**Chapter 4x**

**Mr. Cuss interviews the Fremmit Cheil**

I hae telt the state o maitters o the fremmit cheil's incam in Iping in full, sae that the fey impression he vrocht micht be unnerstude bi the reader. Bit apairt frae twa fey happenins, the affairs o his stay until the byordnar day o the club festival micht be passed ower verra faist. There wis a puckles o stooshies wi Mrs. Haa on maitters o hoose rules, bit in ilkie case till late April, fin the first signs o puirtith stertit, he quaetened her bi the easy wey o an extra peyment. Haa didnae like him, an finiver he daured he spakk o the wyceness o gettin rid o him; bit he shawed his ill will maistly bi happin it brazen like, an avoydin his veesitor as muckle as possible. "Wyte till the simmer," quo Mrs. Haa mensefu like, "fin the artists are stertin tae cam. Syne we'll see. He micht be a bittie domineerin, bit bills sattled on time is bills sattled on time, fitever ye’d like tae say."

The fremmit cheil didnae gae tae kirk, an mairower made nae differ atween the Sabbath an the wikk days, even in rigoot. He vrocht, as Mrs. Haa thocht, in stots an bangs. Whyles he wid cam doon early an be aywis eident. On ithers he wid rise late, stravaig his chaumer, worryin lood fur oors thegether, smoke, sleep in the airmcheer bi the lowe. He didnae spikk wi the warld ayont the clachan. His natur wis unca onchancy; fur the maist pairt his mainner wis thon o a cheil tholin byordnar tribble, an aince or twice ferlies wir snappit, rippit, smushed, or brukken in antrin ootbrakks o violence. He seemed unner a muckle coorse roose. His wey o spikkin tae hissel in a laigh voyce grew steidily on him, bit tho Mrs. Haa lippened sair she could makk neither heid nur tail o fit she heard.

He didnae aften gae oot bi daylicht, bit at gloamin he wid gae oot rowed up inveesibly, whether the weather wis cauld or nae, an he chuse the laneliest pathies an thon maist owershaddaed bi trees an banks. His gogglin glaisses an ghaistly bandaged face aneth the braid brim o his hat, cam wi a misfittin suddenty ooto the derkness on ane or twa hame-gaun wirkers, an Teddy Henfrey, tummlin ooto the "Reid Jaiket" ae nicht, at hauf-past nine, wis fleggit shamefu bi the cheil's skull-like heid (he wis waukin hat in haun) lichtit bi the sudden licht o the ajee howf yett. Sic bairns as saw him at nichtfaa hid widdendremes o bogles, an it seemed dootfu whether he dislikit loons mair than they dislikit him, or the reverse; bit there wis o a certainty a strang eneuch dislike on ilkie side.

It wis fated that a body o sic a remairkable luik an mainner should becam an ordnar sklaik in sic a clachan as Iping. Opinion wis unca dividit aboot his darg. Mrs. Haa wis thochtfu on the poynt. Fin back speired, she explained verra cannie that he wis an "experimental researcher," gaun tenty ower the wirds as a bodt fa dreids pitfaas. Fin speired fit an experimental resaercher wis, she wid say wi a thochtie o superiority that maist educatit fowk kent sic things as thon, an wid syne explain that he "discovered ferlies." Her veesitor hid haen an accident, quo she, that temporary bladdit his face an hauns, an bein o a delicate kind, he wis ill-disposed tae ony public kennin o the fack.

Ooto her ken there wis a view weel held that he wis a vratch ettlin tae flee frae justice bi rowin hissel up sae as tae hide hissel aathegether frae the een o the polis. Thon notion lowped frae the harns o Mr. Teddy Henfrey. Nae crime o ony size datin frae the mids or eyn o Februar wis kent o have. Thocht up in the heid o Mr. Gould, the apprentice assistant in the National Skweel, this theory tuik the form that the cheil wis an Anarchist in disguise, makkin explosives, an he set aboot unnertakkin sic detective darg as his time lat him. These wir fur the maist pairt glowerin verra hard at the cheil finever they met, or in speirin fowk fa’d niver seen him, leadin questions aboot him. Bit he fand oot naethin.

