**Chapter 7 x The Unveilin o the Fremmit Cheil**

The fremmit cheil gaed intae the wee parlour o the "Cairriage an Shelts" aboot hauf-past five in the mornin, an there he bedd until near noon, the blinds doon, the yett steekit, an nane, efter Haa’s snub, gaun near him.

Aa thon time he maun hae fasted. Thrice he rang his bell, the third time forcey an ongaun, bit naebody reponed. "Him an his 'gae tae the deil' indeed!" quo Mrs. Haa. Sune cam an imperfeck spikk o the spulzie at the manse, an twa an twa wir pit thegether. Haa, helpit bi Wadgers, gaed aff tae finn Mr. Shuckleforth, the magistrate, an takk his advyce. Naebody gaed upstairs. Foo the cheil occupeed hissel is unkent. Noo an then he wid merch stride up an doon, an twice cam an ootbrakk o banns, a teirin o paper, an a pouerfu smashin o bottles.

The wee bourich o feart bit ill-faschent fowk grew. Mrs. Huxter cam ower; a wheen blythe young laddies braw in blaik ready-vrocht jaikets an pique paper ties--fur it wis Whit Monday—jyned the bourich wi a mixter maxter o speirins. Young Erchie Harker merked hissel oot bi gaun up the yaird an ettlin tae keek unner the windae-blinds. He could see naethin, bit gaed rizzon fur jelousin that he did, an oihers o the Iping halflins sune jyned him.

It wis the brawest o aa possible Whit Mondays, an doon the clachan street stude a raw o near a dizzen staas, a sheetin gallery, an on the girse bi the forge wir three yalla an chocolate cairts an a wheen ootstaunin fremmit fowk o baith sexes biggin a cocoanut shy. The cheils wore blue ganzies, the weemen fite peenies an rael fashionable hats wi wechty feathers. Wodger, o the "Poorple Fawn," an Mr. Jaggers, the cobbler, fa also selt auld secunt-haun ordinar bicycles, wir raxxin a towe wi union-jacks an royal ensigns (that hid aince celebrated the first Victorian Jubilee) ower the road.

An inbye, in the artificial derkness o the parlour, intae which anely ae thin straik o sunlicht won in, the fremmit cheil, hungeret we maun jelouse, an feart, rowed in his uncomfy hett wippins, glowered throwe his derk glaisses on his paper or clunkit his orra wee bottles, an whyles banned wi roose the loons, heard gin inveesible, ootside the windaes. In the neuk bi the ingle lay the smush o hauf a dizzen brukken bottles, an a strang guff o chlorine bladdit the air. Sae muckle we kent frae fit wis heard at the time an frae fit wis eftir seen in the chaumer.

Aboot noon he o a suddenty lowsed his parlour yett an stude glowerin fixed at the three or fower fowk in the howf. "Mrs. Haa," quo he. Somebody gaed gey blate an caaed fur Mrs. Haa. Mrs. Haa cam eftir a whylie, a bittie short o braith, bit aa the fiercer fur thon. Haa wis still oot. She’d thocht ower this scene, an she cam haudin a wee tray wi an unsattled bill on it. "Is’t yer bill ye’r wintin, sir?" she speired.

"Foo wisn't ma brakkfast set oot? Foo hae ye nae cuikit ma meals an reponed tae ma bell? Dae ye think I live wioot ettin?"

"Foo isn't ma bill peyed?" quo Mrs. Haa. "That's fit I wint tae ken."

"I telt ye three days syne I wis awytin siller--"

"I telt ye twa days syne I wisnae gaun tae wyte fur nae siller camin. Ye canna girn gin yer brakkfast wytes a bittie, gin ma bill's bin wytin fur five days, can ye?"

The fremmit cheil swore brief bit strang.

"Na, na!" frae the howf.

"An I'd thank ye kindly, sir, gin ye'd keep yer sweirin tae yersel, sir," quo Mrs. Haa.

The cheil stude luikin mair like an angeret divin-helmet than iver. It wis aathegither thocht in the howf that Mrs. Haa hid the better o him. His neist wirds shawed sae.

"Luik here, ma gweed wumman--" he stertit.

"Dinna 'gweed wumman' me," quo Mrs. Haa.

"I've telt ye ma siller hisnae cam."

"Siller indeed!" reponed Mrs. Haa.

