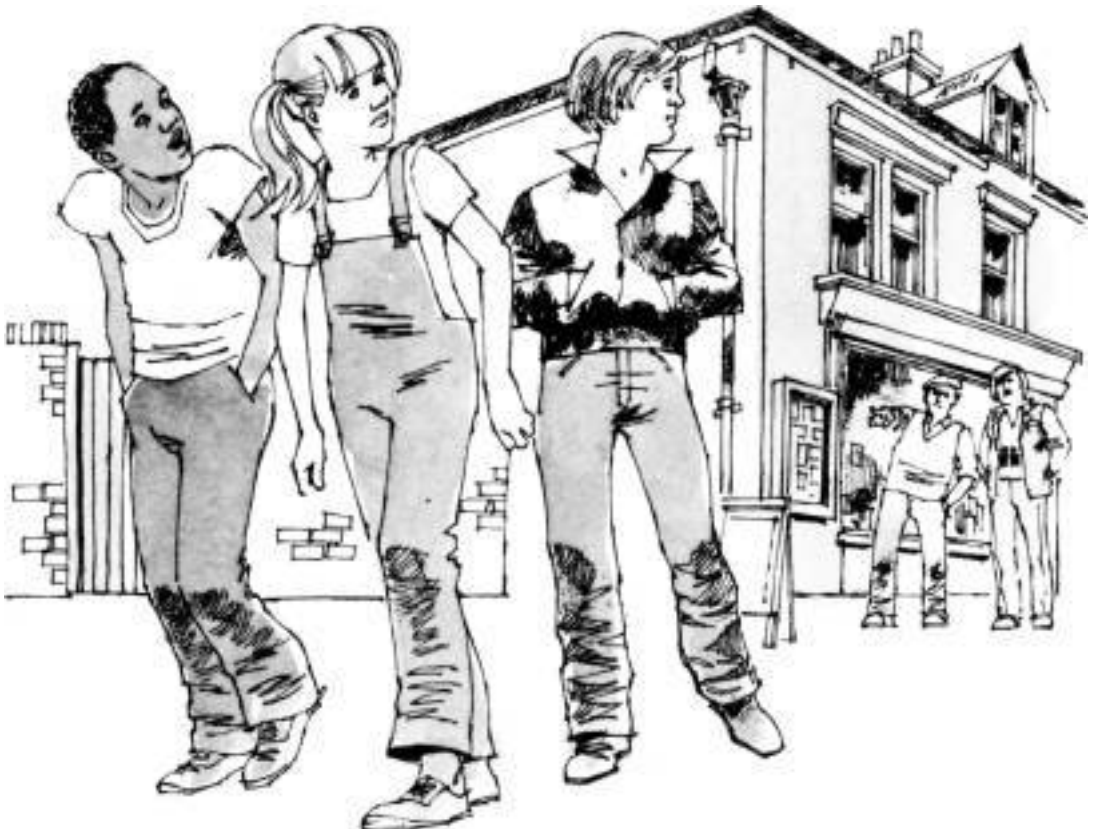
'Definitely . . . not!' said Butch.

The man walked quickly into the shop.

The children walked away, towards Mr Trim's shop.

But then they saw the grim-looking young man coming
out of the newspaper shop. He began to follow them.

'Come on,' said Trevor, 'let's go!'



Chapter three **The Birdman**



The children arrived at Mr Trim's shop out of breath.

'My little sailor friends!' said Mr Trim.

'What can I do for you?'

'We've come to buy something cheap,' said Jackie.

'We're short of cash, are we?' said Mr Trim.

'Never mind. We're sure to find something cheap.'

He got out his old box of toys. The children were looking at them, when the grim-looking young man came into the shop.

'Can I help you, sir?' said Mr Trim.

'Just looking,' said the man. He looked at all the junk in the shop. In the corner, he found a small chest.

He tried to open the drawers, but they were stuck.

'Do you mind, sir,' said Mr Trim.

'How much is this?' asked the man.

'That chest is sold!' said Mr Trim.

He went over to the man and stood in front of the chest.

'I saw a card in the newspaper shop about a chest for sale,' said the young man. 'Is it this one?'

Mr Trim seemed upset.

'Perhaps it is. But I have others. Let me show you.'

'No,' said the young man. 'I wish to see the contents of this one.'

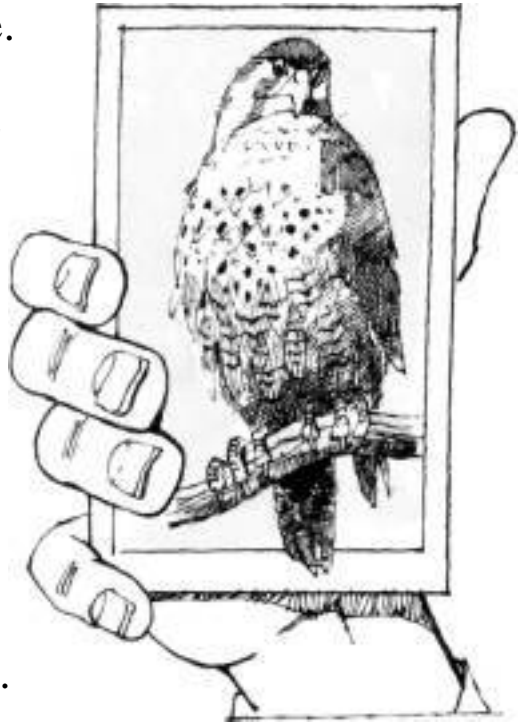
Then he showed Mr Trim a postcard.

