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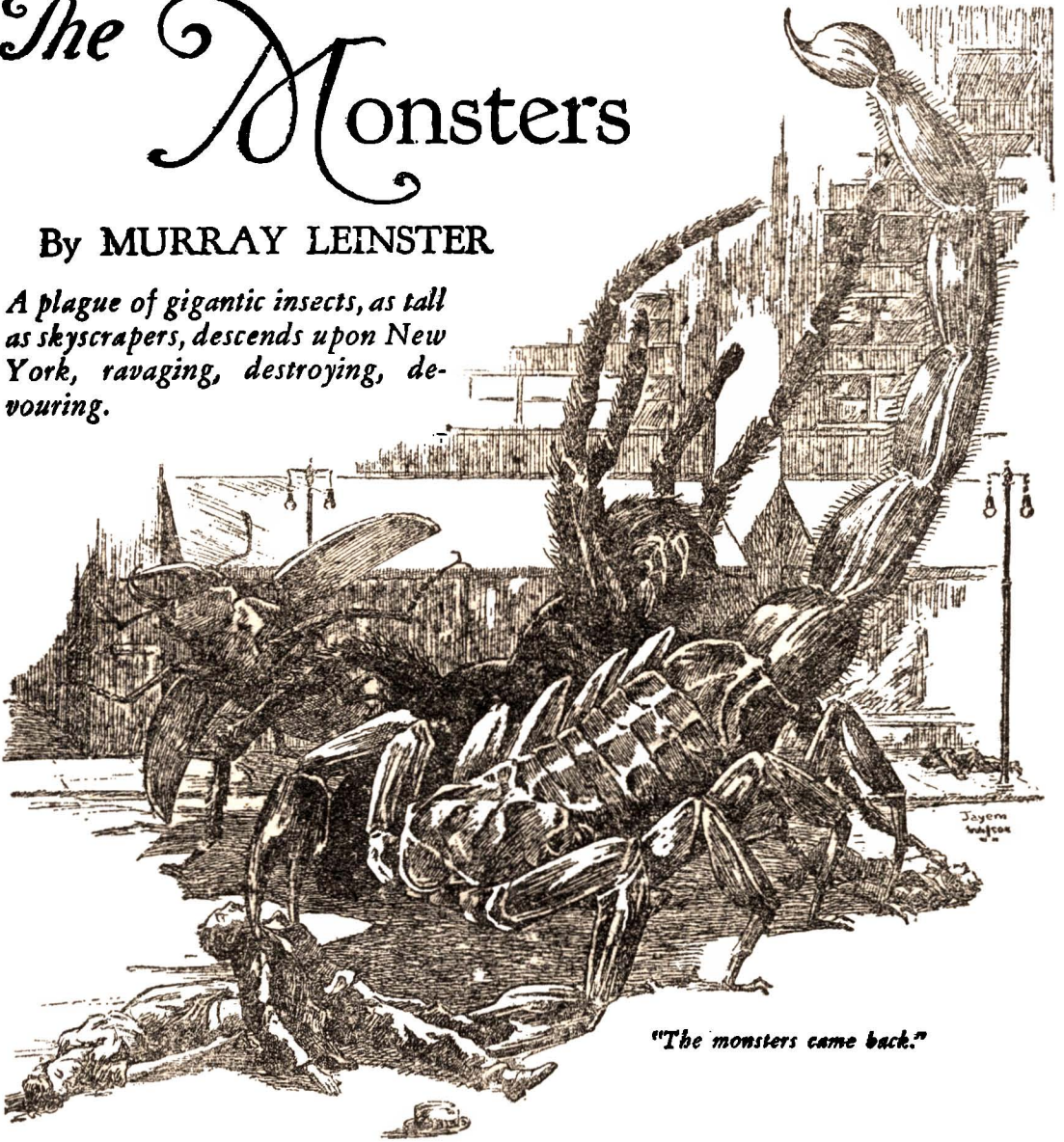
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The Monsters

By MURRAY LEINSTER

A plague of gigantic insects, as tall as skyscrapers, descends upon New York, ravaging, destroying, devouring.



"The monsters came back."

DANNY BURTON very justly has the credit of having ended the menace of the Monsters, but according to the records it was one Patrolman Schwartz, Shield 5023, who actually saw them first. On the log at his precinct station it is down in black and white: "10:16. Emergency call from Patrolman Schwartz, Shield 5023, reporting giant spider in middle of 46th Street. Ambulance sent for him, with relief."

It is fairly clear that Patrolman Schwartz was assumed to be suffering

from prohibition horrors, and that trouble was in store for him.

However, the record goes on: "10:20. Emergency call. Motorcycle Officer Casey. Giant centipede, forty feet long, outside 819 W. 53rd Street . . ." That entry was never finished, because of: "10:21. Riot call from Times Square. Giant insects attacking crowds . . ." And that was broken into by: "10:22. Ambulance and reserve call. Hoxy's Theater. Panic. Giant spider . . ." And from there the log of that one particular

precinct trails off into incoherence. The next four or five lines, as well as they can be translated from the increasingly agitated illegibility of the desk-man, read as follows: "10:24. Subway station 48th Street blocked . . . giant worm . . . moth fifth avenue sixty feet l— Bees big as cows traffic blocked fifty-seventh carried off man big beetle holy mother reserves riot guns caterpillar . . ."

There is no use following that record further. It contains no really intelligible statement for the better part of three-quarters of an hour. Then it begins, raggedly, to record the reports of police on riot duty regarding ambulances routed to divers hospitals with the number of people packed in each one, of emergency hospitals hastily improvised in smashed-open stores, and such data as must be made available to a central organizing office even while a calamity is going on. And the Monsters, even on their first appearance, did constitute a calamity. The toll of dead and injured for that first night made Danny Burton feel rather sick when he saw it in his own newspaper, and as a reporter on the *Tabloid* Danny was inured to the dishing-up of the gruesome and the lurid for the *Tabloid's* particular lip-reading public.

It may be that Danny's reaction to that casualty list was the most significant thing about the first appearance of the Monsters, though he was assuredly the last person on earth to seem of any importance in connection with them. Danny was twenty-five, he earned thirty dollars a week on the *Tabloid*, and his occupation was the uncovering of such facts as would justify the production of composite photographs to go under headlines like, "LOVE NEST RAID BARES TRAGEDY," and "RUM KING BEGS MERCY OF ENEMIES." He shared an apartment with Tommy Burns, who worked in a bank and dreamed dreams of

television apparatus, and with Dick Thomas, who kept the bathroom in a mess with his photographic chemicals. Danny, himself, cherished an ambition to write plays. The three of them were as unpromising a group of youngsters as ever failed to set the world on fire. But it happened that through Danny Burton the trio had their pictures in the papers for three days running. And, more important, the menace of the Monsters was removed.

In justice, though, we should give due credit to Patrolman Schwartz, Shield 5023. He saw them first.

OFFICER SCHWARTZ'S footsteps echoed hollowly as he strolled with ponderous tread along the nearly empty street. It was a little after ten. Behind him, the traffic on Fifth Avenue had dwindled to a spaced, separate flow of purring bodies which could even be picked out as individuals as they flashed across the street intersection. Ahead of him, an elevated train growled swiftly past, above Sixth Avenue. On either side were tall, silent buildings showing here and there a single illuminated window two or three stories up, and showing now and again a quiet, discreetly lit ground-floor space which was either a nondescript coffee-house or a tea-room specializing in privacy. A taxicab had stopped before one of these last. A girl stood abstractedly by while her escort settled with the chauffeur. A surface car rumbled flimsily up Sixth Avenue. Patrolman Schwartz paused and regarded a shop window displaying a delicately folded outfit of lingerie.

One of the irregularly spaced lighted windows above him turned dark. The light inside had been snapped out. The man and girl by the taxi moved across the sidewalk and entered the tea-room. It was also—as Patrolman Schwartz knew

with a vast calmness—a speakeasy. There was a dull, muted roar everywhere in the air. It was the voice of New York at night. The stars were dimmed by the competing glare of the city's myriad lights. Far away, over on Broadway, the corner of an electric sign winked elaborately in a wriggling pattern of colored sparks. A taxi-horn blew raucously. The air had the smell of dust and exhaust fumes and asphalt, with a bare trace of an acrid odor which was probably needle-beer somewhere near by, and altogether it was a peaceful and normal evening on Patrolman Schwartz's beat.

Then it happened.

There was a shadow overhead. Something soared in a steep arc through the air, descending. A vast bulk alighted with an utter soundlessness upon the exact middle of the pavement. There was an involved, intricate pattern of interweaving angular objects, all of it utterly without sound. Patrolman Schwartz stopped in his tracks. The street noises and the city roar were to him sheer quietness, and that quietness was utterly undisturbed. He stared blankly at the twisting, writhing pattern of tangled things. On account of their size, those things looked to Patrolman Schwartz like small steel girders—say, five or six inches in thickness. But no mass of steel would writhe and twist with such monstrous swiftness, and especially no thing of steel could move without sound. This thing was alive! But the whole affair was so completely impossible that for a moment Patrolman Schwartz was not even frightened. He was only amazed.

Then somebody screamed. Man or woman, Patrolman Schwartz never knew, but that shriek of unbelieving horror broke the paralysis that bound him. Patrolman Schwartz moved. More, he moved nearer to the writhing mass in the street. Instinctively, he clutched his

night-stick. He had gone ten paces before his eyes told him what it was he saw. He had gone twenty before his brain would credit it. He turned on his flashlight and shot its beam upon the still moving, still soundless mass. And then Patrolman Schwartz's breath left him in a choking gasp and he knew stark panic.

