**CHAPTER 22x In the Emporium**

"Sae last Januar, wi the stert o a snaa storm in the air aboot me--an gin it sattled on me it wid shaw me!--trauchelt, cauld, painfu, aathegither disjaskit, an still bit hauf siccar o ma inveesible quality, I stertit this new life tae which I’m set on. I’d nae bield, nae gear, naebody in the warld in fa I could reveal aa. Tae hae telt ma secret wid hae gien me awa--vrocht a bit shaw an curiosity o me. Nanetheless, I wis hauf-thochtit tae stop some passer-by an haive masel upon his mercy. Bit I kent ower weel the fleg an roch coorseness ma advaunces wid steer up. I vrocht nae plans in the street. Ma anely objeck wis tae win a bield frae the snaa, tae get masel happit an hett; Syne I micht hope tae plan. Bit even tae me, an Inveesible Chiel, the raws o Lunnon hooses stude snibbit, sneckit, an boltit siccar.

"Anely ae thing could I see clear afore me--the cauld exposure an wae o the snaa storm an the nicht.

"An syne I’d a winnerfu notion. I gaed doon ane o the roads leadin frae Gower Street tae Tottenham Coort Road, an fand masel ootside Omniums, the muckle business far aathin is tae be bocht--ye ken the airt: maet, grocery, linen, gear, claethin, ile peintins even--a muckle twisty heeze o shoppies raither than ae shoppie. I’d thocht I’d finn the yetts lowsed, bit they wir steekit, an as I stude in the braid entrance a cairriage stoppit ootbye, an a chiel in uniform--ye ken the kinno body wi 'Omnium' on his bunnet--flang ajee the yett. I ettled tae gae in, an waukin doon the shoppie--it wis a placie far they wir sellin ribbons an mochles an hose an thon kinno maitter--cam tae a mair open airt gien ower tae picnic creels an wicker gear.

"I didnae feel safe thonner, hoosaeiver; fowk wir gaun back an forrit, an I stravaiged jittery aboot till I cam upon a braid pairt in an upper fleer haudin a heeze o bedsteids, an ower thon I sclimmed, an fand a reestin-neuk at last amang a muckle howp o fauldit flock mattrasses. The airt wis already lichtit up an unca hett, an I decidit tae bide far I wis, keepin a cannie ee on the twa or three sets o shoppie chiels an customers fa wir daunderin throwe the placie, until closin time cam. Syne I should be able, I thocht, tae raik the placie fur maet an claes tae reive, an disguised, wanner throwe it an owerluik its gear, mebbe sleep on some o the beddin. Thon seemed a guid ploy. Ma thocht wis tae takk claes tae makk masel a happit bit ordnar body, tae get siller, an syne tae win back ma buiks an pyokes far they wytit fur me, takk a ludgin somewey an complex plans fur the hale winnin o the advauntages ma inveesibility gaed me (as I still thocht) ower ma fiers.

"Steekin time cam faist eneuch. It could nae hae bin mair than an oor efter I tuik up ma placie on the mattrasses afore I saw the blinds o the windaes bein drawn, an customers bein merched tae the exit. An syne a nummer o gleg young chiels stertit wi unca speed tae redd up the gear that bed in a raivel. I left ma neuk as the fowk dwined awa, an creepit cannie oot intae the less lanely pairts o the shoppie. I wis really bumbazed tae see foo faist the young chiels an weemen wheeched awy the gear set oot fur sale durin the day. Aa the kists o gear, the hingin cloots, the fantoosheries o lace, the kists o sweeties in the grocery airt, the shaws o this an thon, wir bein wheeched doon, fauldit up, skelped intae trig placies, an aathin that couldnae be taen doon an pit awa hid sheets o some roch gear like sackin haived ower them. Syne aa the cheers wir cowpit up on tae the coonters, leavin the fleer clear. Direck ilkie ane o thon young fowk hid dane, he or she made faist fur the yett wi sic a luik o virr as I hae rarely seen in a shoppie wirker afore. Syne cam a heeze o halflins skitterin wid stoor an cairryin pails an breems. I’d tae jink tae win ooto the wey, an as it wis, ma cwuit got stung wi the wid stoor. Fur some time, wannerin throwe the happit an darkened airt, I could hear the breems at wirk. An at the hinnereyn a guid oor or mair efter the shoppie hid bin snibbed, cam a soun o steekin yetts. Seelence cam upon the placie, an I fand masel wannerin throwe the braid an complex shoppies, waukweys, shaw-chaumers o the airt, alane. It wis verra still; in ae neuk I mynd passin near ane o the Tottenham Coort Road yetts an lippenin tae the tappin o buit-heels o the passers-by.