'Have the contents got anything to do with this?'

Jackie saw the postcard. She grabbed Trevor and Butch. On the postcard was a picture of a bird.



'That's like our bird!' said Jackie.
'What?' shouted the young man.
'Your bird? What do you mean?'
They tried to tell him,
but Mr Trim stopped them.
'You leave these children alone.
They're friends of mine.
Out of my shop! Out!
Or there will be trouble!'
He began to push the
young man out of the door!
The children did not understand.



'Tell me everything you know about this bird,'
said Mr Trim. He was very excited.
'About the parakeet?' asked Butch.
'Parakeet!' said Mr Trim. 'That wasn't a parakeet.
That was a picture of a peregrine falcon.
Tell me everything!'
When they told him about the bird on the canal
and the strangers, Mr Trim looked very worried.
'That poor beautiful bird has been stolen,' he said.
'Perhaps from a nest in Scotland. The thieves must
have brought it to London to sell it. Wild peregrine
falcons are very rare. People will pay a lot of money for
such a rare bird or its eggs.'

He told them that all falcons are protected by law. He said it was stealing to take a falcon from its nest.

'I don't trust that young man. He's probably a bird-thief,' said Mr Trim. 'It was lucky I was here to deal with him, because I am an ELF.'

'An elf?' said Jackie. 'Are you joking?'

'You mean, with pointed ears?' asked Butch.

'ELF stands for English Lovers of the Falcon,' said Mr Trim. 'We try to protect wild falcons. So I want you to show me which house those strangers came out of. Probably they're crooks as well!'

They looked out of the shop door. The grim-looking young man was in the street, watching the shop.

'Quick! Dash through the back door, my dears,' said Mr Trim. 'We mustn't let that birdman follow us. Let's find that house as quickly as we can. We mustn't let him meet the other crooks!'



Chapter four **Are they crooks ?**

Mr Trim and the children went quickly along the towpath. They came to the house where they had seen the man arguing with the woman. They all hid and watched. The fat man, Badger, came out of the house carrying some raw meat.



When Mr Trim saw Badger, he made a funny sound.

'What is it, Mr Trim?' whispered Jackie.

'Nothing, my dear,' he said, but he looked very strange.

Badger went to a small shed. Opening the door, he dropped the meat inside. Then he shut the door quickly and went back into the house. Mr Trim and the children went to look in the shed.

Mr Trim opened the door.

Inside, they saw the peregrine falcon. It was holding the meat with its strong talons and pulling at it with its hooked beak. It looked fiercely at them, but it was tied up.

'Isn't it beautiful?' whispered Mr Trim.

'Yes, but no wild bird should be tied up like that.

Poor thing !' said Jackie.

'Shall we tell the police?' asked Trevor.

'Wait,' said Mr Trim. 'We must make sure that these people really are crooks. I'm going into the house to talk to them about that peregrine.'

Butch thought they should all go in, but Mr Trim said the children must wait outside.

'If I'm not out in five minutes,' he said, 'then you can go for the police.'

The children watched brave Mr Trim going up to the back door. They were very worried! Next, they saw the fat man open the door. He stared at Mr Trim.

Was their friend in danger? Mr Trim was talking to Badger. They could not hear him, but this is what he was saying:



'Smile, Badger! We're being watched. Pretend you don't know me and ask me to come in!'



Inside the house, Mr Trim met the woman in black. He smiled at her.

'Cat Mary!' he said, 'the great falcon-thief!'

Cat Mary told Mr Trim that she had caught the falcon in Scotland. She wanted to sell it. Badger was helping her, but everything had gone wrong.

'He's a fool!' she said fiercely. 'He keeps letting the bird escape!'

Mr Trim said, 'I can sell the falcon for you.

I'm taking some falcons' eggs to a French buyer tonight. He's in a boat on the river. He'll pay big money for that bird. Two thousand pounds!'



Cat Mary smiled. But Mr Trim added,
'I'll take half the money.'

'Oh no, you won't!' said Cat Mary fiercely.
She had stopped smiling.

'You'd better do as I say,' said Mr Trim.

'There are three kids outside, waiting to call the police.
You have one minute to make up your mind!'

They could see the children through the window.
Cat Mary and Badger had to agree.

The children could not believe it. They saw Mr Trim
smiling at them from the house. He seemed to be friends
with the crooks! Then he suddenly stopped smiling.

He was staring at the towpath behind them.

He shut the door quickly. The children turned round.

There, on the towpath, was the Birdman.