The weaving steel girders were legs, monstrously horned and spiked. A rounded bulk amongst them was a belly. And the legs were easily fifteen feet in length, and there were eight of them, and the belly was not less than six feet in diameter, and before the belly there was a face—Patrolman Schwartz had no impression of a head or neck, but only of a face—which was so monstrously inhuman and so inhumanly monstrous that he felt his throat working to utter a scream echoing the one he had heard a little while since. The Thing was a spider! A spider that filled the middle of the road!

There were eyes which glowed an insane ferocity. There was a slavering opening which was a mouth, and beside it ghastly feelers, clawed and jointed. And the Thing was busy with another smaller Thing beneath it, which it was killing horribly. While the policeman stood frozen, the smaller Thing ceased to kick and the Monster remained squatting upon the asphalt of Forty-sixth Street, in New York, and began to eat its prey. And there was no sound whatever. Not even the champing of jaws or ripping noises as the smaller creature was crunched and crushed and devoured.

Patrolman Schwartz had watched, paralyzed, while a giant spider bigger than a draft-horse slaughtered a smaller living thing of which he could only be sure that it was not human. But then, quite suddenly, the shaking man swore deeply. Tremblingly. Then he put his whistle to

his lips and blew shrilly. He was trembling, but he got out his revolver while he blew, and he pounded on the sidewalk with his night-stick.

Heads appeared. Somebody in evening clothes appeared around a corner.

"Get back!" roared Patrolman Schwartz. "Get back!"

There came a sputtering of motors as he blew his whistle again. A motorcycle cop. Then another patrolman, running. A murmuring noise began strangely on the seemingly deserted street. There were short, sharp little strangled cries. People saw the Thing in the middle of the pavement. They could not see it—mercifully—as clearly as Patrolman Schwartz could see it, but they felt horror. Windows crashed shut. Two more cops. Three. They goggled unbelievably at the shape they could not see clearly, when Patrolman Schwartz told them what it was.

He led the way to show them, and afterward his flesh crawled at the memory of his own daring. He went within ten yards of the feasting Thing. It lifted its Face. . . . The cops drew back, shivering.

"There's nothin' to do," said Patrolman Schwartz unsteadily, "but call Headquarters for a machine-gun. An' keep people away from this dam' thing. . . ."

The policemen shakily took up posts to close the street. Police whistles bring crowds quickly, in New York. Already there were people coming. A woman was screaming monotonously in some room above. . . .

Patrolman Schwartz made his report and was instantly convicted of having the horrors. He returned to his post and stood guard. Nothing happened. The Thing ate horribly but without a sound. If its belly had not been six feet through, if its legs would not span a circle thirty

feet across, it would have been a spider. A spider! And it paid no attention whatever to its surroundings. It feasted, terribly, upon that smaller Thing it had slaughtered. . . .

There was a stout, white-faced policeman with his revolver in his hand, watching it. There were other policemen warning crowds away from it, keeping the street clear with profanity and night-sticks—and with cold sweat on their foreheads. The giant spider ignored them all. It was feeding. And Patrolman Schwartz watched it.

He has nothing more to do with the story of the Monsters. He simply saw them first.

THE second man was Motorcycle Officer Casey. He turned into Fifty-third Street at top speed, leaning well inward. There were people coming out of that street "like"—as he explained lucidly afterward—"bats out of hell with the lid off." There was pandemonium there. Somewhere there were two houses full of people all screaming at once, and the sidewalks were streaming fleeing people, old and young, who even violated that most fundamental of all New Yorker instincts and left the sidewalks to run away in the middle of the street.

Motorcycle Officer Casey swerved violently to avoid running squarely into a hugely fat man who fled silently with fixed, glassy eyes. Figures were running toward him in the strangest, most awful panic he had ever seen. They fled like folk who have gazed into the deepest pit of hell. And save for those who still screamed monotonously, these fugitives from a yet unguessed-at terror ran in an utter panic-stricken silence.

The mob in flight thinned suddenly. Casey emerged into clear space, looking for the cause of the trouble. But he

looked through emptiness for half a block and saw the backs of another thinning mob, fleeing in exactly the same fashion but in the opposite direction. There was one human figure on the sidewalk, either crushed or fallen in the terror-ridden flight, just before the houses from which the pandemonium of a mad-house came. But Casey knew something of panics, and those screams were hysteria. They were unvarying, rhythmic—definitely not the screams of people who watch a crime in process of commission.

Casey could never tell what made him look up. It was probably a movement. But he did look up, and saw Something coming smoothly and with a queer rippling motion down the side of the house. It was all of forty feet long. Its body was not less than three feet in diameter. It was a centipede—but it was forty feet long! It was colossal. It was monstrous. And it came smoothly and with a sinuous, rippling motion down the six-story building front. The human figure lay on the sidewalk before that building.

Motorcycle Officer Casey's breath whistled between his teeth. He knew terror. Stark panic. He knew pure and unadulterated horror. When he tumbled off his motor-bike, raised that limp figure from the sidewalk, and leaped back to give the bike the gas, he was hardly conscious of the movements of his own body. He was possessed of a superstitious, unreasoning terror of the monster Thing that was only sixty feet away—forty feet away . . . twenty feet. . . . Then the motor-bike shot off like a thing possessed.

The monster centipede reached the ground, arched its body and flowed across the street—which it filled from building-wall to building-wall—and then rippled obscenely up the wall of that other building. . . .

AND then Times Square. The middle of the theater-time. Nobody can do more than guess what the death-toll would have been if the Monsters had first appeared an hour later, when the streets would have been thronged from curb to curb with crowds from the ended shows. It was bad enough anyway, though there was only a trickle of people on the sidewalks, movie-shopping, and sedentary groups outside a few of the theaters, smoking between the second and third acts. Even the vehicular traffic was light—for Times Square.

The electric signs blazed and twinkled and made those angular, jerky movements designed to invest "*Borhams, For the Gums*" and "*Ponds Clothes*" and "*Wellmax Coffee*" with the special form of sex-appeal which leads to a large and popular sale. The ground quivered now and again with the roaring passage of subway trains beneath. Surface cars crawled along with their absurd effect of being anachronisms in a modern city. Cars of every sort, with taxis predominating, sped along the intersecting streets. . . .

And then the Monsters appeared.

Nobody saw where they came from. Something vast and winged soared clumsily into view to southward, dodged the jagged spires of skyscrapers, and then spread huge wings stiffly and alighted soundlessly in that triangular concrete park which is between Broadway and Seventh Avenue just north of their intersection. There it folded its wings and was still for an instant. It was fifty feet long, and jet-black, and—it was an insect! It looked up ten feet or more from the pavement. It had colossal faceted eyes a yard or more across, which seemed to glitter in the lights about it. It had curving, tapered antennæ which quivered and moved about curiously and were nearly as long as the rest of its body.

The street noises of Times Square changed abruptly. The traffic tumult changed. Brakes squealed swiftly. A cop's police-whistle blew. There was an indecisive, milling confusion among the folk on foot. Then another Monster appeared.

This one came out of nowhere, slithering agilely down the windowed sides of the old Times Building. It was a great bulk fifteen feet in diameter with legs of an incredible vastness. It was a spider . . . And then something huge tumbled clumsily over the roof of Loewe's Theater and spread colossal wings to break its fall, and bounced hugely from the sidewalk. . . . It was a beetle, green in color, but obscenely fat. It writhed and wriggled crazily, getting itself upright again, while motorcars stopped with smoking tires to keep from running into it—because its bulk was that of a moving-van. It heaved itself erect and began to walk down the middle of Seventh Avenue in an extraordinary, machine-like preoccupation, its antennæ moving weirdly, its ghastly mandibles outstretched before it.

Then the panic really began. The motored traffic fled. The humans ran screaming. A policeman began to shoot, his revolver booming thinly through the uproar of yells and shrieks from human beings in the uttermost of terror. But a few—a very few—people looked upward at the beat of mighty wings, and saw a butterfly vaster than any man-created aircraft, soaring past in the glow of the lights below. And some people saw a creature scuttling across the roofs with an unholy celerity and told tales of its awesome aspect afterward. But just then there was only panic.

There was only one man in Times Square who kept his presence of mind for even a few seconds. He was a news photographer for the *New York Tabloid*. He had a news-camera up in an office of

the Longacre Building. He had been preparing to photograph the after-theater crowds for the Sunday rotogravure section, using the German film which is sensitive to the light of incandescent bulbs. This man snapped pictures before he fled. He got a clear picture of the monstrous spider just as it gathered itself for a leap from the Times Building. He got a rather blurry snapshot of the beetle advancing down Seventh Avenue amid the maddened efforts of those in traffic to escape. And he had packed up his films, intending to abandon the camera for haste in flight, when he saw the beginning of the battle between the giant spider and the black creature in the concrete park. He paused for one more snap. That picture is almost clear. It shows, besides the titanic struggle of the two Monsters, the first of that affray of scurrying tumble-bugs—only ten feet long or so—which came waddling out of West Forty-fifth Street.

The queer thing about the Times Square appearance of the Monsters was that apparently nobody noticed that their fight, their marching, and even the terrific battle between the giant spider and the cricket were absolutely, utterly soundless.

