

"There's no place for you here!"

and he stepped into a warm, dark passage, where the only lighting came beneath a curtain hanging on his left.

He lifted the curtain and passed underneath, finding himself in a long, low room where the rafters were only a few inches over his head.

Dim gas-light revealed about a dozen men assembled near a counter. The air was thick with smoke, which was disturbed by the sudden draught of his arrival.

Everyone turned, and Terhune almost gasped. He had never seen a more evil-looking lot of faces. If they had been gangsters they could not have looked more forbidding.

They were mostly muffled in greatcoats, though some had sweaters or the jerseys of fishermen. A dozen pairs of eyes

regarded him sullenly.

"Good evening!" he said.

There was no reply from anyone. Drinks were held suspended in mid-air as the men glared at him. He allowed a few seconds to pass, then added:

"A dirty night, but I expect you get a lot of this around here. It's none too good on the road."

"Motoring?" came in a husky whisper from the landlord, a fat man with a bulbous nose, who had leaned over the counter and revealed two tattooed forearms of tremendous proportions.

"Yes, I've come from London this afternoon, and it's not been much fun," replied Terhune, loosening his coat.

"Then you've taken the wrong road!" rasped the man behind the counter. "You should've

kept straight on at the fork instead of turning right."

"No, I've had enough of the road for tonight. I came here purposely," admitted the visitor, wondering when the group would stop staring at him.

"I want to put up here for the night. I suppose you've got rooms?"

"Yes, but they're all occupied," snarled the landlord. "I haven't a bed to spare."

Terhune looked at the crowd about him and decided they could not be visitors. They were undoubtedly local men, and they would not be staying at the inn.

"Oh, I see, that's unfortunate! Perhaps you could direct me to another hotel?"

"All closed for the winter!" whispered the fat man. "This

is the only one open, an' I can't take you. Best get on to Portmaven. Ye'll get in there."

There were nods and grunts of approval from the bystanders, and Terhune felt an unusual surge of anger. They did not want him, that was clear.

A man with an under-hung jaw leaned towards him and jerked a thumb towards the door.

"You'd best be going right away, mister. Another ten minutes and the tide will be lapping the causeway."

"I'm not going!" Terhune heard himself saying. "I can't drive any farther tonight. If you can't find me a bed, I'll sleep on a table, on a couch, on the floor, or anywhere, but I'm not going out into that fog again."

The Inspector Of Police

EVERYONE looked at the landlord, who slowly opened a flap in the counter and came out. He was even more enormous than Terhune had believed, and must have weighed all of twenty stone.

"I told you I can't put anyone up. House is full!" he rasped, his voice never rising above a whisper. "There's no place for you here."

His attitude was threatening, but any manner less likely to intimidate Paul Terhune it would have been hard to find.

"Then the least you can give me is a hot drink and a meal," Paul Terhune said.

"I'll not do that. I've no time to prepare meals this time o' night. The staff have gone off. I've let 'em go home," whispered the man, and again the crowd nodded assent.

Terhune stiffened.

"Listen, just what's the idea? One minute you tell me the inn is full up, and that every bed is occupied, and the next you say you've sent the staff home. If that is true, I can have one of their beds. I can pay, if that's what you're worrying about."

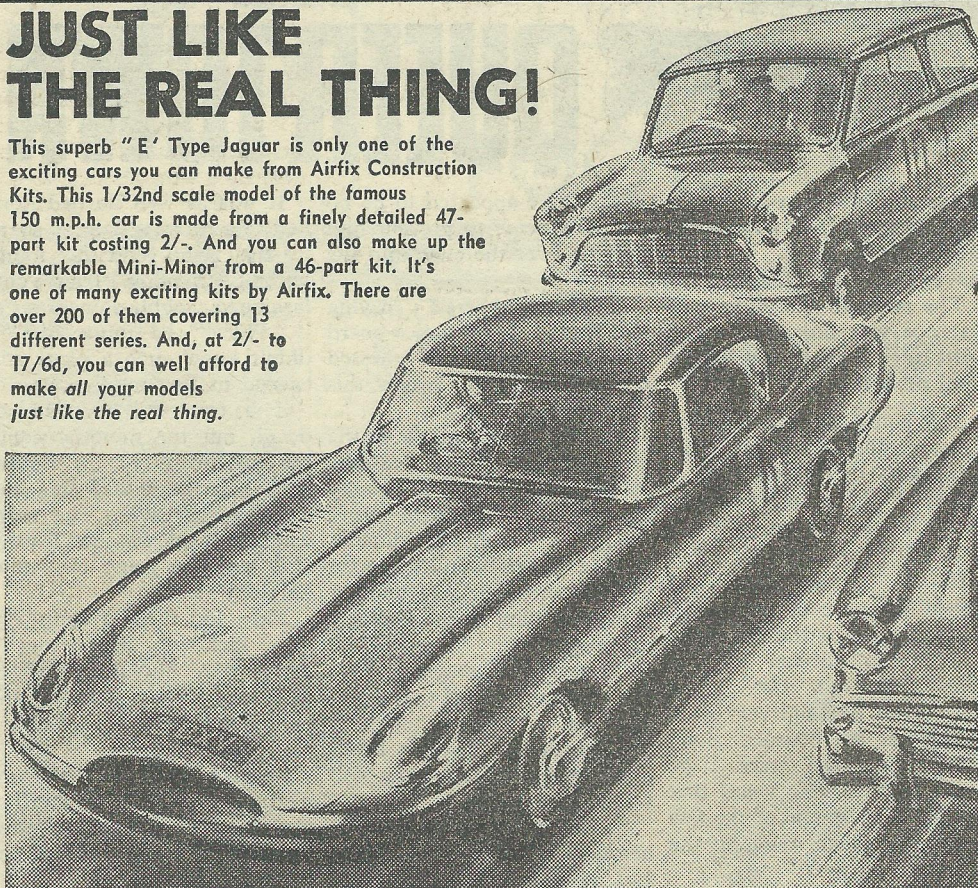
The fat man's eyes became glazed and stubborn.

"I'm sayin' there's no room for you here," he murmured huskily. "I've no time fer trouble. This is a private party."

Paul Terhune looked at the rows of ugly faces. Some of them were leering. One man

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