He was watching the house through his binoculars.

Chapter five **The Welsh telegram**

Inside the house, the crooks were worried.

'Who is that man?' asked Cat Mary, staring at the Birdman.

'I'm not sure,' said Mr Trim, 'but I suspect him. He knows something.'

Outside, the children were stuck between the house and the Birdman. The five minutes were up, but they could not get the police. Then the door opened and Mr Trim called them in. Cat Mary and Badger were standing beside him.

'These people are old friends of mine,' said Mr Trim. 'Meet Mr Badger and Miss MacBride.'

Jackie stared at Trevor and Trevor stared at Butch.



How could these crooks be Mr Trim's friends ?
'They found the peregrine falcon yesterday,'
said Mr Trim. 'They thought it must be stolen.
They were trying to save it.'

'Where did the peregrine come from?' asked Trevor.
He did not believe Mr Trim's story.

'Look!' said Mr Trim and he pointed out of the window.
'You mean the Birdman?' asked Jackie.



'He must have stolen it and brought it to London,'
said Mr Trim. 'But he lost it and he thinks my friends
have got it. He's trying to get it back!'

He gave them a piece of paper and some money.
'We must send a message for help to another ELF,
a friend of mine. You take this telegram to a Post Office.
We'll stay here and guard the falcon. But you must
be quick. Don't let that Birdman see you!'

They were just going, when Cat Mary suddenly shouted at them.

'You mustn't read the message, do you understand?'

Mr Trim laughed.

'Don't be silly, Mary dear. They must read the message, when they write it on the telegram form. But I'm afraid they still won't understand it. I had to write it in Welsh.

My friend is Welsh, you see.' He smiled at Cat Mary.

'Never mind, my dears. It just says that we have found a stolen wild falcon. I've told him to bring help.'

Mr Trim made them go out through the front door.

'Run along, my little sailor friends! And stay away from the Birdman.'

The children ran quickly to the Post Office.

They wrote the Welsh message on a telegram form.

Counter No.	POST OFFICE  INLAND TELEGRAM FOR POSTAGE STAMPS	Serial No.					
Office Stamp	Prefix	Handled in	Service Instructions	Acrost Words	Charge	Charged by Words	Seen at by
					Tax 2 incl RP		
					VAT 2		
					RP 2		
					TOTAL 2		
						Circulation	
BLOCK LETTERS THROUGHOUT PLEASE							
To							
DEDDA OT SGGE WOH							
EVAH ENIRGEREP NOCLAF							
POTS OWT DNASUOHT							
SDNUOP POTS LLIW							
GNIRB HTOB THGINOT							
POTS TRIM							
<small>The particulars on the back of this form should be completed.</small>							

They gave it to the Post Office man.
When he started to read it, he looked puzzled.
'It's all right,' said Jackie. 'It's Welsh.'
'Welsh! That isn't Welsh,' said the man.
'How do you know?' asked Butch.
'I'm Welsh myself,' said the man.
'If that language is Welsh, then I'm a Dutchman!'
But the Post Office man took the telegram all the same.



Outside the Post Office, the children were very puzzled.
'Perhaps it wasn't any language,' Butch said.
Suddenly, Jackie shouted, 'STOP!'
Trevor and Butch stopped walking.
'Stop!' Jackie shouted again.
They thought she had gone mad.

'Stop—pots,' she said. 'I've found a clue.

Pots is stop backwards! You put "stop" in telegrams at the end of every sentence.'

Butch wrote the word on the pavement with some chalk.

'What about the other words?' asked Trevor.

'Is it a code?'

Butch wrote: DEDDA OT SGGE.

What did that say? What did all the telegram say?



Chapter six Proof at last!

The children soon worked out all the message.

Back at the boat, they wrote it down:

ADDED TO EGGS NOW HAVE PEREGRINE
FALCON STOP TWO THOUSAND POUNDS STOP
WILL BRING BOTH TONIGHT STOP TRIM

They looked at one another. Was Mr Trim as bad as the others? They could not believe it.

Just then, Sharon came in with a newspaper.

'I found this in the newspaper,' Sharon said.

'Is this picture like the bird you saw?'

She showed them a picture of a peregrine falcon.

They read what it said above the picture.

FALCON THIEF STRIKES AGAIN

ANOTHER peregrine falcon has been stolen from its nest in Scotland. Experts from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds think the thief was a woman. She may be hiding in London now.

She always dresses in black. Experts call her Cat Mary because she steals so many birds.

'That must be Miss MacBride!' said Jackie.

'Mr Trim called her Mary, and she's dressed all in black. It must be her.'

'That's it,' said Trevor. 'We must tell the police!'

He was getting excited. Butch agreed. 'That telegram said "tonight". We haven't got much time.'

But Jackie thought they should give Mr Trim one more chance.

'Let's see if he's gone back to the shop,' she said.

'I think we should talk to him before we go to the police.'¹

The others did not like it, but they agreed to go to the shop. Perhaps they would find more clues there.

When they got there, the door was not locked.