2

THE death-list in Times Square was long, but the appearance of a giant spider in Hoxby's Theater was a really major catastrophe. The cathedral of the talkies was full to capacity, and eighty-odd musicians were mute while Leonora Black, upon the screen, listened yieldingly to the vocal sex-appeal of a notable he-man with a dimple in his chin. A close-up of the seductive one's face, showing the dimple clearly, was on the screen at the time of the catastrophe. There was very probably an atmosphere of pure rapture in Hoxby's Theater at that moment,

with each female in the audience imagining herself the person so delectably tempted to agreeable sin.

But a movement up near the ceiling of the vast edifice brought a shrieking uproar from the top balcony. The building shook with the outcry. Then it quivered with the trampling of feet in awful, blind, unreasoning flight. And eyes in the orchestra even tore themselves away from the scene on the screen, which would presently have turned out to be quite respectable.

A spider was spinning a web up near the ceiling. There would have been nothing alarming in that, save for the fact that the spider's belly was five feet across, and that its legs were inches thick and yards long, and the web it was spinning was as large as a steel cable. But those things accounted for the panic. For an instant there was the paralysis of utter horror. And then the spider, working preoccupiedly upon its web, began to drop toward the center of the orchestra floor, clinging to the cable of web it spun behind it. . . . It dropped toward the crowd beneath. . . .

The panic which followed would have been historic had it been alone. The roll of dead and wounded, trampled on and crushed, matches the casualty list of a minor battle. But the panic in Hoxby's Theater was not alone. There was the panic in the Forty-eighth Street subway station, when a glistening yellow slug—a blind Thing—came crawling out of the uptown tunnel and squirmed up upon the passenger platform and human beings went mad with terror because the Thing was yards in diameter and blind and horrible. . . . And there was the moth that came reeling down from the sky with something smaller but still vastly terrible pursuing it, and blocked traffic on Fifth Avenue. . . . And there were the three bees—they were fifteen feet long, and

their stings were like barbed harpoons—who were reported to have carried off a man in Fourth Avenue, and a caterpillar. . . .

But Danny Burton saw the caterpillar. He was writing on a play at the time, working in his shirt-sleeves in the living-room of the flat he shared with his two friends. He was struggling with the recurrent temptation that afflicted him. Danny knew, of course, that you can be artistic, or you can be popular. And to be artistic you have to imitate Eugene O'Neill or one of a select list of other playwrights. And Danny was suffering from the urge to write this particular scene—as he had been tempted to write others—in a way that was not artistic at all, but was merely true. But he fought down the temptation and plugged on, keeping his psychopathic elements clearly in view and sternly restraining his protagonist's tendency to run away from the artistic into the authentic.

Then he heard the roar outside. It was a sort of growling tumult, interspersed with thin and high-pitched noises which sounded like women screaming. He lifted his head. Then he heard a crash. It was the sort of crash that is instantly identified. The screech of tortured metal, the metallic clamor, and then the frightened screaming of somebody who has seen an automobile accident and screams instead of doing anything intelligent.

Then, of course, there should have come a frightened hush, and afterward the hum of babbling conversation. But nothing of the sort occurred. The crash and the screaming did not interrupt the growing roar of a panic-stricken crowd for even an instant.

Danny went to the window. He looked down. The street was full from gutter to gutter. People were running away from something, eddying crazily about

lamp-posts and other insurmountable obstacles in their path. From their throats there seemed to rise a sort of composite hoarse growling sound like nothing Danny had ever heard before. There were two cars in a crazy heap, one of them turned over on its side, and nobody was paying the least attention to them or to a man who crawled out of one of them and promptly lost himself in the crowd, fleeing like the rest from the same unseen thing. Then Danny saw a girl struggling in the overturned car, trying to get out. And not one soul offered the least assistance. There was, too, a tiny wisp of smoke coming from under the hood. Fire. . . .

On the instant Danny leaped for the door. He was, of course, a reporter for the *New York Tabloid*. But also he was a human being. He flung himself down the steps in headlong dives which beat any time the elevator could have made. He arrived at the bottom with an attained velocity which sent him hurtling out through the big doorway into the street.

And even in the short time he had taken to descend four flights, the crowd had thinned. Where it had filled the street from one side to the other, now there was only a trickle of running, gasping figures. Danny saw a flare-up of flame, and dismissed all other matters until he should reach the toppled motor-car. He careened off a running figure which was panting hoarsely, each breath sounding like a croak. He raced to the car. The flame was climbing higher. It roared upward, suddenly. The girl's head projected from a window, deathly white.

"My—foot's caught!" she said quickly, though she cringed from the mass of flame now leaping up from the hood of the toppled car. "If you can—lift a little. . . ."

Danny raced to the farther side. A two-passenger coupé, turned over. He heaved mightily at the top. It lifted. There was a tinkling of glass. He smelled gasoline, pouring out. The car was a small one, and had a ten-gallon tank under the hood. That had been punctured. Then a short-circuit had sparked. . . .

Heat seared him as the spreading vapor flared in a sudden momentary blast. The girl was scrambling up to the side of the car. She half jumped, half toppled into his arms.

He dragged her away as the fire under the hood roared furiously.

"Hurt much?" he demanded.

"I—don't know. . . ." The girl's fingers tightened affrightedly on his arm. She was not even looking at the burning car, though the heat of its blazing was fierce enough for discomfort. She was looking past Danny, in the direction from which the now vanished mob had fled. "L-look!"

And Danny turned and looked. And a Thing was coming vaguely down the very center of the street. It was round and huge. It was a caterpillar. But the fur which makes caterpillars seem so soft and downy to look at here showed as a forest-like growth of slender spikes; of horns each one ten feet in length. The caterpillar was yellow, and while its body might be three yards in diameter beneath its fur, those ghastly spikes reached out and filled the narrow canyon of the street to suffocating fullness. It had eyes, huge areas of an inflamed red. It had horns, which were tufts of spiky hairs. It moved with an undulating motion upon its innumerable stubby legs and now and again it lifted its forepart and seemed to gaze vaguely about. When it did so, the furry, lateral palpi before its mouth-orifice were seen to be moving indecisively. Then it settled to the ground again and moved on. Deliberate

as its progress seemed, however, its rate of travel was swift. It was at least sixty feet long. It was moving quite as fast as a man could run.

DANNY looked once, then swung the girl from her feet and raced across the street. Flight with a girl who might or might not be able to run was impossible. Danny reached the doorway and swung her inside it.

"That—that Thing," he said unsteadily, "is too big to get in here. So—that's what the crowd was running from!"

He stared at it, unable to believe his eyes. The girl stared with him, abstractedly rubbing at her ankle. Danny swallowed.

"It might—break in," he said unsteadily, "but I—think we can get away faster than it could break down walls. Don't you?"

The girl turned her face to him. Her expression was strange, as if she doubted her own sanity.

"I—I know what it is," she said, and swallowed. "I've—raised them, for fun. The little ones. They eat peach-tree leaves. . . ."

The Thing's head was opposite the doorway at that moment. It halted, and Danny thrust the girl behind him. The monstrous multiple eyes stared vaguely all about. Each eye was a myriad eyes, but they seemed sightless because they did not seem directed. The Thing flowed on. . . .

"Gosh!" said Danny dazedly. "And I'm supposed to be a reporter! Come on!"

He turned and raced for the elevator, the operator of which was down on his knees, praying frenziedly. Danny seized the controls and shot the car upward. As it rose with a dizzy speed, he demanded again:

"Hurt much?"

"I—don't think so," she told him un-

steadily. Her mind, like his, was unable to fix itself on anything but the incredible reality they had seen. "How—what—how did that caterpillar grow? It ought to be—it ought to be an inch long! It is a giant peach-caterpillar! I'm sure! But how did it grow?"

Danny brought the elevator to a stop. It was distinctly unskilful handling. He opened the door and had to step down a foot and a half. He helped her out.

"I've got to telephone," he said feverishly. "Got to tell the *Tabloid* about it. What was the name of that thing?"

He was rushing into the still-open door of the apartment and dialing furiously, "*Tabloid?* Give me Jeans, quick! . . . This is Burton! Big story, Jeans! There's all hell loose! Panic! Mobs running around. A big caterpillar down here, as big as a dozen motor-trucks. . . ."

"*Oh, for God's sake!*" said a weary voice on the wire. "*They're all over town. Spiders. Bugs. Everything in creation. Hanson got some pictures. How many killed up there?*"

"Panic only," said Danny concisely. "Don't know of any deaths. This caterpillar doesn't eat people. It's a sort that lives on peach-trees. Giant form of a well-known insect. I've got an expert here who's raised them."

The voice on the wire showed signs of life as Danny grinned at the girl.

"*You've got a bug expert there? Pack him in a taxi and bring him here! In a hurry! We'll have him identify the bugs—*"

"It's a she," said Danny. "Hurt in a motor-car crash in the panic and can't come." He put his hand over the transmitter and said anxiously, "I say, do you know much about bugs? I just said you were an expert on them."

"I've been doing research work in entomology," the girl told him. "You

say that it's quite true that the caterpillar we saw is harmless. It eats leaves. It's a giant peach-caterpillar. It will probably smell its way to Central Park and devour the trees there. If people keep out of its way, it'll be quite harmless."

Danny relayed the information. The man at the other end came fully to life and swore bitterly because the bug expert was injured.

"I'm sending prints of the pictures we've got," he snapped. "Have her identify them. Get her on the wire. Quick!"

