Chapter 3

**The Thoosan an ane Bottles**

Sae it wis that on the twinty-ninth day o Februar, at the stert o the thaw, this unca cheil fell ooto infinity inno Iping clachan. Neist day his gear cam ben the slush--an unca fey gear it wis. There wis a pair o kists richt eneuch indeed, sic as a mensefu body micht nott, bit mairower there wis a kist o buiks—muckle wechty, buiks, o which puckles wir jist in an unkent haunscreivin--an a dizzen or mair crates, kists, an pyokes, haudin objecks stappit in strae, as it luikit tae Haa, ruggin wi a casual cweeriosity at the strae--glaiss bottles. The fremmit cheil, rowed up in hat, jaiket, mochles, an scarf, cam oot edgy like tae meet Fearenside's cairt, while Haa wis haein a wird or twa o sklaik afore helpin humf them in. Oot he cam, nae takkin tent o Fearenside's tyke, fa wi snuffin in a hauf-hairtit wey at Haa's shanks. "Cam alang wi thon kists," quo he."I've bin wytin lang eneuch."

An he cam doon the steps tae the tail o the cairt as gin tae takk the smaaer kist.

Nae suner hid Fearenside's dug catched sicht o him, hoosaeiver, than it stertit tae stiffen an gurr coorsely, an fin he breenged doon the steps it gaed a hauf-lowp, an syne breenged straicht at his haun. "Whup!" skirled Haa, lowpin back, fur he wis nae hero wi dugs, an Fearenside roared, "Lie doon!" an catched up his wheep.

They saw the dug's teeth hid slippit the haun, heard a kick, saw the dug makk

a flankin lowp an fix on the cheil's shank, an lippent tae the teir o his breeks. Syne the finer eyn o Fearenside's wheep reached the breet, an the dug, bowfin wi wae, ran unner the wheels o the cairt. It wis aa ower in a hauf-meenit. Naebody spakk, aabody skirled. The cheil luikit faist at his torn mochle an at his shank, stertit as if he’d boo tae the latter, syne turned an breenged faist up the steps inno the howf. They heard him gyang heidlang ben the lobby an up the uncarpeted stairs tae his chaumer.

"Ye breet, ye!" quo Fearenside, sclimmin aff the cairt wi his wheep in his haun, while the dug watched him throwe the wheel. "Cam here," Fearenside telt him--"Ye'd better."

Haa hid stude gapin. "He wiz bitten," quo Haa. "I'd better gyang an takk tent o him," an he hashed on efter the cheil. He met Mrs. Haa in the lobby. "Cairrier's dug," he telt her "bit him."

He gaed straicht upstairs, an the cheil's yett bein ajee, he pushed it open an wis enterin wioot ony devaul, bein a natural carin body.

The blind wis doon an the chaumer derk. He catched a glisk o a maist unca ferlie, fit seemed a haunless airm wyvin at him, an a face o three muckle unclear merks on fite, verra like the face o a peely wally pansy. Syne he wis struck forcey in the breist, hurled back, an the yett slammed in his face an steekit. It wis sae faist that it gaed him nae time tae takk aathin in. A wyvin o unclear shapes, a dunt, an a clour. There he stude on the derk wee landin, winnerin fit it micht be that he’d seen.

A couple o meenits efter, he rejyned the wee bourich that hid grown ootbye the "Cairrage an Shelts." There wis Fearenside tellin aboot it aa ower again fur the secunt time; there wis Mrs. Haa sayin his dug didnae hae ony business bitin her guests; there wis Huxter, the general dealer frae ower the wey,ill-faschent; an Sandy Wadgers frae the forge, mensefu; aside weemen an bairns, aa o them spikkin styte: "Widnae lat it bite me, ye ken"; "'It’s nae richt tae hae sic dugs"; "Fit wey did it bite him, tho?" an sic like.

Mr. Haa, glowerin at them frae the steps an lippenin, fand it unca that he’d seen onythin sae verra remairkable happen upstairs. Mairower, his spikk wis althegither ower limited tae tell fit he’d seen.

"He disnae wint ony help, he sez," he reponed tae his wife's speirin. "We'd better be takkin his gear in."

"He should hae it cauterised at aince," quo Mr. Huxter; "speecially gin it's at aa reid."

"I'd sheet it, that's fit I'd dae," a wumman in the bourich telt aabody.

O a suddenty the dug stertit gurrin again.

"Cam alang," cried an angeret voyce in the yett, an there stude the rowed up cheil wi his collar turned up, an his hat-brim bood doon. "The suner ye get thon ferlies in the better I'll be suited." It’s statit bi an unkent onluiker that his breeks an mochles hid bin cheenged.

"Wis ye hurtit, sir?" speired Fearenside. "I'm rael sorry aboot the dug--"

"Nae a bit," quo the cheil. "Niver brukk the skin. Hash up wi thon ferlies."

He syne swore tae hissel, sae Mr. Haa statit.