They went in and called Mr Trim. He was not there.

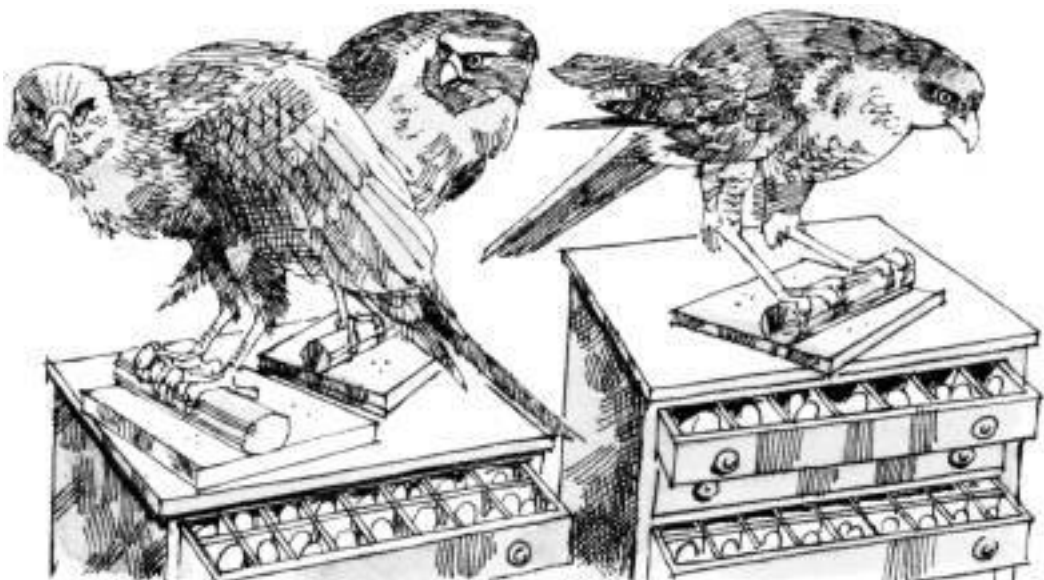
They crept upstairs to look for him. They had not been upstairs before. Butch pushed open a door and they went in. The room was full of stuffed birds.

Some of them were falcons! There were drawers full of birds' eggs.

'What a collection!' said Butch.

'What do you think of your friend Trim now?'

Just a friendly old man, is he?' Trevor asked Jackie.



'Perhaps he collected these long ago before peregrines were protected by law,' said Jackie. She still could not believe Mr Trim really was a crook.

'There's one way of making sure,' whispered Butch.

'Follow me.' He went downstairs to the shop.

He crept over to the small chest of drawers.

They could not open the drawers, but Butch took out a screw with his pen-knife. In the top drawer there were some eggs! There was a piece of paper with some of Trim's code on it!

01 NOCLAF SGGE

'Proof at last! Just what we need!' said Butch.

'So Mr Trim is a crook,' said Trevor.

'Very clever, my little sailor friends!'

The children turned round and there was Mr Trim.

Cat Mary and Badger were with him and Badger was holding the falcon's basket. The children were trapped.

The crooks were between them and the door.

'Let's get them!' snarled Cat Mary.