The girl took the receiver. She began to ask questions. Presently she said, "That must be *Mygale Hentzii*. The American tarantula. It's a jumping spider—a hunting spider. The other's a cricket, I believe. They all seem like—gigantic forms of natural creatures. I know. . . . I wouldn't believe it, only I saw this caterpillar and recognized it. Positively. . . . Yes. . . . The *Mygale Hentzii* will jump on anything, no matter what size. I—yes—I suppose it would. . . ." She shuddered. "People will be in danger from that! . . . Centipedes? Yes. . . . Mostly they live on flies, but they'll kill anything small. . . . Yes, they'll probably attack people, too. . . ."

Danny gnawed at his lips. Suddenly he remembered and vanished into the bathroom. He came back with a roll of bandage for the girl's ankle. She was just putting down the telephone.

"What's 'taking the baby out of bed'?" she asked puzzledly. "And what's a hundred-point head?"

"Gosh!" said Danny, awed. "Pulling out the forms! At a time like this. . . . I see! You gave him stuff the other papers won't have. What the dam' things really are, and what they'll do!"

"He said something about my name in a hundred-point head. . . ."

"Then you're famous!" said Danny. "D'you see? You're a bug expert, you've told him what the bugs are, what they live on, how to dodge them, and so on. They'll splash the news all over number three page. One will be pictures. Two—the horror-stuff and casualty lists. You'll get the spread on number three. How to dodge the bugs. . . ." He stopped. "My gosh!" he said unsteadily. "I still don't believe I saw it! I wonder how many there are? He said——"

"Listen!" said the girl, rather pale.

They moved to the window together. Danny opened it. There was a thin, tumultuous noise a long distance away. Human voices. Shots. Suddenly the thin rasp of machine-gun fire. The noise went on as a faint, yapping ululation. It was not alone. Somewhere else there was another tumult. The high-pitched screams of women. . . . And somewhere else still . . .

"Oh, look!" said the girl, pointing with a shaking hand.

A great winged thing fluttered above the lighted ways of the city. It was colorful and huge. Two hundred feet across or more, its wings were banded and spotted in vast areas of vivid color. Giant legs were drawn up beneath its body. Vast, gracefully arching plumed antennæ of purest gold spread out before it. And suddenly the moving beam of a searchlight seemed to streak overhead and smite the soaring thing. Its eyes glowed a vivid, dusky red. They shone like carbuncles. Like rubies.

Danny saw something vast and black and horrible leap from one building-top to another, a long distance away. But the girl's eyes were on the infinitely beautiful flying thing, soaring above a city gone mad with terror as giant insects—Monsters—made free with all its streets and ways.

"It's a Hawk-moth," said the girl

softly. "A Jessamine Sphinx. It's beautiful!"

It was beautiful. But all over the city there were outbursts of ghastly panic when some new and ever more monstrous creature appeared in a new locality. There were spiders everywhere, it seemed. Giant things which could seize upon a dray-horse as prey, and afterward crouch down leisurely beside it and extract all the juices from its carcass. There were centipedes forty feet and more in length, racing at incredible speed in quest of prey, or sometimes remaining utterly motionless as if to lure humans within reach by a semblance of immobility. And monstrous beetles lumbered here and there, and an army of tumblebugs ten feet in length scurried about in quest of food—which could only be human beings. . . .

New York was subject to an invasion never before known to man. And New York was mad with fear.

3

WHEN Dick Thomas came into the apartment, he found Danny and the girl debating anxiously, with photographic prints scattered over the table before them. Danny looked up.

"What did you see, Dick?" he demanded. "Talk for the press. Miss—Miss Adams—Miss Anne Adams. Mr. Thomas. — We're entomological headquarters for the *Tabloid*, Dick," he added. "Deciding what the bugs are, and dictating their habits and such over the phone for the edification of the populace."

"I know," said Dick grumpily. "The town's gone crazy! I saw a lot of excitement, and people throwing fits in the public streets, but I've been chasing around with a camera and that new film, and I can't see a thing to photograph but a lot of panics."

Dick Thomas had, as a matter of fact, undergone a not uncommon experience. Where the Monsters appeared, there was chaos. But the tales told by fugitives seemed so utterly incredible only around the corner from the scene of a Monster's appearance, that there were cases of perfect calmness, of complete tranquillity, in between the areas of greatest terror. More than one adventurous soul went out to get a sight of the Monsters of which even the radios were now babbling frenziedly, and wandered for hours without encountering more than the tag-end of a panic, or seeing anything more exciting than an ambulance being loaded with victims of a crash, or watching policemen subduing some unstable individual gone insane from sheer horror. Dick Thomas had searched earnestly for the source of the tumults which made the voice of the city rising toward the stars, now a frenzied ululation. And he had seen nothing whatever. He was disgusted.

"If you feel that way," said Danny, "here's comfort. Here are some prints. Still wet. Look 'em over."

The girl was regarding Dick speculatively. He picked up the slimy, glistening photographs. He looked at one and grunted. He looked at a second. The third and fourth and fifth. . . .

"Hooley!" he said. "Your filthy rag, Danny, is putting out composites! Composites! Printing photos of insects on top of photos of crowds. You didn't fall for these, did you? There are panics, yes. I've seen more cases of hysterics in the past hour than anybody outside of a madhouse ever looked at before. But these pictures—blah!"

"They're straight!" insisted Danny.

But Dick grunted and turned away. He went disgustedly into another room. He felt, at the moment, very much as a big-game hunter might feel who spent

a weary day trailing a moose, only to discover that it had walked into camp in his absence and had been shot at and missed by the cook.

Danny grinned. The phone rang. He answered and talked briefly.

"Putting your dope on the air," he announced. "Your name attached. Broadcast through the courtesy of the *Tabloid*. Nothing but spiders and centipedes are to be worried about.—Hullo!"

THE third of the triumvirate occupying the apartment came in. It was Tommy Burns, of course. His clothes were torn nearly from his body, one eye was blacked, and he had one arm in a sling made out of his handkerchief.

"You are a wreck!" said Danny. "What got after you?"

"I was in Times Square," said Tommy shakily. "Lord! Suddenly the place was full of ungodly things. Then a mob ran over me, and after that a bug that looked like a baby tank chased me. . . . I'm lucky to be alive!"

Silently, Danny extended the still-wet pictures. Tommy Burns looked down at them.

"That's it." He shuddered a little as he pointed. "I was right there. On that corner. I saw the beginning of that fight. I saw this Thing landing on the head of that one and they started fighting. Lord! . . ."

Dick Thomas came back. He was scowling.

"I was peeved," he said ungraciously. "Sorry. But those photos are composites. I'll show you. This Times Square one——"

"I was there!" interrupted Tommy, shivering. "I was right there!" Again he pointed. "Say! See that speck? That's me! Just as I started to run! That spider-thing jumped over my head! Lord! It

couldn't have been fifteen feet away. And was I scared?"

"Then it wasn't a fake?" demanded Danny. "This photo's straight?"

"No fake about it! I saw it all!"

"But it is a fake!" protested Dick Thomas. "Don't you think I know a faked picture when I see one? I know how they're done! Look here! This spider is walking a good foot above the ground in this picture. In that one he's put his foot through a bench—without hurting the bench! And that big thing, the cricket, has rolled down on the iron fence. A weight like his would crush any fence flat! But see where it seems to come out of his body? It isn't even bent by his weight! Where the picture was taken of the spider and cricket, there was no fence, nor was there any bench! And when the picture was taken of the bench and fence, there was no spider or any cricket there! There were two photographs taken at different times and places, and put together! I know what I'm talking about!"

Danny bent over the picture. He saw just what Dick was pointing out. The girl leaned over his shoulder.

"Somebody," said Dick, "cut out a picture of two bugs fighting, and pasted it over a picture of a crowd in a panic, and rephotographed the combination. That's all!"

"Only," said Tommy Burns, "it doesn't happen to be true! I was there. I'm in that photo. So were the bugs there. I don't care where they seem to be walking or what they don't mash. They were there!"

Danny put his head in his hands. Rushing footsteps sounded outside the door. A *Tabloid* photographer, with more prints, his face deathly white.

"M-my Gawd!" he gasped. "I saw—what I saw on the way here! Somethin' like a mandolin on stilts, with arms like

cross-cut saws! It was lookin' in third-story windows! A big giraffe. I snapped him, but—Gawd!"

"Give me your plate!" snapped Dick Thomas. "Come along! Develop it right now! I've got the stuff all ready. . . ."

He had snatched the other man's camera and dragged him away to the bathroom, where his array of photographic apparatus silenced all the photographer's protests. Danny dialed swiftly. In seconds Anne was talking composedly into the phone.

"Yes. . . . The beetle climbing at a wall is a picture of a sisyphus beetle. A dung-beetle. Very tiny, normally, and he will be harmless. . . . That monstrous snaky-looking thing is an angle-worm, an earth-worm, one of the *Lumbrucida*. This one looks to be a hundred feet long and ten feet thick, but it's the same creature people use for fish-bait. Harmless. The other one, that caterpillar crawling over a stalled automobile, is the caterpillar of the Tiger-moth. It's harmless too. . . ."

Tommy Burns could be heard drinking thirstily. He came back, his eyes still wide with horror. Anne hung up the receiver and turned to Danny.

"Here's something," she said queerly, "I can't make out. This picture of a Tiger-moth caterpillar with a car sticking out of its body. Nobody could fake a picture like that. It's impossible. . . ."