"Still, I daursay in ma pooch--"

"Ye telt me three days syne that ye hidnae onythin bit a sovereign's wirth o siller on ye."

"Weel, I've fand some mair--"

"'Mphm!" frae the howf.

"I winner far ye fand it," quo Mrs. Haa.

Thon seemed tae roose the cheil mair. He stampit his fit. "Fit dae ye mean?" he speired.

"I winner far ye fand it," quo Mrs. Haa. "An afore I takk ony bills or fetch ony brakkfasts, or dae ony sic things fitsaeiver, ye’ll tell me ane or twa things I dinna unnerstaun, an fit aabody disnae unnerstaun, an fit aabody is sair wintin tae unnerstaun. I wint tae ken fit ye’ve bin daein tae ma cheer upstairs, an I wint tae ken foo it is yer chaumer wis teem, an foo ye got in again. Fowk that bide in this hoose cam in bi the yetts--thon's the rule o the hoose, an that ye didnaedae it, an fit I wint tae ken is foo ye did cam in. An I wint to ken--"

O a suddenty the cheil heistit his gloved neives, stampit his fit, an quo, "Stop!" wi sic byordnar virr that he seelenced her richt aff.

"Ye dinna unnerstaun," he telt her, "fa I am or fit I am. I'll shaw ye. By God! I'll shaw ye." Syne he pit his open haun ower his face an withdrew it. The mids o his face becam a blaik hole. "Here," quo he. He steppit forrit an haundit Mrs. Haa somethin which she, glowerin at his cheenged face, acceptit richt aff. Syne, fin she saw fit it wis, she skirled lood, drappit it, an hytered back. The snoot--it wis the cheil's snoot! pink an sheenin--rowed on the fleer.

Syne he tuik aff his glaisses, an aabody in the howf peched. He tuik aff his hat, an wi a forcey meevement ruggit at his fuskers an bandages. Fur a meenit they resistit him. A fleerish o awfu forekennin passed ben the howf. "God Almichty!" quo somebody.Syne aff they cam.

It wis waur than onythin. Mrs. Haa, staunin gap-mooed an horrifeed, skrieched at fit she saw, an ran fur the yett o the hoose. Aabody stertit tae meeve. They wir expeckin merks, skaiths, horrors ye could see, bit naethin! The bandages an fause hair flew ben the lobby intae the howf, fowk makkin a fey lowp tae jink them. Aabody tummlit on aabody else doon the steps. Fur the cheil fa stude thonner skirlin some mummlit explanation, wis a solid meevin body up tae the jaiket-collar o him, an syne--naethin, nae veesible ferlie at aa!

Fowk doon the clachan heard skirls an skreichs, an luikin up the street saw the "Cairraige an Shelts" teemin oot aabye inbye. They saw Mrs. Haa faa doon an Mr. Teddy Henfrey lowp tae jouk tummlin ower her, an syne they heard the frichtfu skirls o Millie, fa, camin o a suddenty frae the kitchie at the soun o the stooshie, hid cam on the heidless cheil frae ahin. These grew mair.

Syne aabody aa doon the street, the sweetie seller, cocoanut shy ainer an his apprentice, the swing mannie, wee loons an quines, teuchter bobbydazzlers, bonnie jaads, auld bodachs in smocks an peenies cyards --stertit rinnin tae the howf, an in a mervellous whylie a bourich o mebbe forty fowk, an faist growin, sweyed an hootit an speired an skreiched an suggestit, afore Mrs. Haa's howf. Aabody seemed keen tae spikk at aince, an the result wis a richt ramfeezle. A wee bourich supportit Mrs. Haa, fa wis heistit up in a state o feintin. There wis a confeerin, an the ee-watterin evidence o an oot-spukken ee-witness. "O Bogle!" "Fit's he bin daein' ?"

"Hisnae hurtit the quine, his he?" "Ran at her wi a knife, I heard."