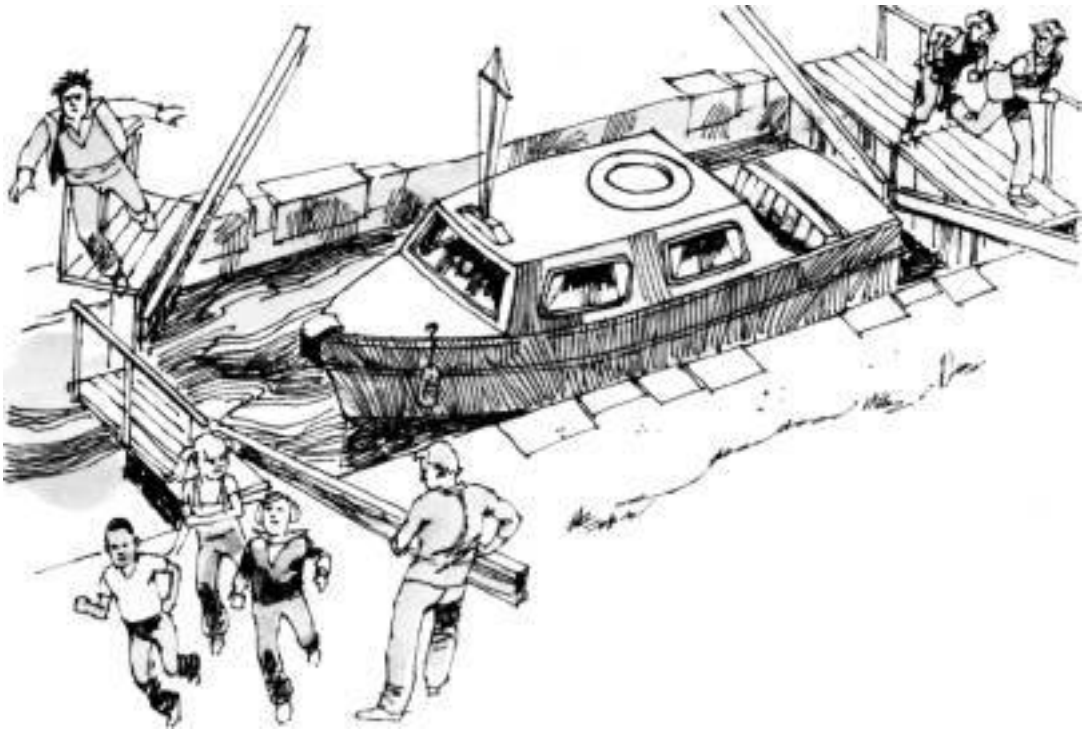


Chapter seven **A friend in need**

'Run for it!' screamed Jackie. She pushed the chest of drawers in front of the crooks.

'My eggs! My eggs!' cried Mr Trim.

The children ran out through the back of Trim's shop. They climbed over the wall and ran down to the canal lock. Badger was just behind them. A man was opening the lock gates to let his boat go through. But the children ran across before he got them open. Badger was too late. He tried to jump across the gap between the gates . . . but he fell in the water!



Trim and Cat Mary ran across the other gates and chased the children along the towpath. On the canal bridge, the children looked round. The crooks were not behind them. They stopped to get their breath. Suddenly they saw Trim and Cat Mary at the other end of the bridge! They turned back and ran off the bridge . . . into Badger. He grabbed Jackie and held her arms. The boys tried to pull her away but she shouted: 'Don't worry about me! Run for help!'

Trevor and Butch ran off. The other two crooks were chasing them. As they came round a corner, they saw a van. The door opened and a voice said, 'Quick! Jump in!'



They were so surprised that they got into the van. Then they saw it was . . . the Birdman! Trevor and Butch tried to get out again. But the Birdman grabbed them. 'Get down!' whispered the Birdman, 'and keep still!' They heard Cat Mary's voice outside the van. She was arguing with Trim. Then they went away.

Trevor and Butch looked at the Birdman.
What was he up to ?

'Who are you?' asked Butch.

He showed them a card.

'I'm Tom Roberts, from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. I'm a sort of detective.

I've been chasing Cat Mary for weeks and weeks.'

'So you didn't steal the falcon?' said Trevor.



'We thought you were a thief. We called you the Birdman!'

'Well, I am a birdman,' said Tom, 'but I don't steal birds. I protect them and care about them.

Now I think it's time you told me who you are.'

They told him all about the peregrine falcon and about Mr Trim's telegram.

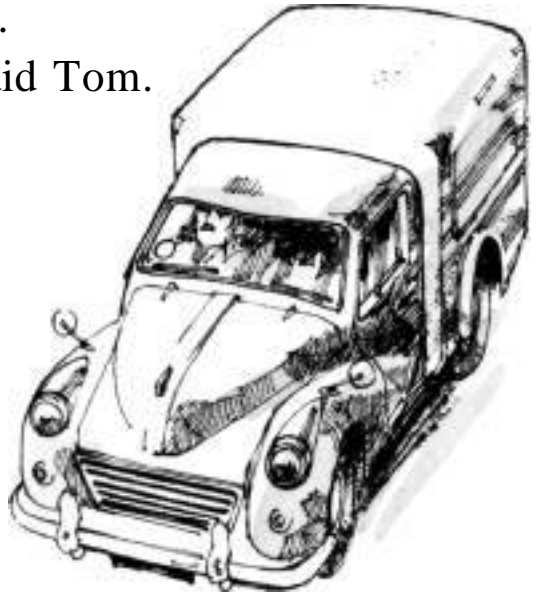
'That's all the proof I need,' said Tom.

'We can catch this gang of crooks. But they'll be on their guard now.'

Suddenly he stopped.

'What's happened to the girl?'

When they told him about Jackie, he drove off as fast as he could.



The crooks took Jackie back along the towpath.

'We must go to meet my buyer on the river, before those boys bring the police,' said Mr Trim. 'We'd better all go to France.'

'What about the girl?' asked Badger.

'Are we taking her to France, too?'

Mr Trim looked worried.

'Perhaps we should let her go,' he said.

'You're getting soft, Trim,' said Cat Mary.

'She must stay with us!'

When they reached the shop, the door was open.
Mr Trim quickly collected the falcons' eggs.
'Badger!' Cat Mary screamed. 'Where's the falcon?'
The falcon's basket was on the floor. It was empty.
The falcon had escaped. Badger must have dropped
the basket when he ran after the children.
'Badger, you fool!' shouted Mr Trim. 'You've just lost
two thousand pounds again! What do we do?
There's no time to look for the falcon now,
not with the police after us.'



Cat Mary thought fast.
'Trim,' she said. 'There's just one place in London
where we can find another one.'
'Another peregrine?' said Trim.
'Yes. Come on, let's get out of here,' said Cat Mary.
'We must hide somewhere until it's dark.
Badger, keep hold of the girl. Trim, your buyer
will have a peregrine falcon by midnight!'