Danny stared at the thing. It was a picture of a caterpillar crawling diagonally across a street. It was huge; fifteen feet thick at least, and forty-five feet or more in length. And out of its body as it crawled there projected the front part of an automobile. There was no sign of a wound. There was no sign that the car was being dragged in any way. The bristles of the caterpillar's fur projected through the windshield and even through the mud-guards. But the glass, though

punctured, was not crashed. The mud-guards were not bent. The car seemed incredibly to be uninjured, save that its after part was buried in the body of the caterpillar.

Dick Thomas came out, waving a wet plate. He held it silently before Anne.

"A Praying Mantis," she said, then grew pale. "It's the most terrible, most bloodthirsty insect in the world. . . ."

The photographer flung himself at the telephone. But Dick Thomas said triumphantly:

"And it's a fake too! Look! One of its legs, that top one, is sticking right into the masonry of a building-wall! The masonry isn't disturbed! The bricks aren't hurt! And either they'd have to be crashed out, or the creature's arm would be cut off!"

Dialing, the photographer said bitterly:

"Say, maybe you know somethin', but I shot that picture through the back window of a taxi while it was makin' a mile in nothin' flat! The chauffeur saw that thing too, the same time I saw it! I didn't fake that picture! Hell! I was scared down to my lights!"

Danny rocked his head back and forth in his hands. The open window admitted the sounds of a city gone mad with fear. Anne took the phone to describe the habits and prey of the Praying Mantis, after the photographer had told a lurid tale of being chased by the monster he had snapshot. He would return with the developed plate as soon as the taxi chauffeur recovered enough to recognize money when it was offered him for the trip.

"I say it's faked!"

Dick was disgustedly pugnacious, but Danny shoved the print of the caterpillar at him.

"Tell me," he said harassedly, "how that one was faked, Dick! I've had to listen to enough photography from you

to know this simply can't be done! How did they fake those bristles puncturing that windshield and the mud-guards? The actual puncturing's impossible, but so is the faking of such a picture!"

Dick stared at the picture. His face went blank. He examined it more closely and more closely still. He even got a lens and went over it with an increasing bafflement.

"I don't know," he said helplessly. "It's a fake. It's bound to be! The state of things it shows is not a possible state of things! But I don't know how it was done. From a photographic standpoint, it's perfect."

Anne spoke suddenly.

"But we—most of us anyway—have seen those monstrous creatures. They're visible. Listen, and you'll hear the screams of people who see them. I don't think the question is whether the photographs are fakes or not——"

"The question," said Danny harassedly, with his head in his hands, "is not how the photos were faked, but how photos that weren't faked could show those impossibilities! That car growing out of a caterpillar is impossible!"

"So is the caterpillar," said Anne coolly. "So are all the monsters." She pointed to a photograph. "That's a *Mygale Hentzii*, which at its biggest is an inch and a half across. This one is forty feet or more. And there are certain things about it that show it isn't a full-grown spider! Think of that! This is a cricket, which might grow to be two inches long. But this one isn't a mature specimen either, and it's fifty feet! How did these creatures come to be magnified like that?"

Danny started up.

"Magnified! Wait a minute!" He began to pace back and forth across the room. He stopped and waved his arms. "Magnified! That's the word!" he cried excitedly. "Listen! An animal's weight

increases with its bulk, as the cube of its size. But strength increases as the cross-section of the muscles. An insect is relatively strong because it's small. Enlarge it, and its legs won't be able to lift its body off the ground. A spider as big as that one"—he pointed to the Times Square Monster—"wouldn't be able to walk!"

"But it did!" said Tommy Burns. "I saw it! It jumped half a block!"

"Another impossibility," said Danny triumphantly. "The things crawl into impossible relationships with automobiles. They jump impossible distances. They are themselves impossible. They shove their legs through benches without hurting the benches. The Praying Mantis shoved its elbow into what should be a solid mass of masonry, and neither its elbow nor the masonry is hurt. More impossibility! The pictures we have of them can not possibly be fakes, yet they show an impossible state of things. What's the answer?"

"We're all crazy," said Dick skeptically.

"And so are our cameras!" Danny struck his hands together. "Now——"

The *Tabloid* photographer interrupted.

"Say," he said bitterly, "if I'm crazy, I ain't the only one. And Jeans promised me two hundred bucks to bring those pictures here. If he's crazy, he's crazy like a fox. I got to go back, too, to earn that money!"

"The thing is," said Danny, "that Dick said those pictures were taken at different times and places. The bugs at one time and place, and the backgrounds at other times and places. He's wrong! We know that! But maybe they were taken *at one time in two places!* And the other place is magnified!"

"This business has gone to your head," said Tommy Burns. "You're——"

"Amplified!" said Danny, turning upon him. "Television!"

Tommy Burns stared. Then he stiffened suddenly.

"It hasn't been done," he said slowly, groping. "Three-dimensional pictures without a screen, in natural colors. . . . It hasn't been done. But some day it will be done. . . ."

A single voice shrieked throatily in the street outside. The photographer's taxi-driver. Danny jumped to the window as a door slammed thunderously down in the street and there was a muffled sound of some one running to hide himself in the recesses of the building.

THERE was a Thing coming down the street. It was shaped rather like a mandolin, save that so monstrous a musical instrument has never been conceived even by an advertising genius. Its abdomen was twenty feet in width, and from the forward part projected a slender, cylindrical body some four or five feet in diameter and nearly forty feet long, which ended in a head like that of a hypocritical dragon. Gigantic eyes a yard and a half across looked blackly all about. Its legs—monstrously saw-toothed—moved with an apparent deliberation, but its pace was swift because of the colossal strides it took.

"We'll try it, Tommy," said Danny grimly. "It's got to be so!"

He flung up the window to its uttermost. As the Monster passed, its head only ten feet below the level of the fourth-story window, he flung a book at it, to attract its attention. Anne gasped in horror.

But the book went through the creature's head! The heavy volume with its fluttering leaves left no sign of its passage. Its flight was not intercepted by even a trace of resistance. And the creature seemed utterly unaware of the as-

sault. Tommy heaved a second book. It struck squarely in the middle of the Monster's multi-faceted eye. It vanished behind those crystalline objects. They reappeared instantly. The book appeared again, falling and twisting. . . .

The *Tabloid* photographer was setting up his camera. Dick Thomas vanished, to reappear with a strange camera with a lens bigger than the plate it took. And suddenly a frenzy of energy seemed to possess both Danny and Tommy Burns. They flung things through the window. They bombarded the Monster in a sort of hysterical triumph. Books, magazines, stray objects. . . . Finally even a small table went hurtling through the window to penetrate the vast body of the Monster without leaving a mark or finding any impediment in it, to go crashing on down to the pavement below.

The Monster strode on, turning its head from side to side in a queer, hypocritical inquisitiveness. It had ignored the bombardment. And it vanished.

"Now we know!" said Danny in unsteady triumph. "It's a picture! A projection! Television! An image projected in three dimensions without a screen! An illusion which even photographs! But it isn't real! It can't hurt anybody!"

He dived for the telephone. He dialed furiously. And he barked his story into the transmitter and into the ear of Jeans, at the *Tabloid* office. It was not a particularly coherent story, of course, and it was almost as incredible as the appearance of the Monsters themselves. But it held together. It checked with the fact that save for a single rumor of a man carried off by giant bees—and Anne promptly negated that possibility, as opposed to their instincts—the giant insects had ignored human beings. They had fought each other. They had preyed upon one another. They had been seen to eat one another. But there were no dead

bodies of human beings save those plainly crushed and mangled by other human beings. There were no wounded, save those injured in panics. There were no missing who might not plausibly be looked for in hospitals or the like. And machine-gun fire directed upon the Monsters had been wholly ineffective. They had ignored it. Had seemed invulnerable against it. Danny's tale explained it all.

THE *Tabloid* broke a story even bigger than the coming of the Monsters had been, in a series of extra editions that came off its presses like shells from a quick-firer gun. Only thirty minutes after the Monsters appeared in Times Square, it had published pictures of them battling there. At fifteen-minute intervals it had added to the luridness and completeness of its accounts, and to the number of its picturizations. Now, less than two hours after the city went mad with terrors to which the *Tabloid* had added skilfully concocted food, the *Tabloid* broke the biggest story yet:

MONSTERS FATAL HOAX OF UNKNOWN GENIUS!

The story was wrong, of course. The second coming of the Monsters proved sufficiently that whatever the motive might be, it was not a hoax! But this headline was written after the first appearance only of the Monsters. The death-list was long, but it was exclusively a death-list from human causes. It is now thoroughly established that not one human being was actually killed by any of the Monsters on their first appearance. Enough people died in panics, and certainly a large enough number went mad from fear, but on their first appearance the Monsters did not kill anybody. They reserved that for their second manifestation.

Within twenty minutes after Danny's call, giving the news that the Monsters were phantoms only, the *Tabloid* had the radio stations announcing the news as "exclusively from the *Tabloid*." And the third extra edition after that showed a motor-car actually driving through a monster angle-worm, with the daring human being grinning as he emerged from the Monster's body. It was a shaky grin, and he got five hundred dollars for doing it after painstaking tests had proved Danny Burton had told the truth, but it was convincing. The *Tabloid's* circulation jumped phenomenally, even though there was but one "LOVE NEST RAID" headline in the whole issue, and not a single "RUM KING" episode in any of its pages. Which constitutes a record for the *Tabloid*.

