

He and Windle appeared to be old friends, and the landlord addressed him as "Sam," saying he had come home from foreign parts for a look round his birthplace.

"All the old residents o' Holdenwall come back in the winter," the landlord explained. "In the summer you wouldn't know the place, wi' all the holiday people."

Terhune let the conversation lapse, and as the evening was cold, crisp, and dry, he said he was going for a walk round the walls.

Hunchieg his back against the cold, salt wind, he reached the outer walls and followed the pathway which circled the town.

He was on the north side, head bowed against the blast, when he saw a light flashing on the mainland about a mile across the estuary.

He stood against a small watch-tower, and studied this flickering. He was good at Morse, and soon made out—

"ASWQP UY IKJT LMONE."

"Code!" he thought. "Someone is flashing a torch in this direction. I wonder who is reading it?"

He stepped out of the shelter of the tower with the intention of trying to see if there was any answering light, when two big hands flashed out of the darkness and pushed him in the small of the back.

Paul Terhune made desperate efforts to throw himself backwards, then to maintain his balance, but the force behind that push was too great. He

went head-first from the jetty into the water outside.

The water was shallow, but the mud clung to his knees as he tried to stand up.

He seemed to be sinking, and thought instinctively of quicksands. Swiftly he hauled himself to the foot of the wall, and tried to dig his fingers in between the blocks of stone.

Ping! Splash! Ping! Splash! He knew what those sounds were. Somebody on the wall above was shoot-

been made because he had seen those signals. Once again he wondered what they meant.

If, as he believed, the chief of the local police was concerned in this same conspiracy, it would be foolish to sneak back to the hotel and say nothing about the assault.

That would betray the fact that he did not trust the Inspector. The obvious thing to do was to report the matter without delay.

Reaching the Police build-

actually pushed you from the wall, and you came back again?" gasped the long-nosed Inspector. "Come, come, Mr Terhune!"

"It's the truth! I can show you where I went over. What's more, they fired half a dozen shots at me from a silenced gun. It was attempted murder.

"Now will you believe that someone clubbed me on the head in my room the other day?"

Thacker's small eyes surveyed the private detective, and his expression was grave.

"If this is true, it's serious, Mr Terhune, but—but are you sure you didn't slip? You shouldn't have gone up there in the dark. There's ice, and you might easily have lost your footing."

"I tell you I was pushed, and by a man!" roared Terhune. "What are you going to do about it? Who has got something against me in this town? I've never been here before. Is there a madman at work?"

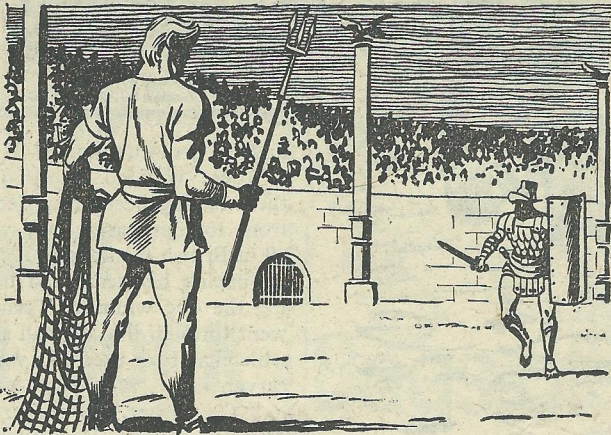
He thought that would indicate that he had no suspicions of the truth. Thacker rubbed his red nose.

"I'll see into it at once, but you must change your clothes immediately, or you'll catch your death of cold.

"Into this side room, Mr Terhune. I'll bring you a towel. There are some uniforms you can take your pick of. It's the best we can do for the moment."

Terhune was not sorry to strip and dry himself. He got into a policeman's uniform and

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ing down at him, guided by the sounds he was making.

He immediately threw himself backwards, and floated away on top of the water, careful not to lower his legs into the mud.

He heard more bullets from a silenced gun searching the black waters, but none came near him.

Minutes passed, the shooting ceased, and Paul Terhune ventured in towards the wall again.

It meant swimming in no more than two feet of water, for the sands and mud beneath that were treacherous and liable to trap him.

At last he got a grip on the wall, and raised himself whilst he searched with his other hand for a second niche.

Finally he was able to haul himself over the upper edge of the wall, and lay there shivering, with the water oozing from his sodden clothing.

He guessed the attack had

ing with its barred windows, Terhune went up the steps to the closed door and strode inside.

"Is Inspector Thacker here?" he asked, in a loud voice and had the satisfaction of seeing the long-nosed inspector himself step up from a side room.

"Ah, there you are! Thacker, take a look at me, and tell me if you need a medical certificate to prove I've been in the water!"

The Inspector goggled and gaped. He seemed very badly shaken by what he saw.

"Why, Mr Terhune, I did not recognise you for a moment. What's been happening to you?"

"I've been attacked again! I was up on the town wall, admiring the light over the marshes, when someone pushed me in the small of the back, and sent me into the sea. After that they fired at me. It was a miracle that I escaped."

"You mean to say someone

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