Tom's story



In the van, on the way to the shop,
Tom Roberts told the boys his story.

'I work for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds,
the RSPB for short. I'm a sort of detective. I try to stop
people stealing wild birds and their eggs. Not long ago,
I was working up in Scotland. I heard that eggs
were being stolen.

Then, later, a young
peregrine falcon was
taken from its nest.

As you know, wild falcons
are protected by law.

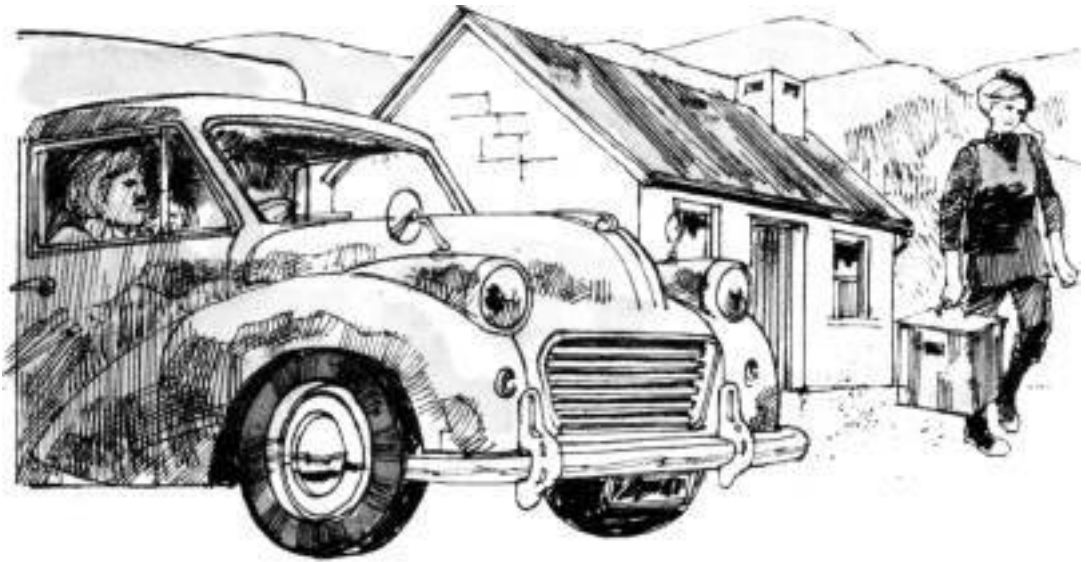
I knew the falcon-thieves
were at work again.

Soon there won't be
any wild falcons left.



Following a clue, I drove to a hotel in the mountains.
There was a young woman staying there, dressed all in
black. One of our helpers told me he had seen her
climbing near falcons' nests. The next morning she left.
I found out her name: Mary MacBride. I followed her
in my van. She went to an empty house in the mountains.

I waited outside. When she came out, she was carrying a bird basket. I was sure she had the falcon inside! That was my chance. I could watch her and find out where she sold it. Then the police could catch her and the buyer with the peregrine!



Mary MacBride drove off with the peregrine, but my old van wouldn't start! I had to watch her drive away. Later, the police told me that she had been seen on the train to London. She told the guard that she had a tame falcon in her basket. She said she was a falconer. I asked the British Falconers' Club. It's a real club, not like Mr Trim's ELF club. The British Falconers' Club would never let a crook like Trim into their club. Their members only keep tame falcons. Mary MacBride wasn't a member.



I tried to find her in London. Falcon-thieves sometimes put cards in shop windows or messages in newspapers to sell their stolen eggs and birds. I began looking for clues in shop windows near the canal.' 'That's where we saw e.g.! In the shop window!' said Trevor.

'That's right. E.g. did mean eggs! These crooks always use codes. I suspected that chest. I suspected you kids, too. When I saw you in Trim's shop, I thought you were in the gang, too. I tried to make Trim think I was a buyer. But he suspected me and wouldn't say anything. So I followed you and Trim to that house. I saw Mary MacBride through the window. I saw them leave the house with the falcon's basket. They were going towards Trim's shop. I ran back to my van to go and tell the police. Then I heard all the shouting and I saw you two coming round the corner.'

'So we got in your way!' said Trevor.

'We'll never save the peregrine now!' said Butch.

Chapter eight **Where's Jackie?**

When they got to the shop, it was empty.

Butch telephoned Sharon to tell her what had happened to Jackie.

'I feel really bad about Jackie,' said Trevor.

'We just left her with Badger.'

'You couldn't have saved her from those three,' said Tom.

Then Trevor saw some writing in the dust on a mirror.

The letters were badly written, but perhaps it was a message, a clue to tell them where she was.



'It looks like a lot of names,' said Tom.

'It can't be anything to do with Jackie.'

Then Sharon arrived. She was very upset about Jackie.

'I think we must telephone the police, Miss Blake,'

Tom said.