Anither skweel o thocht follaed Mr. Fearenside, an either tuik the piebald view or some version o’t; as, fur instance, Silas Durgan, fa wis heard tae say that "gin he chose tae shaw himsel at fairs he'd makk his fortune in nae time," an bein a bittie o a theologian, compared the fremmit cheil tae the body wi the ae talent. Yet anither view jeloused the cheil wis a hermless daftie. Thon hid the merit o accoontin fur aathin straicht awa.

Atween thon main bourichies there wir switherers an compromisers. Sussex fowk hae fyew superstitions, an it wis anely efter the happenins o early April that the thocht o the eildritch wis first fuspered in the clachan. Even then it wis anely gaen credit amang the wummen fowk.

Bit fitiver they thocht o him, fowk in Iping, on the hale, agreed in nae likin him. His ill-natur, tho it micht hae bin unnerstude bi a toun harns-wirker, wis an unca ferly tae thon quaet Sussex clachan fowk. The wud airm wyvins they saw whyles an the heidlang stravaigin efter nichtfaa that swypit him upon them roon quaet neuks, the forcey shuttin doon o aa attempts at back speirin, the likin fur gloamin that led tae the steekin o yetts, the puin doon o blinds, the blawin oot o caunles an lichts--fa could agree wi sic on gauns? They drew aside as he wauked ben the clachan, an fin he’d gane by, young aff takkin tykes wid up wi jaiket-collars an doon wit hat-brims, an gae waukin nervous-like efter him in copyin his itherwardly air. There wis a sang popular at thon time caaed "The Bogle Mannie". Miss Statchell sang it at the skweel chaumer concert (in aid o the kirk lichts), an thereaifter finiver ane or twa o the clachan fowk wir gaithered thegether an the cheil appeared, a bar or twa o this tune, mair or less sharp or flat, wis fussled in the mids o them. As weel latchy wee bairns wid cry "Bogle Mannie!" efter him, an makk aff unca heich.

Cuss, the G.P., wis etten up bi ill faschence. The bandages vrocht up his professional consarn, the report o the thoosan an ane bottles kittlit his jealous regaird. Aa throwe April an Mey he socht a chaunce o spikkin tae the cheil, an at the hinnereyn, near Whitsuntide, he could thole it nae langer, bit cam upon the subscription-list fur a clachan nurse as an excuse. He wis bumbazed tae larn that Mr. Haa didnae ken his guest's nemme. "He gaed a nemme," quo Mrs. Haa-a bar-faced lee--"bit I didnae richtly hear it." She thocht it seemed sae glekit nae tae ken the cheil's nemme.

Cuss chappit at the parlour yett an gaed in. There wis a fairly lood sweir frae inbye. "Excuse ma steppin in," quo Cuss, an syne the yett steekit an cut Mrs. Haa aff frae the lave o the spikk.

She could hear the mummlin o voiyes fur the neist ten meenits, syne a skreich o bumbazement, a steerin o feet, a cheer haived aside, an ootbrakk o lauchter, faist steps tae the yett, an Cuss appeared, his face fite, his een glowerin ower his shouder. He left the yett ajee ahin him, an wioot luikin at her strade ben the haa an gaed doon the steps, an she heard his feet hashin ben the road. He cairried his hat in his haun. She stude ahin the yett, luikin at the ajee yett o the parlour. Syne she heard the cheil lauchin quaet, an syne his fitsteps cam ben the chaumer. She couldnae see his face far she stude. The parlour yett slammed tee, an the airt wis seelent again.

Cuss gaed straicht up the clachan tae Buntin the meenister. "Am I gyte?"Cuss stertit sherply, as he gaed inno the puir wee study. "Dae I luik like a daft body?"

"Fit's happened?" speired the meenister, pittin the ammonite on the lowse sheets o his furth-camin sermon.

"Thon cheil at the howff--"

"Weel?"

"Gie me somethin tae drink," quo Cuss, an he dowpit doon.

