**CHAPTER 27 x THE SIEGE O KEMP'S HOOSE**

Kemp read a fey screivin, screived in leid on a clarty sheet o paper.

"Ye hae bin unca swack an clivver," this screivin gaed, "tho fit ye staun tae gain bi it I canna jelouse. Ye’re agin me. Fur a hale day ye hae chased me; ye hae ettled tae wyle frae me a nicht's rest. Bit I hae hid maet in spite o ye, I hae sleepit in spite o ye, an the gemme is anely stertin. The gemme is anely stertin. There’s naethin fur it, bit tae stert the Muckle Fleg. This annoonces the first day o the Muckle Fleg. Port Burdock is nae langer unner the Queen, tell yer Heid o Polis, an the lave; it is unner me--the Muckle Fleg This is day ane o year ane o the new age--the Age o the Inveesible Chiel. I’m Inveesible Chiel the First. Tae stert wi the rule will be easy. The first day there’ll be ae killin fur the sake o example—a chiel nemmed Kemp. Daith sterts fur him today. He micht steek himsel awa, hide himsel awa, get guairds aboot him, pit on armour gin he likes--Daith, the unseen Daith, is camin. Lat him takk tent; it’ll impress ma fowk. Daith sterts frae the pillar box bi noon. The screivin’ll faa in as the postie cams

alang, syne aff! The gemme sterts. Daith sterts. Help him nae, ma fowk, or Daith’ll faa upon ye as weel. This day Kemp is tae dee."

Kemp read this screivin twice, "It's nae swick," quo he . "That's his wey! An he means it."

He turned the fauldit sheet ower an saw on the addressed side o it the postmerk Hintondean, an the simple detail "2d. tae pey."

He raise slaw, leavin his denner unfeenished--the screivin hid cam bi the ane o'clock post--an gaed intae his study. He rang fur his hoosekeeper, an telt her tae gae roon the hoose at aince, examine aa the faistenins o the windaes, an snib aa the shutters. He caad tee the shutters o his study himsel. Frae a snibbit drawer in his bed chaumer he tuik a wee revolver, owerluikit it cannily, an pit it intae the pooch o his lounge jaiket. He screived a nummer o wee jottins, ane tae Colonel Adye, gaed them tae his maidie tae takk, wi exack tellins as tae her wey o leavin the hoose. "There’s nae danger," quo he, an addit an inner worriet thochtie, "tae yersel." He bedd thochtfu fur a whylie efter daein this, an syne gaed back tae his cweelin denner.

He ett wi gaps o thocht. At the hinnereyn he strukk the brod sherply. "We’ll hae him!" quo he; "an I’m the bait. He’ll cam ower far."

He gaed up tae the belvedere, cannily steekin ilkie yett efter him. "It's a gemme," he spakk, "a fey gemme--bit the chaunces are aa fur me, Mr. Griffin, in spite o yer inveesibility. Griffin\_contra mundum\_ ... wi a bells on."

He stude at the windae glowerin at the hett knoweside. "He maun get maet ilkie day--an I dinna envy him. Did he really sleep last nicht? Oot in the open somewey--siccar frae mishanter. I wish we cud get some guid cauld weet weather insteid o the heat.

"He micht be watchin me noo."

He gaed nearhaun tae the windae. Somethin chappit smertly agin the brickwirk ower the frame, an gart him lowp violently back.

"I'm jist gettin jittery," quo Kemp. Bit it wis five meenits afore he gaed tae the windae again. "It maun hae bin a spurgie," he spakk.

Sune he heard the front-yett bell ringin, an hashed doonstairs. He unsteekit an unsnibbit the yett, owerluikit the chyne, pit it up, an lowsed it cannily wioot shawin himsel. A kent voyce hailed him. It wis Adye.

"Yer maidie's bin fleggit, Kemp," quo he said roon the yett.

"Fit!" skreiched Kemp.

"Hid thon screivin o yours taen awa frae her. He's near aboot here. Lat me in."

Kemp lowsed the chyne, an Adye cam in throwe as nerra a chink as possible. He stude in the haa, luikin wi unca relief at Kemp refaistenin the yett. "Jottin wis wheeched ooto her haun. Scared her horribly. She's doon at the station. Hysteerics. He's near here. Fit wis it aboot?"

Kemp banned.

"Fit a gype I wis," quo Kemp. "I micht hae kent. It's nae an oor's wauk frae Hintondean. Aaready?"