'And we must telephone Jackie's mum,' said Sharon.

Sharon went with him into the back room to telephone.



'I'm sure this message is from Jackie,'

Trevor said to Butch. 'What do you make of it?'

Butch tried to spell it backwards, like Mr Trim's code, but it did not work.

Then he suddenly put his hand over the MA of ALMA.

'Look, Trevor! What does that say?'

'CAN ... AL, canal!' cried Trevor.

'Jackie put the gaps between the words in the wrong place,' said Butch. 'That was her code!'

Trevor agreed with him. They worked out the message
CANAL MAIDA VALE TUN.

'Maida Vale is just up the canal,' said Trevor,

'but what does TUN mean?'

'I don't know,' said Butch. 'But she's told us where the crooks were taking her.'

Tom and Sharon were still on the telephone.

'We just walked out on Jackie when Badger caught her,'¹ said Trevor.

'I know,' said Butch. 'It's up to us to find her!'

They ran out of the shop without telling the others where they were going. They ran all the way to Maida Vale.

There were lots of boats tied up along the towpath.

It was getting dark.

'Perhaps TUN is the name of a boat,' said Butch.

They looked at all the names, but there was nothing with TUN in it. They stopped when they reached a tunnel. Trevor suddenly shouted:

'Tun! Look, Butch! TUN!'

'What do you mean?' asked Butch.

'Tunnel! Jackie must have started to write "tunnel", but she didn't have time to finish it!' cried Trevor.



They crept into the tunnel. From inside, they could see a boat at the other end. They looked out of the tunnel and saw . . . Mr Trim! He was sitting in front of a shed. He was on his own.

'Shall we get him?' whispered Trevor.

'No, let's make him come into the tunnel,' said Butch. Suddenly, Mr Trim saw Trevor. He chased him into the tunnel and Butch jumped on him. They had a fierce fight. But then Butch got on top of Mr Trim and sat on his chest. The fight was over. Trevor ran to the shed. Inside was Jackie!



Chapter nine **Who can be trusted?**

Jackie and the boys had a lot to tell one another. But Jackie did not know where Cat Mary and Badger were going to find another peregrine falcon.

Mr Trim would not tell them.

'You should be ashamed of yourself, Mr Trim!' said Jackie. 'You only pretend to love falcons. You're helping those crooks to sell a stolen wild one. And eggs, too! You don't really want to protect wild birds. You're just selfish and greedy. All you want is the money!'



Mr Trim looked down. He did not say a word. He looked ashamed.

'You don't really care if one day there aren't any falcons left,' Jackie cried.

'I hope they put you in prison!' said Trevor.

'You put that poor falcon in prison!' said Butch.

Mr Trim stared in front of him.

He was looking very ashamed. Suddenly, he looked up.

'I'll help you,' he said. 'I'll tell you everything.

Cat Mary and Badger are going to steal another peregrine falcon, from the zoo. They're going to climb in from the canal, as soon as it's dark.'

'But it's nearly dark now,' cried Butch.

'We must stop them,' said Jackie.

'But can we trust him?' said Trevor. 'It may be a trap.'

'I trust him,' she said.

'All right, then,' said Butch. 'But I don't like it.'

It was getting very dark. Outside the zoo,

Cat Mary had put a rope ladder over the wall.

But Badger was afraid to climb up it.

'Go on, quickly!' snarled Cat Mary.

Badger went up a little way.

Suddenly, he fell down

on top of Cat Mary

and rolled into the canal.

'You fool!' she said fiercely.

As Badger climbed out of the

water, Cat Mary put her hand on

her knife. Badger stared at her.

Then he went quickly

up the ladder.

Cat Mary climbed up after him like a cat.



Soon after that, Mr Trim and the children found the rope ladder.

'They must have got in,' said Mr Trim.

'We'll follow them,' said Jackie. 'Then we can tell the night guards.'

'How can we follow them?' asked Butch.

'We don't know where the falcons are.'

'Look, it's all wet here,' whispered Trevor.

Suddenly, they all began to laugh. They knew what had happened to Badger.

'We can follow his footprints,' said Jackie, 'big wet footprints!'

Mr Trim and the children climbed into the zoo. They followed Badger's wet footprints.

'Remember,' said Mr Trim,

'when we've found them, we must get help.

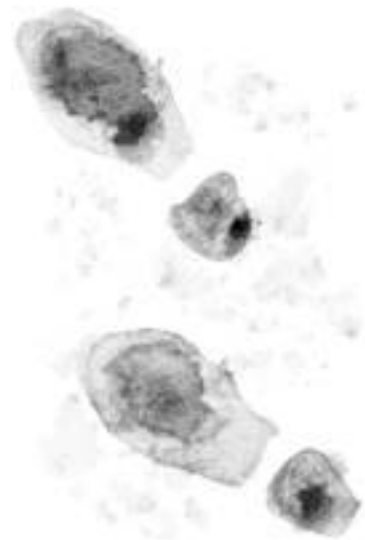
Cat Mary is very dangerous.'