"Nae heid, I tell ye. I dinna mean nae mainner o spikkin. I mean he’s a cheil wioot a heid!" "Styte! It’s some conjurin plisky." "Tuik aff his wippins, he did"

In the warssle tae see in throwe the ajee yett, the bourich vrocht itsel intae a raggedy divot, wi the baulder pynt nearest the howf. "He stude fur a meenit, I heard the quine skirl, an he turned. I saw her skirts wheech, an he gaed efter her. Didnae takk ten secunts. Back he cam wi a knife in his haun an breid stude jist as gin he wis glowerin. Nae a meenit syne. Gaed in thon yett. I tell ye, he’s got nae heid at aa. Ye jist missed him"

There wis a stooshie ahin, an the spikker stoppit tae staun aside fur a wee procession that wis merchin wi smeddum tae the hoose; first Mr. Haa, verra reid an thraw, syne Mr. Bobby Jaffers, the clachan polisman, an syne the cannie Mr.Wadgers. They’d cam noo airmed wi a warrant.

Fowk skirled oot conflictin blethers o the recent happenins.

"'Head or nae head," quo Jaffers, "I’ll hae tae arrest him, an arrest him I will."

Mr. Haa merched up the steps, merched straicht tae the yett o the parlour an haived it ajee. "Polisman,” quo he, "dae yer duty."

Jaffers merched in. Haa neist, Wadgers hinmaist. They saw in the blae licht the heidless cheil facin them, wi a chawed daud o breid in ae gloved haun an a daud o cheese in the ither.

"Thon's him!" quo Haa.

"Fit the deil's this?" spukk in a tone o lood roose frae abune the collar o the corp.

"Ye’re a dashed unca craitur, maister," quo Mr. Jaffers. "Bit heid or nae heid, the warrant sez 'body,' an duty's duty--"

"Bide awa!" warned the body, jinkin back.

Faist, he whippit doon the breid an cheese, an Mr. Haa jist grippit the knife on the brod in time tae save it. Aff cam the cheil's left mochle an wis skelped in Jaffers' face. In anither meenit Jaffers, cuttin aff some spikk consarnin a warrant, hid grippit him bi the haunless wrist an catched his inveesible thrapple. He got a sair kick on the cweet that gart him skirl, bit he held on. Haa sent the knife skytin ben the brod tae Wadgers, fa acted as goalie fur the hame team, sae tae spikk, an syne steppit forrit as Jaffers an the cheil sweyed an hytered tae him, warsslin an duntin. A cheer stude in the wey, an cowped wi a crash as they cam doon thegether.

"Takk the feet," quo Jaffers atween his teeth.

Mr. Haa, tcyaavin tae act on instructions, won a soundin kick in the ribs that got rid o him fur a meenit, an Mr.Wadgers, seein the heidless cheil hid rowed ower an got the upper haun o Jaffers, retreated tae the yett, knife in haun, an sae stytered in wi Mr. Huxter an the Sidderbridge cairter camin tae the rescue o law an order. At the same meenit doon cam three or fower bottles frae the press an shot a strang guff inno the air o the chaumer.

"I'll gie up," skirled the chiel, tho he hid Jaffers doon, an in anither meenit he stude up pechin, an oorie body, heidless an haunless--fur he’d pued aff his richt mochle noo as weel as his left. "It's nae eese," quo he, as if sabbin fur braith.

It wis the feyest thing in the warld tae hear that voyce camin as if ooto teem air, bit the Sussex ferm fowk are mebbe the maist maitter-o-fack fowk unner the sun. Jaffers won up aa weel an tuik oot a pair o hauncuffs. Syne he glowered.

"Ma certes!" quo Jaffers, brocht up short bi a blearie kennin o the feyness o the hale maitter, "Dash it! Canna makk eese o them as I can see."

The cheil ran his airm doon his waistcoat, an as gin bi a mervel the buttons tae which his teem sleeve pyntit becam lowsed. Syne he said somethin aboot his cweet, an booed doon. He seemed tae be ficherin wi his sheen an hose.

"Weel!" roared Huxter, o a suddenty, "thon's nae a cheil at aa. It's jist teem claes. Luik! Ye can see doon his collar an the linins o his claithes. I could pit ma airm--"

He raxxed oot his haun; it seemed tae cam teetle something in mid-air, an he drew it back wi a sherp exclamation. "I wish ye'd keep yer fingers ooto o ma ee," spakk the airy voyce, in a tone o great roose. "The fack is, I'm aa here--heid, hauns, shanks, an aa the lave o it, bit it happens I'm inveesible. It's a dashed deave, bit I am. Thon’s nae rizzon foo I should be powkit tae

bitties bi ilkie daft gype in Iping, is it?"

The suit o claes, noo aa unlowsed an hingin lowse on its unseen props, stude up, airms raxxed oot.