"Fit’s up?" speired Adye.

"Luik here!" reponed Kemp, an led the wey intae his study. He haundit Adye the Inveesible Cheil’s screivin. Adye read it an fussled saftly.

"An ye--?" speired Adye.

"Plottit a trap--like a gype," quo Kemp, "an sent ma plan oot bi a Maidie. Tae him."

Adye follaed Kemp's sweirin.

"He'll rin awa," quo Adye.

"Nae him," reponed Kemp.

A muckle smash o glaiss cam frae upstairs. Adye hid a siller glisk o a wee revolver hauf ooto Kemp's pooch. "It's a windae, upstairs!" quo Kemp, an led the wey up. There cam a secunt smash while they wir aye on the staircase. Fin they reached the study they fand twa o the three windaes smashed, hauf the chaumer skittered wi brukken glaiss, an ae muckle stane lyin on the screivin brod. The twa chiels stoppit in the yett wey, owerluikin the wrack. Kemp banned again, an as he did sae the third windae gaed wi a snap like a pistol, hung splintered fur a meenit, an fell doon in jaggy, trimmlin triangles intae the chaumer.

"Fit's this fur?" quo Adye.

"It's a stert," reponed Kemp.

"There's nae wey o sclimmin up here?"

"Nae for a kittlin," quo Kemp.

"Nae shutters?"

"Nae here. Aa the doonstairs yetts—Fit noo!"

Knell, an syne dunt o boords skelped hard cam frae doonstairs. "Tae the Deil wi him!" skreiched Kemp. "Thon maun be--aye--it's ane o the bed chaumers. He's gaun tae dae aa the hoose. Bit he's a gype. The shutters are up, an the glaiss’ll faa ootbye. He'll cut his feet."

Anither windae telt o its wrack. The twa chiels stude on the landin bumbazed. "I hae it!" quo Adye. "Lat me hae a stick or somethin, an I'll gae doon tae the station an get the bluidhounds pit on. Thon’ll sattle him! They're near haun--nae ten meenits--"

Anither windae gaed the wey o its fiers.

"Ye hinna a revolver?" speired Adye.

Kemp's haun gaed tae his pooch. Syne he dauchled. "I hinna ane--at least tae spare."

"I'll bring it back," quo Adye, "ye'll be safe here."

Kemp, affrontit o his wee brakk frae truith, haundit him the gun.

"Noo fur the yett," Adye telt him.

As they stude dauchlin in the haa, they heard ane o the first-fleer bed chaumer windaes crack an brakk. Kemp gaed tae the yett an stertit tae draw the bolts as seelent as possible. His face wis a thochtie paler than ordnar. "Ye maun step straicht oot," quo Kemp. In anither meenit Adye wis on the yett step an the snibs wir drappin back intae the staples. He devalued fur a meenit, feelin mair comfy wi his back again the yett. Syne he merched, upricht an squar, doon the steps. He gaed ower the girse an cam tae the yett. A wee win seemed tae reeshle ower the girse. Some ferlie meeved nearhaun him. "Stop a bittie," spakk a Voyce, an Adye stoppit deid an his haun tichtened on the revolver.

"Weel?" quo Adye, fite an misfittit, his harns streetched.

"Obleege me bi gaun back tae the hoose," quo the Voyce, as jittery an misfittit as Adye's.

"Sorry," quo Adye a bittie hairsely, an wat his lips wi his tongue. The Voyce wis on his left front, he thocht. Supposin he chaunced tae luck wi a shot?

"Fit are ye gaun fur?" speired the Voyce, an there wis a faist meevement o the twa, an a glisk o sunlicht frae the lowsed flap o Adye's pooch.

Adye dauchled an thocht. "Far I gae," quo he slawly, "is ma ain affair." The wirds wir still on his lips, fin an airm cam roon his thrapple, his back felt a knee, an he wis sprauchlin backwird. He drew awkward an fired gytely, an in anither meenit he was strukk in the moo an the revolver warssled from his grip. He made an eeseless grab at a sliddery limb, ettled tae warssle up an fell back. "Damn!" quo Adye. The Voyce leuch. "I'd kill ye noo gin it wisnae the waste o a bullet," it spakk He saw the revolver in mid air, sax fit aff, pyntit at him.

"Weel?" speired Adye, sittin up.

"Rise up," quo the Voyce.

Adye stude up.