But ten minutes after the radios of the city had blared out the news that the Monsters were television products, were visible pictures in three dimensions and natural colors—just ten minutes after New York heard the news, though it still did not believe it, the Monsters disappeared! Instantly. Like so many puffs of smoke. The Monster spider, feasting horribly in Times Square, one instant was, and then it was not. The giant yellow slug which writhed amid the uncomfortable confines of the Forty-eighth Street subway station, vanished like a candle-flame. The centipedes of forty-foot length, the scurrying tumble-bugs, the huge and gruesome creatures that leaped about the city's roofs—each one abruptly ceased to be.

One moment the city was listening incredulously to its radios saying that it could not believe its eyes; that its toil of dead had died needlessly; its mental breakdowns had no just cause. The next instant the Monsters had vanished,

The city breathed first a mighty sigh of relief, and then it went into a passion

of rage against the unknown man or men who had sent the plague of terror upon the metropolis. Its hospitals were filled to overflowing. Its morgues were crowded. Madmen screamed in terror that would never end. New York demanded the blood of those who had caused its madness. In part the demand was a thirst for revenge; but in part, too, it was still terror, because New York was still afraid.

And next morning its fears were justified. The Monsters came back. And they came back in a fashion which the *Tabloid* was again the first to tell of. Its extra early super-special three-star extraordinary edition unprecedentedly filled nearly half its front page with headlines instead of pictures. The headlines ran:

MONSTERS RETURN AND KILL

No Longer Phantoms!

Deadly Creatures Now Actual!

Hundreds Killed and Devoured!

The picture which filled a bare half of the front page was that of the interior of the elephant-shed in the small Central Park zoo at Sixty-sixth Street. A part of the roof of the shed was torn off. The largest of the two elephants was shown as a shrunken bulk, drained of all its fluids. Upon it squatted a monstrous, loathsome bulk. The bulk was a spider, its belly seeming swollen with the juices it had sucked from the dead elephant's body. There were few other pictures. Even the *Tabloid* could not print some of the pictures its photographers secured.

The second visitation of the Monsters had begun.

4

IT WAS bright and very sunny where Danny and Anne Adams rode in the second car of a swiftly moving cortege.

The day was perfect. Little cotton-wool balls of cloud drifted with a smug placidness in a sky of deepest and most improbable blue. New York, behind them, was now the scene of such horror as even the night before had not approached. But they had left before the Monsters returned, and on this smooth New Jersey road there was only the swiftly moving cavalcade of cars and a blue sky overhead and green things growing on either hand.

This was a sort of scouting expedition, following a line that Tommy Burns had mapped out the night before. He and Dick Thomas rode with Danny and Anne. They followed an army staff car, filled with men wearing Sam Browne belts and an expression of extreme competence. There were the crudely shaped, unmilitary muzzles of air-cooled machine-guns sticking up over the back of that car ahead. Where Danny rode, his ribs were jabbed at by one of the innumerable gadgets Tommy Burns had bought for his television apparatus and now had adapted hopefully for further use. Tommy had taken Danny's analysis of the situation, the night before, not only as an explanation of what was happening, but of what might be done about it. He had thrown together some apparatus to modify his short-wave receiver and had hooked it up on a loop for directional reception. And the previous night Tommy had searched the ether feverishly in the half-hour or so between Danny's telephoned story to the *Tabloid* and the abrupt disappearance of all the Monsters. He'd found a consistent disturbance in the ether and had plotted its line. It was that line they were roughly following now. With time in which to work, he could have moved his apparatus and secured another bearing on the transmitter he felt sure projected the Monsters, but with the disappearance of the Monsters

the short-wave disturbance broke off abruptly. Now he was talking uneasily:

"I know I didn't get the carrier-wave." He was nervous. Much depended on him. Too much. "It was too short for my outfit. I was getting a heterodyne, or a harmonic. And—well, that might not have come from one station. It might be a heterodyne from two stations, which might register the line to one station or the other, but also might register the line where the heterodyning signals were most nearly equal."

Danny frowned. He hadn't Tommy Burns' knowledge of radio, but he had heard him babble of television and radio until he had absorbed some knowledge despite himself.

"The colors were all right, weren't they, Anne?"

"Absolutely right," said Anne. She looked tired, but borne up by excitement. After the vanishing of the Monsters, she and Danny had been closeted with police officials and later with representatives of the national government most of the night. As the original discoverers of the fact that the Monsters were projections of some sort, their chain of reasoning was important. Tommy Burns had been called in too, of course, and even Dick Thomas was accepted for the time as the most available expert on photography.

Danny made a vague gesture.

"Just guessing," he said doubtfully; "to project anything in natural colors means the color-screens have to be pretty closely adjusted. And two stations any distance apart would have a ticklish job synchronizing them. Besides, the Monsters weren't projections of film. They were projected images of things that were living at the time their images were amplified and put on the air. Like television. So the chances are there was only one station sending."

Dick Thomas said curtly:

"The damned things showed up in three dimensions, though. Not even as stereoscopic images. You'd have to have projecting stations at right angles to each other to get all the details. You'd have to!"

Anne said tiredly:

"But there are two things I can't understand. All the Monsters were immature; small; not full-grown insects. Why? And they kept to the streets. Nobody has mentioned that. They couldn't see people, it's fairly clear. But they could see the streets and the buildings! If they sometimes walked one foot above the pavement, they never walked through brick walls. If they weren't material—and we know they weren't—why didn't they? They could!"

The car immediately behind them, an army radio-truck, began to blow its horn furiously. The car ahead checked. The whole cavalcade came to a halt. A uniformed man ran forward to the leading car. As he passed the one in which Danny rode he called:

"Monsters back in New York! They're eating people! They're eating 'em."

As motors cut off, a loud-speaker in the radio truck could be heard blaring throatily. A voice was audible amid the peaceful green pine-woods, deep and hurried and nearly hysterical.

"The Monsters have reappeared. . . . Every one is warned to keep to their houses. The Monsters of last night were not actual creatures, but the Monsters of this morning seem to be. They are known to have devoured nearly all the animals in the Central Park zoo. . . . It is encouraging, though, that army officers say that if they can kill, they can now be killed. Last night machine-gun bullets were of no use. Today, they can hardly fail to be fatal to the Monsters. Regular troops are being moved from Governor's Island, equipped with guns, grenades, and

flame-projectors. . . . Since the Monsters can be attacked, now, it is only a matter of hours before they are wiped out, but in the meantime, keep to your houses! Stay indoors! Do not show yourselves at windows! Make no movements nor any noises which will draw the attention of the Monsters! Then you will be safe! More troops are being rushed. . . ."

There was a click. The loud-speaker was cut off. Somebody said in a shaken voice:

"That's the general broadcast. It's lies. Here's the short-wave to Washington—and us."

A thinner, still more hurried voice began to snap crisp phrases from a smaller loud-speaker. And those phrases were horrible in their significance.

"After tearing off the roof of the elephant-shed, a Monster spider killed the larger of the two elephants and sucked it dry. The zoo was overrun with Monsters. The rhinoceros was torn to bits by what seem to have been gigantic beetles. For the first time, giant ants have appeared. They are about four feet long and are exploring the city everywhere. Several of them have been seen carrying human beings in their mandibles. . . ."

Danny felt acutely sick.

"No Monsters have been seen farther north than One Hundred Eighty-second Street," the voice went on crisply. "They have, however, showed themselves all the way down to the Battery. Also, no Monsters have so far appeared in Brooklyn, nor have any of them crossed the bridges. It is reported that one giant centipede, attacking the west-bound traffic on the Williamsburg Bridge, searched truck after truck for living beings, and about one-fourth of the way across the bridge suddenly vanished. It is believed that he was somehow destroyed, perhaps by coming in contact with a charged wire. His entire body seemed to lose all its members.

The remains were merely a horrible mass of bloody pulp. . . ."

ANNE ran away, putting her hands over her ears. Danny remained, listening resolutely, though an unconquerable nausea filled him.

Presently he went back to the car in which he had ridden, a sickly white in color. Tommy Burns was working feverishly with his short-wave radio receiver.

"It's on again!" he panted. "My God! It's trying to blow out my tubes! I daren't tune in even the heterodyned wave clean! It would blow anything! I'm all detuned, and I've got everything shielded, and still it comes through all around the compass. Go get one of those radio men from the truck back there."

Danny jerked his thumb. Dick Thomas sprinted. Danny said sickly:

"Tommy! I've got an idea! The Monsters last night were phantoms, were images, not material things. We threw things right through them, and the man who drove through that earthworm for the *Tabloid* said it was hollow inside. He could see lights. Its internal organs weren't projected. Just the outside. As if it were a balloon. So when they projected it, only the moving outside surfaces of the creature were projected. You see?"

Tommy Burns gazed at him abstractedly, his hands working the controls of the short-wave receiver.

"A mirror-image hasn't any thickness," said Danny hopelessly, "but a silvered glass ball will make images with no thickness which enclose something. Those Monsters, last night, were images with no thickness enclosing emptiness. And they weren't actual substance. If those Monsters today were flesh and blood, they couldn't walk. They'd be too heavy! But they're walking and killing things and people. So they can't be actual sub-

stance either. They can't be! But they act like it! Tommy, how is it done?"

Tommy said:

"There's power. Good God! There's more power on these short waves than I knew there could be on earth!"

"I talked to Millikan once," said Danny hopelessly. "I interviewed him for the *Tabloid*. A bunch of us, in a sort of press-conference. I had to mess up what he said. The *Tabloid* doesn't want straight science. But he said energy—power—is just another form of matter, for substance. My head's working over its head, Tommy. I'm drowning in stuff I'm trying to get straight. But a magnetic field acts like a substance. Like an elastic band, pulling things toward itself. Or pushing them. Only it isn't a substance. And a magnetic field hasn't any surface. That's why it reaches out and pulls and pushes. Tommy, if a magnetic field had a surface, it would act exactly like a substance. . . . My God, Tommy! Those damned things are killing people back in New York! They're killing them! And eating them!"