Puckles o ither cheils hid noo cam inno the chaumer, sae that it wis fair stappit. "Inveesible, eh?" speired Huxter, takkin nae tent o the fremmit cheil’s coorseness. "Fa iver heard the likes o thon?"

"It's unca, mebbe, bit it's nae a crime. Foo am I attackit bi a polis cheil in this wey?"

"Ah! Thon’s anither maitter," quo Jaffers. "Nae doot ye’re a bittie hard tae see in this licht, bit I’ve got a warrant an it's aa correck. Fit I'm efter isnae inveesibility,--it's spulzie. There's a hoose bin brukken intae an siller taen."

"Weel?"

"An maitters raelly pynt--"

"Styte!" quo the Inveesible Cheil.

"I hope sae, sir; bit I hae ma orders."

"Weel," reponed the cheil, "I'll cam. I'll cam. Bit nae hauncuffs."

"It's the ordnar wey," quo Jaffers.

"Nae hauncuffs," reponed the fremmit cheil.

"Excuse me," Jaffers spakk.

Quick, the cheil sat doon, an afore onybody kent fit wis gaun on, the bauchles, hose, an breeks hid bin hickled aff unner the brod. Syne he lowpit up again an haived aff his jaiket.

"Hi min, stop thon," skirled Jaffers, o a suddenty jelousin fit wis gaun on. He grippit at the waistcoat; he warssled, an the sark sliddered oot o it an left it hingin teem in his haun. "Haud him!" skreiched Jaffers, lood. "Aince he tirrs his claes--"

"Haud him!" quo aabody, an there wis a breenge at the flichterin fite sark that wis noo aa that wis veesible o the fremmit cheil.

The sark-sleeve laundit a cannie cloor in Haa's face that stoppit his open-airmed on cam, an sent him back intae auld Toothsome the sexton, an in anither meenit the sark wis heistit up an becam shakky an teem flichterin aboot the airms, even as a sark that is bein pued ower a cheil's heid. Jaffers catched at it, an anely helpit tae rug it aff; he wis strukk in the moo ooto the air, an glekit like threw his truncheon an skelped Teddy Henfrey hard on the croon o his heid.

"Takk tent!" skirled aabody, fechtin at aathin an hittin at naethin. "Hau him! Steek the yett! Dinna lat him lowse! I’ve catched somethin! Here he is!" A perfeck stooshie o souns they vrocht. Aabody, it seemed, wis bein hit aa at aince, an Sandy Wadgers, mensefu as iver an his harns sherpened bi a frichtfu skelp on the snoot, reopened the yett an led the tirrivee. The ithers, follaein in a breist, wir jammed fur a meenit in the neuk bi the yett. The hittin carried on. Phipps, the Unitarian, hid a front tooth brukken, an Henfrey wis hurtit in the cartilage o his lug. Jaffers wis strukk aneth the jaw, an, birlin, catched at somethin that cam in atween him an Huxter in the melee, an stoppit their camin thegether. He felt a strang breist, an in anither meenit the hale jing bang o warsslin, vrocht up cheils shot oot inno the thrang haa.

"I’ve catched him!" skreiched Jaffers, chokin an birlin throwe them aa, an warsslin wi poorpie face an swallin veins agin his unseen fae.

Cheils hytered back an forrit as the fey fecht sweyed faist tae the hoose yett, an gaed birlin doon the hauf-dizzen steps o the howf. Jaffers skirled in a stranglit voyce--haudin ticht, hoosaeiver, an makkin play wi his knee—birled roon, an fell wechty unnerneth wi his heid on the graivel. Anely syne did his fingers lat gae.

There wir vrocht up skreichs o "Haud him!" "Inveesible!" an sae furth, an a young cheil, a fremmit body in the placie fas nemme wis unkent, breenged in at aince, catched somethin, missed his haud, an cowped ower the polis cheil’s dinged doon corp. Hauf-wey ower the road a wumman skirled as somethin hashed by her; a tyke, kicked bi the luik o’t, yelped an ran maenin intae Huxter's yaird, an wi thon the escape o the Inveesible cheil wis won. Fur a whyle fowk stude bumbazed an wyvin, an syne cam fleg, an skittered them tae the fower airts ben the clachan as a win skitters deid leaves.

Bit Jaffers lay quaet still, face up an knees booed, at the fit o the steps o the howf.