"Takk tent," ordered the Voyce, an syne, forcie, "Dinna try ony pliskies. Mynd, I can see yer face gin ye canna see mine. Ye’ve got tae gae back tae the hoose."

"He winna lat me in," coontered Adye.

"Thon’s a peety," quo the Inveesible Chiel. "I've got nae quarrel wi ye."

Adye wat his lips again. He luikit awa frae the barrel o the revolver an saw the sea hyne aff verra blue an derk unner the noon sun, the smeeth green lea, the fite cliff o the Heid, an the thrang toon, an o a suddenty he kent that life wis verra swete. His een cam back tae this wee metal ferlie hingin atween heiven an eirde, sax yairds awa. "Fit am I tae dae?" quo he dowie like.

"Fit am I tae dae?" speired the Inveesible Chiel. "Ye’ll get help. The anely wey is fur ye tae gae back."

"I’ll try. Gin he lats me in will ye vow nae tae breenge at the yett?"

"I've got nae argy-bargy wi ye," quo the Voyce.

Kemp hid hashed upstairs efter lattin Adye oot, an noo hunkered doon amang the brukken glaiss an teetin cannie ower the edge o the study windae sill, he saw Adye staun bletherin wi the Unseen. "Foo dis he nae fire?" fussled Kemp tae himsel. Syne the revolver meeved a thochtie an the glent o the sunlicht glentit in Kemp's een. He shaded his een an ettled tae see the soorce o the blinnin licht.

"Ma certes!" quo he, "Adye’s gien up the revolver."

"Promise nae tae breenge at the yett," Adye wis spikkin. "Dinna push maitters ower far. Gie a body a chaunce."

"Ye gae back tae the hoose. I tell ye richt noo I winna promise onythin."

Adye's thochts seemed set. He turned tae the hoose, waukin slaw wi his hauns ahin him. Kemp luikit on--dumfounert. The revolver vanished, glimmered again intae sicht, vanished again, an becam clear on a close owerluik as a wee derk objeck follaein Adye. Syne maitters happened unca faist. Adye lowpit back, furled aroon, cleukit at thon wee objeck, missed it, haived up his hauns an drapped forrit on his face, leavin a wee pluffert o blue in the air. Kemp didnae hear the soun o the shot. Adye warssled, heistit himsel on ae arm, drapt forrit, an lay quaet.

Fur a whylie Kemp bedd glowerin at the quaet carelessness o Adye's mainner. The efterneen wis verra hett an still, naethin seemed steerin in aa the warld apairt frae a pair o yalla butterflees chasin ane anither ben the busses atween the hoose an the road yett. Adye lay on the girse near the yett. The blinds o aa the hooses doon the knowe-road wir steekit, bit in ae wee green simmer-hoose wis a fite corp, luikin like an auld bodach asleep. Kemp owerluikit the surroondins o the hoose fur a sicht o the revolver, bit it hid vanished. His een cam back tae Adye. The gemme wis openin weel.

Syne cam a ringin an chappin at the front yett, that grew at last deefenin, bit follaein Kemp's orders the skiffies hid steekit thirsels intae their chaumers. Thon wis follaed bi a seelence. Kemp sat lippenin an syne stertin keekin cannily ooto the three windaes, ane efter anither. He gaed tae the stair heid an stude lippenin misfit. He airmed himsel wi his bed chaumer poker, an gaed tae examine the inbye faistenins o the grun-fleer windaes again. Aathin wis safe an quaet. He gaed back tae the belvedere. Adye lay quaet ower the edge o the graivel jist as he’d drappit. Camin alang the road bi the hooses wir the hoosemaidie an twa polis chiel.

Aathin wis deidly quaet. The three fowk seemed verra slaw in camin. He winneret fit his fae wis daein.

He stertit. There wis a knell frae aneth. He dauchled an gaed doonstairs again. O a suddenty the hoose chittered wi wechty dunts an the brakkin o timmer. He heard a knell an the blooterin clang o the iron faistenins o the shutters. He turned the key an lowsed the kitchie yett. As he did sae, the shutters, brukken an in skelfs, cam fleein inbye. He stude dumfounert. The windae frame, apairt frae ae crossbar, wis still hale, bit anely wee progs o glaiss bedd in the frame. The shutters hid bin caad in wi an aixe, an noo the aixe wis dingin doon in swypin cloors on the windae frame an the iron bars defendin it. Syne o a suddenty it lowped aside an vanished. He saw the revolver doon on the path ootbye, an syne the wee weapon jinkit intae the air. He lowpit back. The revolver crackit jist ower latchy, an a skelf frae the edge o the steekin yett glentit ower his heid. He snibbed an caad tee the yett, an as he stude ootbye he heard Griffin skreichin an lauchin. Syne the cloors o the aixe wi its brakkin an smushin results, wir restertit.