He wrung his hands. Dick Thomas came back with a man from the radio truck. The radio man was white and sick like everybody else. Dick Thomas stared at Danny, wringing his hands.

"What you got?" demanded the radio man of Tommy Burns.

"Power!" said Tommy bitterly. "Those short waves are on and I can't tune them in for directional because if I do they'll blow my tubes. Everything! I'm tuned somewhere near a heterodyne wave now, and it was only half a meter yesterday. But if I tune it in, I'll blow everything! And I've got to tune it to locate the damned sending-station! You see?"

The radio man pulled himself together.

"Let's look." He plunged into an inspection of Tommy Burns' apparatus. It was home-made, and there were make-

shifts which the army man, with an army man's bland indifference to expenses paid by the government, felt a sort of scorn for. But it was receiving on half a meter wave-length, and there are not many receiving-sets which can go down to half a meter. Which called for respect, too.

Anne caught at Danny's arm.

"Danny!" she cried desperately. "What's going to be done? We've got to stop it somehow. . . ."

"Have you any people back there?" asked Danny in sudden terror. He had no idea why he should be more concerned about possible relatives of Anne than any other people, but it was so. He had been with her for sixteen hours, in which time they had talked constantly at fever-heat of things entirely apart from themselves. There had been no mention of personalities at all. But now Danny said anxiously, "How's your ankle where the car caught it? I forgot to ask."

"I'd forgotten all about it. It's all right. And I haven't any people anywhere. But Danny! How is that thing—those Monsters—going to be stopped?"

There was a milling, helpless confusion about the radio truck. These cars had started out rather hopelessly to scout along a line Tommy Burns had laid out. It had promised little to begin with. Now, with the Monsters again in New York, it promised less. It was a bearing, within three degrees, of the sending-station of the Monsters. But they had come twenty miles from New York with no sign of anything they could investigate. And a three-degree arc in twenty miles amounts to a good-sized slice of territory. Here it would be an area at least two miles wide, in any hundred-yard space of which half a dozen concealed stations might be hidden. And this part of New Jersey was wooded and not thickly settled. . . .

The men who had set out not too

hopefully now listened helplessly while a loud-speaker told them that the Monsters were no longer phantoms, but ghastly reality. While it told them of a tenement-house invaded by three of the smaller Monsters—spiders with bellies only a yard across—and of the holocaust there. Of a giant Praying Mantis which stood in its unspeakable "spectral attitude" athwart a street filled with a fear-maddened mob of fugitives, and of what the giant creature did when the mob tried to flee. . . .

The loud-speaker went on, drearily. The armed party listened helplessly, sick with rage and horror. The radio man with Tommy Burns suddenly spoke in a tone of inspiration.

"Say! Half a turn of the lead-in around a soft-iron core! That'll damp the stuff. Try that. Then a full turn if we need it. Come on!"

Danny and Anne and Dick Thomas stood helplessly in the sunlight. It seemed to them as if over the miles of distance separating them from New York they would hear the screaming noises of the city. The city, in a frenzy of despairing horror while the Monsters overran its ways, would be uttering a million-throated cry of despair. . . .

"I've got to talk," said Danny unsteadily. "I know it won't do any good. This stuff is over my head. But—I think better, talking. If—if a magnetic field had a surface, it would act like a substance. D'you see, Dick? I'm trying to think. . . . Those Monsters are projections like motion-picture projections. Only they must be television projections of living things. Something is focussed upon the city, to project amplified images of creatures in another place. . . ."

"It would take an aplanatic lens," said Dick wearily, "for depth of focus. I don't know anything about the radio stuff. . . ."

"And I said a magnetic field with a surface—a definite surface—would be like a substance except it would be invisible. . . ."

"Not necessarily," said Dick wearily. "Magnetism affects light. It shifts the plane of polarized light, anyhow. They've made cameras to photograph different stages of an electric spark by using that principle."

"Maybe—maybe it would even be visible!" Danny struck his hands together. "Something which looked like matter and felt like matter, but wasn't anything but a field of magnetism! If they could project magnetic fields, Dick! If they could! Which would have surfaces! When they were brought to focus they'd be visible, because then they'd have surfaces; and having surfaces, they'd act like substances! Out of focus they wouldn't! That's it! D'you see, Dick?"

"But they wouldn't be material," said Anne drearily. "They couldn't eat people. . . ."

"With a certain strength of field," said Danny eagerly, "they'd just be visible! Like a soap-bubble! They would reflect light as a soap-bubble does, and offer no more resistance to puncture! If those phantom Monsters had been soap-bubbles which reformed after they broke, we'd never have noticed so slight an appearance of substance! We wouldn't! A slight magnetic field, with a surface. That's all they were! And the Monsters that eat, they're fields, too, only their field is stronger. They resist puncture. They're amplified magnetic fields, images of the actual insects wherever the damned things are being broadcast from, but images which resist puncture——"

"How do they see people?" asked Anne wearily.

Danny was taken aback only for an instant.

"If the devils who're doing this can

project a magnified magnetic-field image of an insect for people to see, why can't they project a reduced magnetic-field image of people for the insects to see—and try to devour? It's television! Television field-images of the city, in miniature, for the insects to crawl over, and television field-images of the insects to prey on the city. That's why the pictures were wrong! That's why spiders walked sometimes a foot off the ground! Why that Praying Mantis stuck its arm into masonry! The images didn't exactly coincide! And it didn't matter, then, because the fields were weak. . . ."

"Crazy," said Dick Thomas hopelessly.

But Anne's eyes glowed into Danny's.

"I think—I think——"

TOMMY BURNS suddenly yelled with joy.

"We got it! We got it! There's the line!"

There was a roar from the men who had gathered about the radio truck. Helpless, because depending upon a single bearing and that not made with any instrument of precision, they had been stunned by the messages that were coming through. Futility seemed to paralyze them. But now a new reading of the sending-station's bearing tuned their horror into rage, their feeling of helplessness into fury, and the paralysis that came of a conviction of futility turned into a hungry hatred that sent them racing to their places.

"Over there!" Tommy Burns was saying vengefully to the officer in command of the whole expedition. "That's the line, exactly! We had to take a turn and a half of the lead-in to choke down the power so we could use a directional on it. We checked up on three different wavelengths—I think one heterodyne and two harmonics. They all point the same way.

And it can't be far! It can't! That stuff was too powerful!"

The officer had his map spread out. He was checking up by compass and his present, known location. The line, drawn on the map, was wholly clear. It started at a thread of solid black which indicated a double-width concrete road, and it went past a church, and across a space some two miles in width on which each feature of the ground was indicated with the minuteness of a modern topographical survey, and then it passed through the dots which indicated a straggling small town, and then another, and another. . . .

"With the power you talk about," the officer said crisply, "they'd be fools to shoot it in concentrated form through a town. It would lose a lot and possibly start fires by heating up metal objects. So it probably isn't beyond here"—his finger touched the first town—"and if it's a radio wave, no matter how short it is, common sense says they're not broadcasting it from down in a hollow. So. . . ." He traced contour lines with grim care. "The chances are it's on this particular hill. Two miles away. An isolated spot. Not even foot-paths are shown on the map, here."

He blew his whistle shrilly. Men raced from the different cars and snapped to attention. He pointed out the objective.

"The chances are twenty to one that the Monsters are being produced, somehow, and flung into New York from right here!" he told them. He did not know, of course, of Danny's reasoning and conclusions. "If we smash that place, we prevent more Monsters going to New York. Here are your orders."

He gave them, very grimly and very precisely. There were six cars besides the radio-truck, and they would approach the place from six different directions.

"Use your heads," he said savagely. "I

don't care how you get there. If there's resistance—and there probably will be—smash it! But the most important job any man of us ever had is smashing any electrical apparatus in that place! You can figure that every minute that's wasted costs lives behind us. Smash things! Stop that outfit from working! Pulverize it! Now move!"

A car pulled out of line and streaked away. It had machine-guns and gas-bombs, and it contained eight men. A second car roared away. The armored car—fourth in line—rumbled and growled and suddenly swung off the concrete and surged away on a dirt road which should lead it finally to meadowland and rolling hills, unwooded if the map was right. One by one, like shots from a gun, the cars flashed out of sight to take up their posts. The advance would take place from all directions at once.

"Now, wait a minute," snapped the officer. "You radio men, send this stuff back. I don't know what's waiting for us. We may not get back ourselves. Miss Adams, you'd better stay behind here. A car will probably come along and pick you up sooner or later. I don't know why you were allowed to come anyway, though you're better off than you would be in New York."

"I shan't stay back," said Anne coolly. "A car might come. But also, if Danny's right, they might be sending Monsters. He knows how the whole thing's done, now. And if they think of looking here, they can see us."

The officer stared sharply.

"If you have any ideas," he said urgently, "you'd better send them right away. We'll be late!"

"It may be nonsense," said Danny uneasily. "But anyhow——" He went dubiously to the radio truck and talked doggedly into the microphone. He finished.

"It's worth while trying an electro-magnet on one of the Monsters, anyhow. If it's what I think, the Monster will be caught and held just as if it were a mass of iron."