Fin his harns hid bin steidied bi a glaiss o chaip sherry—the anely drink the gweed meenister keepit --he telt him o the interview he’d jist hid. "Gaed in," he gaspit, "an stertit tae sikk siller fur thon Nurse Fund. He'd stuck his haun in his pooches as I cam in, an he sat doon wechtily in his cheer. Snuffed. I telt him I'd heard he tuik an interest in scientific ferlies. He reponed aye. Snuffed again. Keepit on snuffin aa the time; like he’d new catched a coorse hoast. Nae winner, rowed up like thon! I cairriet on wi the nurse notion, an aa the while keepit ma een ajee. Bottles--chemicals--aawye. Scales, test-tubes in stauns, an a guff o--evenin primrose. Wid he gie siller? Said he'd conseeder it. Speired at him, richt oot, wis he researchin. Sez he wis. A lang research? Got unca roosed . 'A damnt lang research,' quo he, blawin the cork oot, sae tae spikk. 'Och,' I reponed. An oot cam the girn. The cheil wis jist on the byle an ma speirin byled him ower. He’d bin gien a prescription, a maist valuable prescription--fit fur he widnae say. Wis it medical?

'Damn ye! Fit are ye fishin efter?' I telt him I wis sorry. Dignifeed snuff an hoast. He restertit. He'd read it. Five pairts. Pit it doon; furled his heid. Draucht o air frae a windae heistit the paper. Sweesh, reeshle. He wis wirkin in a chaumer wi an open hairth he said. Spied a flichter, an there wis the prescription burnin an liftin tae the lum. Breenged fur it jist as it wheeched up the lum. Sae! Jist at thon pynt, tae illustrate his tale, oot cam his airm."

"Weel?"

"Nae haun--jist a teem sleeve. Loshtie! I thocht, thon’s a defeck! Got a cork airm, I jelouse, an his taen it aff. Syne, I thocht, there's somethin fey in thon. Fit the deil keeps thon sleeve up an ajee, gin there's naethin in it? There wis naethin in it, I tell ye. Naethin doon it, richt doon tae the jynt. I could see richt doon it tae the elbuck, an there was a glimmer o licht sheenin throwe a teir o the claith. 'Gweed Sakes!' quo I. Syne he stoppit. Glowered at me wi thon blaik specs o his, an syne at his sleeve."

"Weel?"

"Thon's aa. He niver spakk at aa; jist glowered, an pit his sleeve back in his pooch faist 'I wis sayin,' he gaed on , 'that there wis the prescription burnin, wisn't I?' A speirin hoast. 'Foo the deil,' quo I, 'can ye meeve a teem sleeve like thon?' 'Teem sleeve?' 'Aye,' quo I, 'a teem sleeve.'

"'It's a teem sleeve, is it? Ye saw it was a teem sleeve?' He stude up richt awa. I stude up as weel. He cam towards me in three verra slaw steps, an stude rael close. Snuffed pysonously. I didna jink, tho I'm damned gin thon bandaged stump o his, an thon blinkers, arenae eneuch tae unsattle onybody, camin quaet up tae ye.

"'Ye said it wis a teem sleeve?' quo he. 'Aye,' I reponed. Efter glowerin an saying naethin thon barefaced cheil, unspectacled, stertit scrattin. Syne verra quaet he pued his sleeve ooto his pooch again, an heistit his airm at me as tho he wid shaw it tae me again. He did it verra, verra slaw. I luikit at it. Seemed a lang time. 'Weel?' sez I, clearin ma thrapple, 'there's naethin in it.'

"Hid to say somethin. I wis stertin tae feel feart. I could see richt doon it. He raxxed it oot straicht towards me, slawly, slawly--jist like thon--until the cuff wis sax inches frae ma face. Fey maitter tae see a teem sleeve come at ye like thon! An syne--"

"Weel?"

"Somethin--jist like a finger an thoomb it felt--nippit ma neb."

Bunting stertit tae lauch.

"There wasnae onythin thonner!" quo Cuss, his voyce rinnin up intae a skirl at the "thonner." "It's aa verra weel fur ye tae lauch, bit I tell ye I wis sae bumbazed, I duntit his cuff hard, an birled roon, an hashed ooto the chaumer--I left him--"

Cuss stoppit. There was nae mistakkin the sincerity o his fleg. He birled roon in a helpless wey an tuik a secunt glaiss o the braw meenister’s verra puir sherry. "Fin I duntit his cuff," quo Cuss, "I tell ye, it felt jist like duntin an arim. An there wasnae an airm! There wisnae the ghaist o an airm!"

Mr. Buntin thoucht it ower. He luikit agley at Cuss. "It's a maist remairkable tale," quo he. He luikit verra wyce an unca grave. "It's really," reponed Mr. Buntin wi wecht an feelin, "a maist remairkable tale."