Kemp stude in the lobby ettlin tae think. In a meenit the Inveesible Chiel wid be in the kitchie. This yett widnae haud him aff a meenit, an syne-- A ringin cam at the front yett again. It wid be the polis chiel. He ran intae the haa, pit up the chyne, an drew the snibs. He gart the quine spikk afore he drappit the chyne, an the three fowk hytered intae the hoose in a howpie, an Kemp caad tee the yett again.

"The Inveesible Chiel!" quo Kemp. "He’s gotten a revolver, wi twa shots--left. He's killt Adye. Shot him onywey. Did ye nae see him on the girse? He's lyin thonner."

"Fa?" speired ane o the polis.

"Adye," spakk Kemp.

"We cam in the back wey," quo the girl.

"Fit's thon brakkin?" speired ane o the polis.

"He's in the kitchie--or will be. He’s fand an aixe--"

O a suddenty the hoose wis fu o the Inveesible Chiel's din-raisin dunts on the kitchie yett. The quine glowered tae the kitchie, chittered, an gaed back intae the dinin-chaumer. Kemp ettled tae explain in brukken blethers. They heard the kitchie yett gie.

"Thon wey," quo Kemp, stertin intae meevement, an bunnlit the polis intae the dininn-chaumer yett.

"Poker," socht Kemp, an breenged tae the fender. He haundit the poker he’d cairriet tae the polis chiel an the dinin-chaumer ane tae the ither. He o a suddenty flung himsel back.

"Wheech!" quo ae polis chiel, booed doon, an catched the aixe on his poker. The pistol snappit its hinmaist barr ane shot an rippit a dear Sidney Cooper. The secunt polis chiel brocht his poker doon on the wee weapon, as a body micht caa doon a wasp, an sent it rowin tae the fleer.

At the first knell the quine skirled, stude skirlin fur a meenit bi the ingle, an syne ran tae lowse the shutters—likely wi a notion o escapin bi the brukken windae.

The aixe drew back intae the lobby, an drappit tae an airt aboot twa fit frae the grun. They could hear the Inveesible Chiel braithin. "Staun awa, ye twa," he quo. "I wint thon chiel Kemp."

"We wint ye," reponed the first polis chiel, makkin a faist step forrit an swypin wi his poker at the Voyce. The Inveesible Chiel maun hae jinkit back, an he hytered intae the brolly staun.

Syne, as the polis chiel hytered wi the swype o the cloor he’d aimed, the Inveesible Chiel coontered wi the aixe, the helmet wis connached like paper, an the cloor sent the chiel furlin tae the fleer at the heid o the kitchie stairs. Bit the secunt polis chiel, aimin ahin the aixe wi his poker, hit somethin saft that snappit. There wis a sherp skreich o pain an syne the aixe drappit tae the grun. The polis chiel swypit again at teemness an cloored naethin; he pit his fit on the aixe, an strukk again. Syne he stude, poker clubbit, lippenin close fur the slichtest meevement.

He heard the dinin-chaumer windae lowse, an a faist breenge o feet inbye. His fier rowed ower an sat up, wi the bluid rinnin doon atween his ee an lug. "Far is he?" speired the chiel on the fleer.

"Dinna ken. I've strukk him. He's staunin somewey in the haa.Unless he's jinkit bye ye. Doctor Kemp--sir."

Seelence.

"Doctor Kemp," cried the polis chiel again.

The secunt polis chiel stertit warsslin tae his feet. He stude up. O a suddenty the feint dunt o nyaakit feet on the kitchie stairs could be heard. "Feech!" cried the first polis chiel, an aimless like flang his poker. It brukk a wee gas bracket.

He luikit as gin he’d chase the Inveesible Chiel doonstairs. Syne he thocht better o’t an steppit inno the dining-chaumer.

"Doctor Kemp--" he stertit, an stoppit short.

"Doctor Kemp's a hero," quo he, as his frien luikit ower his shouder.

The dinin-chaumer windae wis gappin, an neither hoosemaidie nur Kemp wis tae be seen.

The secunt polis chiel thochts on Kemp wis short an glowin.