"My first veesit wis tae the airt far I’d seen hose an mochles fur sale. It wis derk, an I’d the deil o a hunt efter spunks, that I fand at last in the drawer o the wee siller desk. Syne I’d tae get a caunle. I’d tae teir doon wippins an raik ben a nummer o kists an drawers, bit at the hinnereyn I fand fit I socht; the kist label caad them lammies’ oo breeks, an lammies’ oo semmits. Syne hose, a thick scarf, an syne I gaed tae the claes airt an got breeks, a supper jaiket, an owercoat an a slouch bunnet--a meenisterial kinno a bunnet wi the brim pued doon. I stertit tae feel a human bein again, an ma neist thocht wis maet.

"Upstairs wis a maet depairtment, an syne I got cauld maet.There wis coffee still in the urn, an I lichtit the gas an heatit it up again, an aathegither I didnae dae ill. Efterwirds, creepin ben the placie sikkin o blankets—I’d tae pit up at last wi a howp o doon quilts--I cam on a grocery pairt wi a heeze o chocolate an sugary fruits, mair than wis guid fur me forbye--an some fite burgundy. An near thon wis a toy depairtment, an I’d a braw notion. I fand some makkie-on snoots—dummy snoots, ye ken, an I thocht o derk glaisses. Bit Omniums hid nae ee depairtment. Ma snoot hid bin a deeficulty mairower—I’d thocht o peint. Bit the discovery set ma thochts rinnin on wigs an masks an the like. At the hinnereyn I gaed tae sleep in a howp o doon quilts, verra hett an comfy.

"Ma last thochts afore sleepin wir the maist agreeable I’d hid since the cheenge. I wis in a state o pheesical calm, an thon wis refleckit in ma harns. I thocht that I should be able tae creep oot unseen in the morning wi ma claes on me, mochlin ma face wi a fite cloot I’d taen, buy, wi the siller I’d taen, glaisses an sae furth, an sae feenish ma disguise. I drappit intae widdendremes o aa the fey ferlies that hid happened durin the hinmaist fyew days. I saw the ugsome wee skinflint o a lanlord spikkin in his chaumers; I saw his twa loons mervellin, an the wrunkled auld wumman's face as she speired fur her kittlin. I kent again the eildritch finnin o seein the claith vanish, an sae I cam roun tae the winny knoweside an the snochrin auld meenister mummlin 'Eirde tae eirde, aisse tae aisse, stoor tae stoor,' at ma faither's open mools.

"'Ye as weel,' quo a voyce, an o a suddenty I wis bein forced tae the mools. I warssled, skirled, priggit tae the mourners, bit they cairried stane-like follaein the service; the auld meenister, as weel, niver dauchled dronin an snocherin ben the rite. I jeloused I wis inveesible an unheard, that owerwhelming forces hid their cleuks on me. I warssled eeselessly, I wis forced ower the brink, the kist rang teem as I fell on it, an the graivel cam fleein efter me in spadfus. Naebody heedit me, naebody wis awaur o me. I vrocht strang warssles an waukened.

"The peely wally Lunnon daybrakk hid cam, the airt wis fu o a jeelin grey licht that flichtered roun the edges o the windae blins. I sat up, an fur a time I couldnae think far this muckle apairtment, wi its coonters, its howps o rowed up gear, its howp o quilts an cushions, its iron pillars, micht be. Syne, as myndin cam back tae me, I heard vyces bletherin.