But Cat Mary and Badger were lost. They started to creep back. They walked right into Mr Trim and the children! Cat Mary whipped out her knife.

'What are those kids doing here?' she said fiercely.

Mr. Trim smiled sweetly.

'Don't worry, my dear. I tricked them into coming here!'



Chapter ten **Back to the wild**

Mr Trim started to walk towards Cat Mary, still smiling.

'Mr Trim!' Jackie shouted. 'What are you doing?

We trusted you!'

'But you see, my little sailor friends, I've tricked you, haven't I?' Mr Trim said, still walking towards Cat Mary.

'You have to be very clever to catch me '

Suddenly, he grabbed Cat Mary's arm.

'Got you!' he screamed. He tried to get the knife, but it went into his arm. Mr Trim cried out.

'Keep back, Trim!' screamed Cat Mary.

'You can't trick me!'

'I'm sorry, Jackie,' said Mr Trim, holding his arm.

'I did try '

'Badger! This time we're really going to get them!' snarled Cat Mary.



Suddenly, a man stepped out of the dark behind her. It was Tom! He grabbed the knife and held her. Policemen came running. It was all over for the falcon gang.

Mr Trim was taken to hospital. Tom explained that they had worked out Jackie's message on the mirror. He had told the police. Soon after that, they heard that some children had got inside the zoo.

'So we worked out where you must be,' said Tom. 'It's lucky we got here in time.'

Then a policeman had a message on his radio. 'Something about a falcon. Flying around Trafalgar Square.'

'That must be our peregrine!' cried Jackie.



'I'd better go and catch him,' said Tom,
'before he eats all the pigeons!'

Some days later, the children were fishing from the narrow boat. Tom came to see them. He said that Mr Trim's arm was much better.

'I don't know what you kids did to him. He really cares about birds now and wants to join the RSPB !

He's going to give his collection of eggs and birds to a museum! Because he tried to help you, he might not go to prison for so long.'

Then Tom told them that they were now members of the Young Ornithologists' Club.

'Orni-what?' asked Butch.

'Ornithologists,' said Tom. 'People who care about birds and want to protect them. That's what you three are. You helped to save a wild falcon.'



'What's happened to our falcon?' asked Jackie.

'It's gone to Wales, with a real falconer,' Tom told them.

'He's teaching it to hunt for its own food, so that it can look after itself. Then it will be a real wild bird again.'

A week later, Sharon and the children went to Wales with Tom. They saw the peregrine falcon.

The falconer had a piece of meat for the bird to eat.

He made the meat look like a pigeon.

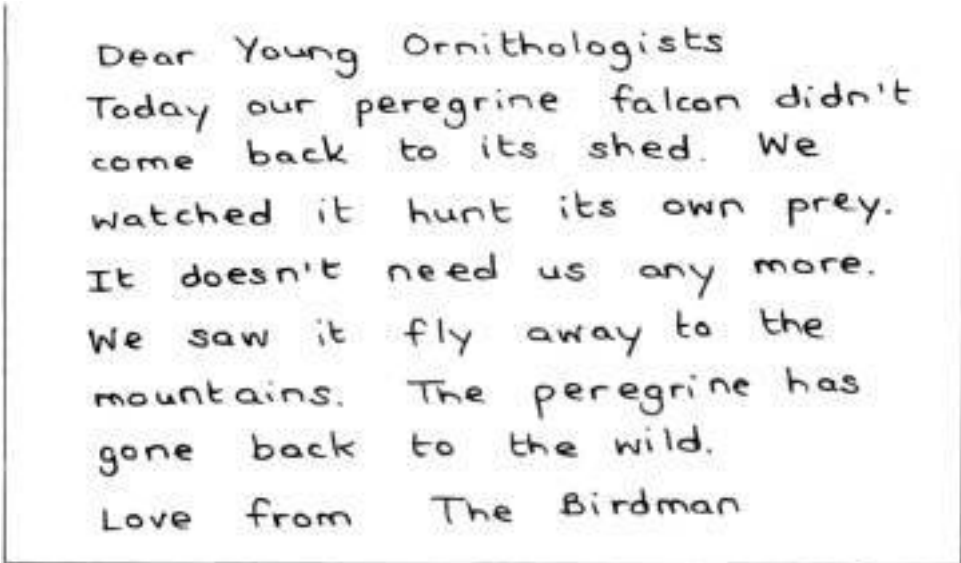
He tied it to a long string and swung it round.

The peregrine swooped down and caught the meat with its talons. It was learning to be a hunter again, to be a bird of prey.

'You see, Sharon!' said Jackie. 'Isn't it a beautiful bird?'¹

'Definitely!' said Butch and Trevor together.

Two weeks later, Tom sent the children this postcard:



Dear Young Ornithologists
Today our peregrine falcon didn't
come back to its shed. We
watched it hunt its own prey.
It doesn't need us any more.
We saw it fly away to the
mountains. The peregrine has
gone back to the wild.
Love from The Birdman



LOOK AND READ

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Autumn

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