As sune as the first kist wis, as he direckit, cairried intae the parlour, the cheil flung hissel on it wi byordnar forecieness, an stertit tae unrowe it, skitterin the strae wi nae thocht fur Mrs. Haa's basse. An frae it he stertit tae takk bottles--wee fat bottles haudin pooders, smaa an slender bottles wi coloured an fite fluids, fluted blue bottles labelled pyson, bottles wi roon bodies an slender necks, muckle green-glaiss bottles, muckle fite-glaiss bottles, bottles wi glaiss stoppers an frostit labels, bottles wi gran corks, bottles wi bungs, bottles wi widden caps, wine bottles, salad-oyl bottles--pittin them in raws on the press, on the mantel, on the brod unner the windae, roon the fleer, on the buikshelf--aawye. The chemist's shop in Brummlehurst didnae hae hauf sae mony. A richt sicht it wis. Kist efter kist gaed up bottles, till aa sax wir teem an the brod heich wi strae; the anely ferlies that cam oot o thon kists aside frae the bottles wir a wheen test-tubes an a cannie packit balance.

An finiver the kists wir teemed, the cheil gaed tae the windae an set tae wirk, nae tribblin ava aboot the sotter o strae, the lowe that hid gane oot, the kist o buiks ootbye, nur fur the gear an ither pyokes that hid gane upstairs.

Fin Mrs. Haa tuik his denner in tae him, he wis already sae deep in his darg, poorin wee skirps ooto the bottles inno test-tubes, that he didnae hear her till she’d swypit awa the maist o the strae an pit the tray on the brod, gey forcie mebbe, seein the soss that the fleer wis in. Syne he hauf turned his heid an straicht aff turned it awa again. Bit she saw he’d taen aff his glaisses; they wir aside him on the brod, an it seemed tae her that his ee sockets wir byordnar teem. He pit on his glaisses again, an syne turned an faced her. She wis aboot tae girn aboot the strae on the fleer fin he spakk first.

"I wish ye widnae cam in wioot chappin," quo he in the tone o ill-nature that wis sae like him.

"I chappit, bit mebbe--"

"Mebbe ye did. Bit in ma darg –ma unca urgent an necessar darg--the slichtest stooshie, the soun o a yett--I maun prig wi ye--"

"Of coorse, sir. Ye can turn the key gin yer like thon, ye ken. Ony time."

"A verra gweed notion," quo the cheil.

"Thon strae, sir, gin I micht makk sae bauld as tae remairk--"

"Dinna. Gin the strae makks tribble pit it doon in the bill." An he mummlit at her--wirds gey like banns.

He wis sae unca, staunin thonner, sae ill-naturet an hett heidit, bottle in ae haun an test-tube in the ither, that Mrs. Haa wis rael feart. Bit she wis a thrawn wumman. "Gin thon’s richt, I’d like tae ken fit ye think… "

"A shillin--pit doon a shillin. Surely a shillin's eneuch?"

"Agreed," quo Mrs. Haa, takkin up the brod-cloot an stertin tae spreid it ower the brod. "Gin yer satisfeed, of coorse--"

He turned an sat doon, wi his jaiket-collar toward her.

Aa thon efterneen he vrocht wi the yett steekit an, as Mrs. Haa testifees, fur the maist pairt in seelence. Bit aince there wis a dunt an a soun o bottles ringin thegether as tho the brod hid bin hit, an the knell o a bottle haived forcey doon, an syne a faist stravaigin ben the chaumer. Feart "somethin wis the maitter," she gaed tae the yett an lippened, nae wytin tae chap.

"I canna gae on," he wis ravin. "I canna gae on. Three hunner thoosan, fower hunner thoosan! The hale hypothick! Swickit! Aa ma life it micht takk me! ... Tholin! Tholin indeed! ... Gype! Gype!"

There wis a soun o tackets on the bricks in the howf, an Mrs.Haa hid verra unwillin tae leave the lave o his say-awa. Fin she cam back the chaumer wis seelent again, apairt frae the feint skreich o his cheer an the antrin clink o a bottle. It wis aa ower; the cheil hid restertit wirk.

Fin she tuik in his tea she saw brukken glaiss in the neuk o the chaumer unner the concave keekin glaiss, an a gowden merk that hid bin carelessly dichtit. She caad attention tae it.

"Pit it doon in the bill," snappit her veesitor. "God's sake dinna tribble me. Gin there's skaith dane, pit it doon in the bill," an he gaed on tickin a list in the exercise buik afore him.

"I'll tell ye somethin," quo Fearenside,fey like. It wis late in the efterneen, an they wir in the wee beer-shop o Iping Hanger.

"Weel?" speired Teddy Henfrey.

"Thon cheil yer spikkin o, that ma dug bit. Weel--he's blaik. Or, his shanks are. I saw throwe the teir o his troosers an the teir o his mochle. Ye’d hae expeckit a kinno pink tae shaw, widn’t ye? Weel--there wisnae nane. Jist blaikness. I tell ye, he's as blaik as ma hat."

"Ma certes!" quo Henfrey. "It's a fey case aathegither. Fegs, his snoot is as pink as peint!"

"Thon’s true," reponed Fearenside. "I ken thon. An I tell ye fit I'm thinkin. Thon cheil's a piebald, Teddy. Blaik here an fite thonner--in swatches. An he's affrontit o it. He's a kinno hauf-breed, an the colour's cam aff in swatches insteid o mellin. I've heard o sic ferlies afore. An it's the ordnar wey wi shelts, as aabody kens."