

Old Raif

The dawn was arising, the day was anew
No footstep had yet disturbed the fresh dew
Wait, all was not silent, the day not alone
for here was the gamekeeper, leaving his home

'Where you goin?' asked the boy, Sleepy-eyed
As the old man in tweeds slipped silently by
'to see to my charges, they need me this day'
Few words from this quiet man, oft nought did he say

'Can I come with ye, the work I can share
I won't be a nuisance; you won't know I'm there
Allreet, said Old Raif, come up t'thut
But one word of warning, keep thi mouth shut!

Raif shared many secrets, that few've ever seen
The old fox, the sly brock, he knows where they've been
Saw life all around him, and death is there, too
nature gives all, but your heart must be true

And now weak and weary, his good work is done
Recalling his lifetime to his future, his son
With each cherished story that spread many years
The keeper remembers, his eyes fill with tears

What makes a Gamekeeper, is there a plan
Ghost of the forest, this quiet, gentle man
Natures protector, a lover of life
supporting with pride, is the Gamekeeper's wife

Dedicated to my old friend, Raif Barton, who taught me everything I
know about our wonderful countryside and how to respect all living
things, and to all Gamekeepers who keep these wonders for future
generations.

Dr Graham Coates-Gibson
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