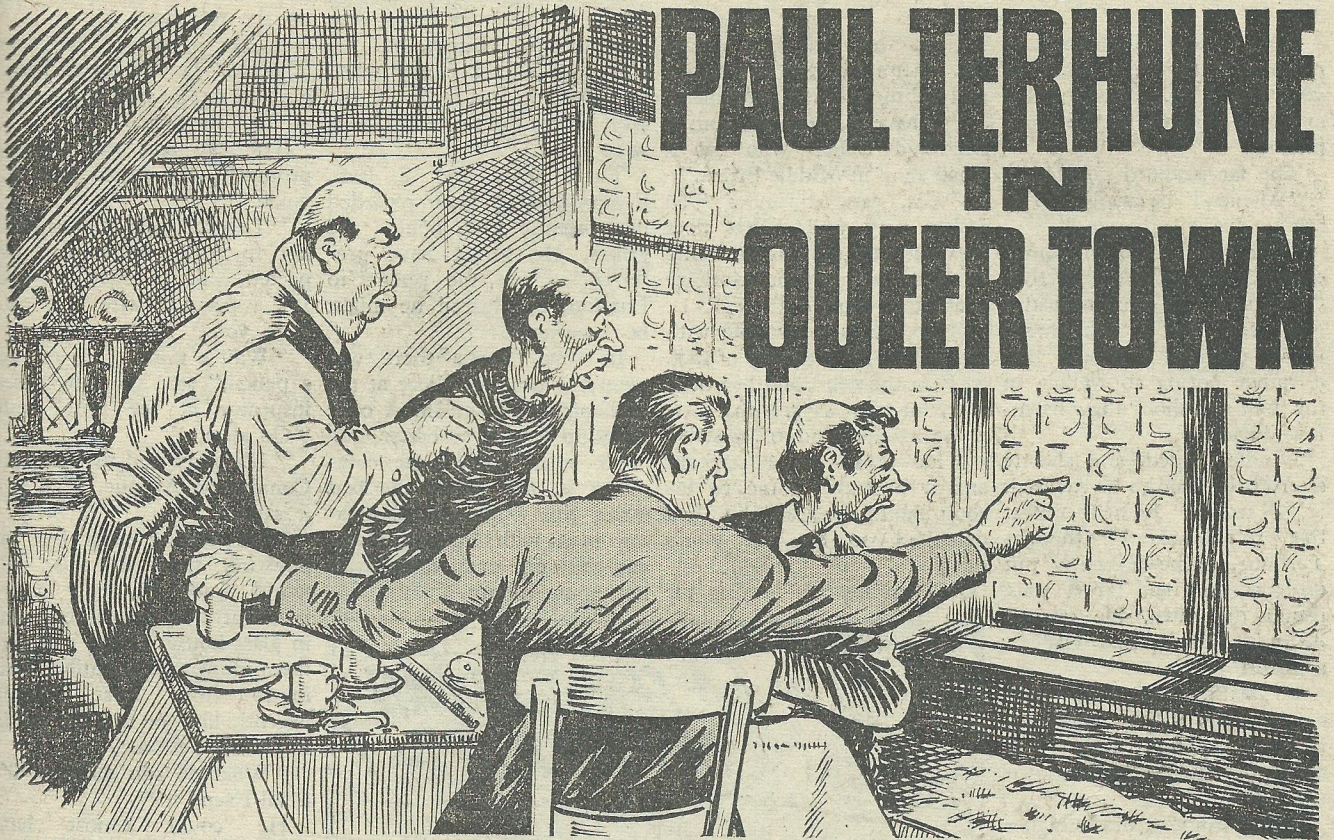


As Paul Terhune distracts the attention of his companions, he switches cups—and someone else will get the tea which was drugged!



PAUL TERHUNE IN QUEER TOWN

THE narrow beam from Paul Terhune's torch gave the only illumination there was inside the big, grim building which was the police station at Holdenwall. He allowed the light to shine into every corner of the room, but it revealed no one else.

Paul Terhune appeared to be alone on his prowling round the police headquarters. Yet he knew that a few minutes earlier a man had entered this room and vanished.

It was yet further proof that Holdenwall was a queer town in more ways than one. Terhune backed into the long corridor, and decided he had better get away as quickly as possible.

He had done what he had come there to do, and he was certain that someone had either overheard him or seen him. It would be wiser to make himself scarce.

A short, dapper, well-knit figure, he went swiftly and softly towards the massive front door which he had recently opened.

A few seconds later he was peering out into the dark central square of Holdenwall, and straining his eyes to detect any movement.

The long eaves of the houses, the cobbled surface of the streets, and the leaded windows of most buildings, gave the place an old-fashioned air. It might have been a scene from the 16th century.

Not a sound could be heard in the streets as he passed silently along them. He noticed that nearly all the inhabitants

slept with closed windows and closed shutters, and he wondered if this was because of the damp mist which rose from the marshes each night.

The Pelican Inn looked sinister and threatening in that come there to do, and he was certain that someone had either overheard him or seen him. It would be wiser to make himself scarce.

There he locked and wedged his door on the inside, and turned to the cupboard in the corner to wedge a chair under the old wrought-iron handle of that.

He knew there was a secret entrance to his room from the catacombs via that cupboard.

Only then did he undress and get into the big, four-poster bed. Warm and relaxed, he did some hard thinking.

Undoubtedly he had blundered into something inexplicable. Something illegal was going on in Holdenwall.

Just what it was he could not decide, but the Inspector of police, Panton of the big general stores, and Jim Windle, the landlord of the inn, were all in it.

There might be many others connected with the thing besides, but so far he had not discovered who they were.

He was in danger; that was certain.

THE TELEGRAM

IT was seven in the morning when Terhune wakened, greatly refreshed. He carefully unlocked and unbarred the door and the cupboard so that nothing

unusual would be revealed when Dobby, the deaf-mute who brought him his morning tea, came in at eight, then returned to bed to think out his movements for the day.

If he had been spied on the previous night, and the unknown gang knew he had visited the police station, he must look out for trouble.

"The most sensible thing I can do is to get into my car and drive away from here," mused Terhune. "I could report everything to Scotland Yard when I reach London."

Yet he knew he would not do this sensible thing. He was not the sort to run away from danger.

He compromised by deciding to send a code telegram to a friend of his in a high position in the C.I.D.

This would bring a second visitor to Holdenwall, and cause inquiries to be made about Inspector Thacker.

Another thing he had to do was to find Nelson, the solicitor. He hated to think of Ted Usher languishing in that damp cell.

Jim Windle, the landlord, was as affable as ever at breakfast time, and wondered if his guest was interested in duck-shooting, as he could get him an invitation to join a party

FOR NEW READERS.

Paul Terhune, the famous private detective, on a late holiday in Norfolk, had arrived at the lonely island town of Holdenwall.

The town was joined to the mainland by a causeway which was covered at high tide. The buildings and streets were hundreds of years old.

Terhune discovered that the town held some sinister secret shared by his landlord, Jim Windle, the local Police Inspector, Thacker, and other important people in the town.

A series of caves under the town led to some cellars. In one of them, Terhune overheard Thacker share out money and goods with one of the local tradesmen.

Terhune discovered Ted Usher, a local woodcarver, was imprisoned in the police cells. After the police had retired for the night, Terhune picked the locks and talked to Usher.

The woodcutter claimed he was imprisoned on false charges and framed by Sergeant Proctor. Terhune thought he saw someone enter a nearby room, but when he investigated he found the room empty.