"Syne far doon the placie, in the brichter licht o some depairtment which hid already heistit its blins, I saw twa chiels draw near. I warssled tae ma feet, luikin aboot me fur some wey o escape, an even as I did sae the soun o ma meevement made them awaur o me. I jelouse they saw jist a body meevin quaet an faist awa.'Fa's thon?' cried ane, an 'Stop thonner!' skirled the ither. I hashed aroun a neuk an cam ram stam-a faceless body, merk ye!--on a skinnymalink halflin o fifteen. He skelloched an I cowped him ower, breenged by him, turned anither neuk, an bi a blythe thocht haived masel ahin a coonter. In anither meenit feet gaed rinnin by an I heard vyces skirlin, 'Aa hauns tae the yetts!' speirin fit wis adee an giein ane anither advyce foo tae catch me.

"Lyin on the grun, I felt feart ooto ma harns. Bit--fey as it micht seem--it didnae cam tae me at thon meenit tae takk aff ma claes as I should hae dane. I’d sattled in ma thochts, I jelouse, tae win awa in them, an thon ruled me. An syne doon the airt o the coonters came a skreich o 'Here he is!'

"I lowped tae ma feet, wheeched a cheer aff the coonter, an sent it furlin at the gype fa’d skirled, furled roon, cam intae anither roun a neuk, gart him birl, an hashed up the stairs. He keepit his balance, gaed a lood halloo, an cam up the staircase hett efter me. Up the staircase wis biggit a heeze o thon bricht-coloured pot ferlies--fit are they?"

"Art pots," spakk Kemp.

"Thon’s Art pots. Weel, I birled at the tap step an birled roun, pyked ane ooto a howpie an knelled it on his glekit heid as he cam at me. The hale howpie o pots gaed heidlang, an I heard skirlin an fitsteps rinnin frae aa the airts. I made a wud breenge fur the ettin airt, an there wis a chiel in fite like a chiel cook, fa tuik up the chase. I vrocht ae hinmaist fearie birl an fand masel amang lichts an iron gear. I gaed ahin the counter o thon, an wytit fur ma cook, an as he breenged in at the heid o the chase, I doobled him up wi a licht. Doon he gaed, an I hunkered doon ahin the coonter an stertit wheechin aff ma claes as faist as I could. Coat, jaiket, breeks, sheen wir aa richt, bit a lammie’s oo semmit fits a chiel like a skin. I heard mair chiels camin, ma cook wis lyin quaet on the ither side o the coonter, dazed or feart spikkless, an I’d tae makk anither breenge fur it, like a mappie huntit ooto a howpie o timmer.

"'This wey, polis chiel!' I heard somebody skirlin. I fand masel in ma bedsteid store chaumer again, an at the eyn o a wudness o wardrobes. I breenged amang them, gaed flat, tuik aa ma semmit efter a rowth o warsslin, an stude a free chiel again, pechin an feart, as the polis body an three o the shoppie chiels cam roun the neuk. They made a breenge fur the semmit an breeks, an grabbit the troosers.'He's drappin the gear,' quo ane o the young chiels. 'He maun be somewey here.'

"Bit they didnae finn me aa the same.

"I stude watchin them hunt fur me fur a whylie, an bannin ma ill-luck in lossin the claes. Syne I gaed intae the ettin-chaumer, supped a little milk I found there, and sat down by the fire to consider my position.

"In a wee whylie twa wirkers cam in an stertit tae spikk ower the business unca vrocht up an like the gypes they wir. I heard a magnifeed accoont o ma wracks, an ither jelousins as tae far I wis. Syne I stertit schemin again. The challengin deefficulty o the placie, speecially noo it wis non alert, wis tae win ony gear oot o it. I gaed doon intae the warehoose tae see gin there wis ony chaunce o packin an addressin a pyoke, bit I couldnae unnerstaun the system o checkin. Aboot eleyven o'clock, the snaa haein thawed as it drapped, an the day bein finer an a bittie hetter than the ane afore, I kent that the Emporium wis eeseless, an gaed oot again, scunnered at ma wint o success, wi anely the feintest ploys in ma harns."