

had his mouth open, his jaw sagging loosely.

"Can any of you gentlemen direct me to the police station, please?" demanded the visitor. "Being licensed as an inn implies certain obligations, as you'll find out when I've made my complaint. Which way is the police station?"

To Terhune's surprise, there was a burst of coarse laughter all round. Then the landlord dropped a heavy hand on Terhune's shoulder and propelled him towards the door.

"Up the street as far as the square, then ye'll find it on the left-hand corner," he chuckled. "Ask for Inspector Thacker or Sergeant Proctor."

The next moment the infuriated traveller was out in the cold and fog, almost blundering into his parked car. More laughter sounded inside the inn.

He buttoned up his collar, and turned up the street with grim resolution. It was not worth taking his car for such a short distance. He was tingling with rage.

The police station was a massive stone building with iron bars over the windows. It did not look as though it had been altered in three or four centuries.

Just a chink of light showed where the massive, studded door was. It creaked loudly as he pushed it inwards.

"That you, Reeves?" came from somewhere on the left.

Paul Terhune walked into an inner office where a surprised sergeant was taking his feet

do what he doesn't want to do. If he says he's full up, there's nothing we can do about it."

"He's not full up. He gave himself away on that point. For some reason he insists that I go on to Portmaven. I'm doing nothing of the kind. I'm staying here the night. I've a perfect right to do so, haven't I?"

The inner door opened, and a middle-aged Inspector put out his nose. It was by far the longest nose Terhune had ever seen on a human being, though the face behind it was ordinary enough.

keeper's advice and drive as quickly as you can across the causeway before the tide comes in."

Terhune bristled. "Have you got any cells here at this police station?" he snapped, and when the Inspector nodded, Terhune snatched up a paper-weight from the desk and hurled it at a clock on the wall, smashing the face.

"Now arrest me for wilful damage, and put me in one of your cells! I'll at least have some shelter."

He had acted so swiftly, and

Terhune pulled out his wallet. "You'll find all particulars of me in there, and if you want any more you can ring up Scotland Yard for references," he snarled, and was surprised to see the Inspector pale as he snatched for the wallet.

"Scotland Yard! What have they to do with it?"

"I have many friends there. As you will see from my papers, I am a private detective. Recently I've been helping Scotland Yard. I intend to take this matter up with them when I get back.

"You know more about that inn than I do, but I'd say from personal observation that there is some special reason why they do not want a stranger there tonight.

"It's nothing to do with me. All I want is a bed, and whether it is your police cell or at the inn, I do not care."

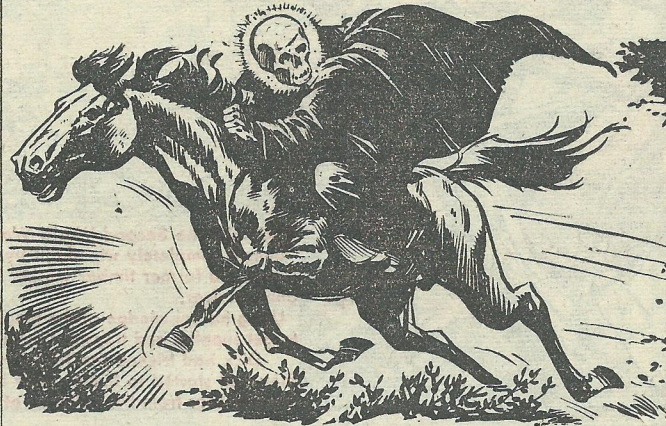
The Inspector was shuffling through the papers and cards in the wallet at express speed. He was licking his lips feverishly and when he looked up a few moments later he was showing his teeth in a wide grin.

"Forgive us, Mister Terhune! I'm afraid we tend to lose our manners down here in the winter time.

"I'll phone that landlord right away, and insist that he finds you accommodation. If he makes any trouble, I'll scare the stuffing out of him. Excuse me!"

He went back to the inner room, and Terhune heard him using the phone.

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