"Now send my report," commanded the officer, "and then follow us if you can. Keep transmitting and telling what you see. We're off."

The two remaining cars shot into motion. A mile, two miles, and then down a dim path, through dense brush which the massive vehicles crushed beneath them. There was a tearing rattle in the air before them. A machine-gun. Suddenly there was a sharp concussion. The spitting of rifles and the dull booming of gas-bombs. And also there were one or two outcries, of men in the presence of death.

With a rush, the two cars plunged ahead. The thin brush parted and dropped behind. Then they saw the battle. It was such a battle as had never before taken place on earth.

5

THERE was a long, low structure sprawling out over the top of a not very steep hill. There were trees growing about it, and it seemed a pleasant place at first glance. There was a rather old-fashioned building which looked like a dwelling-house, and an elongated addition which was much more modern. The addition seemed to have a glass roof. And there were the remnants of flower-beds, wholly neglected, and signs everywhere that this place had once been the center of a small country estate such as every New Yorker some day hopes to retire to—and can not endure when he tries it.

But that was merely the background; a sort of backdrop of peaceful open country which formed a frame for—Monsters.

When the car in which Danny and the

rest were riding came careening out of the surrounding brushwood, a machine-gun was rasping fiercely over to the right. An armored car was rocking and lurching and rolling into view from the left. And three other cars were breaking cover within sight. They were plunging for the building upon the hilltop. And Monsters converged swiftly to attack them.

Nowhere did the Monsters reach such monstrous bulk as here. The giant tarantula which sprang upon the armored car had a belly like a balloon. Its legs were like masts. It covered a hundred and fifty feet in one vast leap, and then flung itself ferociously upon the car which because it moved must be prey. The armored car crashed into the descending mandibles, a three-pounder gun booming desperately. A machine-gun—two of them—roared frantically. And then the armored car was a puny thing of crushed metal which the titanic Thing out of hell was mouthing at, scratching with its monstrous fangs to puncture and drain out the juices all things which moved should possess. . . .

The Monsters that whirled upon the other cars and ran with incredible swiftness to attack them were not so huge, but they were huge enough. In seconds the car to the right, racing on with spitting machine-guns, seemed to be buried beneath vast bulbous bodies which fought first to seize it, and then fought each other. . . . Something long and jointed arose, glistening, and waited with a cunning immobility for another car to come within its reach. . . . And that car swerved madly, lurching and bouncing upon the uneven ground, and raced alongside the Monster's body, raking it with a furious blast of fire. But as it raced on, bound for the building on the hilltop, the Monster whirled like a flash and leaped after it. . . . And a centipede fights not only

with its jaws, but with every barbed and spiked joint of its many, many legs. . . . It was standing over the overturned car when a spider leaped upon it and the two vast Monsters battled terribly above the car. . . . A machine-gun began to spit hysterically from the wreckage beneath the gigantic, horrible forms. . . .

These things happened in seconds only. Danny saw them in single, isolated flashes. The terrain was alive with Monsters, of every conceivable form, of every imaginable sort of ghastliness. There were two Things fighting insanely a hundred yards ahead. There was something else feasting horribly upon the still-writhing body of something else more horrible still. . . . A Monster caterpillar was flinging its body about spasmodically while a Creature all legs and hellishness slashed and slashed and slashed at it. . . .

"They—can't smell," said Danny from a constricted throat. "They jump at people because they move. But they can't—smell! They *can't!*"

Anne's grip of his arm was terrified and tight.

"N-no insect would attack a thing that—didn't smell like food and didn't move!" she gasped.

"If we're attacked," barked Danny, though his voice was unsteady, "if we're attacked, stop the car and everybody sit still!"

Anne screamed. A leg, a monstrous, saw-toothed leg the size of a girder for the hugest bridge ever built, descended before the car. There were other legs all about. They moved and quivered with a horrible life. The Thing was huger than any elephant. It was huger than any imaginable animal. It was more vast than the ancient reptiles. It was unbelievable. It was impossible. It was——

Monstrous palpi seized the car. It stopped. The chauffeur became a frozen,

unreasoning statue of pure fear. He sat with brakes on, his eyes wide and staring. . . . And then there was a mighty impact somewhere near by, and a terrific, soundless battle went on above. . . .

Danny had hit on the essential weakness of the Monsters as means of defense for the house upon the hilltop. They could not smell. All insects live by their sense of smell vastly more than by sight or sound. And incredible as it seemed, the slaughter of human beings by Monsters was murder done remotely. The Monsters which ravaged New York were enormously magnified images of tiny creatures many miles away. Those images possessed, not actuality, but surfaces which resisted deformation. They duplicated the movements of their minute originals. And those minute originals saw the enormously ensmallled images of people—which images also possessed surfaces—projected in their midst from many miles away. Just as the Monsters, to the human beings in New York, lacked the attribute of sound which would have made them wholly real, so the images of human beings lacked the attribute of smell which to the insects would have made them wholly real. The tiny insects attacked the human images—and the Monster images attacked the human beings—simply because they moved; through the same instinct which makes a dog leap at a motor-car because it moves.

In a city full of people who would be hysterical at sight of the grisly creatures, the Monsters were a real and a terrible menace. When crowds saw them, they fled. When creatures fled, the Monsters attacked. But here, used as a means of defense for the house on the hilltop. . . .

THE unthinkable battle above the motor-car surged away. There were creatures bigger than houses in this bat-

tle to the death, fighting with an unspeakable ferocity in an absolute absence of sound. But somewhere, men made noises. There were scattered, useless shots. Somewhere a bomb went off. Then two grenades. Then a man screamed. . . .

The chauffeur shrieked and bolted. He fled for the seeming safety of the woods behind. And Something soared through the air in a deadly leap and fell upon him. . . .

Danny scrambled into the driver's seat.

"Keep still!" he said between his teeth. "Anne, for God's sake, don't move!"

Gigantic, multiple eyes stared down at the car. A huge, an incredible limb reached out and touched the hood. Horror bordering upon insanity filled those within it. But there were only four, now. Danny and Anne and Tommy and Dick. They were motionless; perhaps with iron self-control, perhaps paralyzed by fear.

But Danny's voice went on, steadied now and commanding.

"Keep still! Keep still! The beast's just curious! We haven't any smell, to him. He'll think we're pebbles. . . ."

The Thing moved away, seeking food. . . . And Tommy jammed in the clutch and shot the car twenty yards ahead. But he stopped again as Something leaped. . . . And the Horror felt of the car, and smelled of it, and it had no smell. . . .

A machine-gun was still going desperately. But its bullets were useless. Worse than useless. The Monsters were surfaces only. Their inward organs were not projected. The bullets tore through the outer surfaces—which closed behind them!—and tore through the farther surfaces, and did not harm the actual insects. The bullets penetrated only pseudo-actual images. The actual insects were in that long, low building on the hilltop. . . .

It seemed that centuries passed while Danny crept toward the hilltop. A centi-

pede crawled completely over the car, while it was still, and did not harm it. Two monstrous beetles, fighting furiously, bumped into it and nearly toppled it over. Three separate times small scuttling spiders—their bellies were only feet in diameter, instead of yards—investigated the thing which had moved; their fangs bared, their fiendish small eyes glowing evilly, and went away in quest of something which both moved and smelled of food. . . .

And suddenly there were no Monsters near by. A machine-gun rasped, and broke off. A revolver popped empty. Grenades and gas-bombs exploded futilely. . . . But the car Danny drove was near to the long low building which looked as if it had once been the center of a country estate such as New Yorkers dream of and can not endure. No more than fifty yards to the front door. No more than thirty! There was a man by the door, watching the Monsters. He was grinning nervously. . . .

"They can't come here," said Danny. His voice shook horribly. "They aren't focussed on this place. That man—I'm going to kill him! Tommy, you go in and smash things. Help him, Dick! I'm going to kill that man. . . ."

With a roar, the car leaped forward. It crashed through weedy, neglected flower-beds. It smashed down a fence. It plowed through soft ground and the man on the porch gasped frantically and turned to face them. He gaped at them incredulously. It was not possible that any living human beings could have crossed that area in which mountainous deadly things fought and battled and slaughtered every living thing. . . . Then he cried out and snatched an automatic pistol into view. He fired hastily, already swinging to flee into the house. . . .

And Danny leaped from the car not

fifteen feet behind him and shot him down—and a man screamed horribly, off among the Monsters—and then in a cold passion that was pure horror expressed in action, Danny pumped his weapon empty into the toppling, spasmodically jerking figure. The last two shots were fired into a form that kicked convulsively upon the floor of the porch.

Then Danny stooped and picked up the weapon with which the other man had shot at him.

"He killed God knows how many people in New York," he said steadily. "Come on! There may be more of them."

THE other two were leaping behind him. They flung themselves at the door. It flew open with an effect of anticlimax before them. A loud humming noise beat upon them from within and they went savagely toward it, weapons out and ready.

A second door. They crashed it in. They were in a great clear space, made evidently by tearing out floors and partitions in the old-style house. There were great glass tubes in which wires and grids showed themselves distorted and strange. There was a flickering blue light which beat upon a queerly shaped grid which was black in itself, and yet seemed to emit an indefinite reddish glow, and all of this was enclosed in thick glass. And there was a huge coil, more than man-height high, from which the humming noise came. There was a feeling of power, of incredible power, quietly at work amid this humming noise. But there was no other human being in sight.

"Smash things!" said Danny, in a tone of ice. He fired at the glass plates about the blue light. A crack leaped across the glass. Air whistled as into a vacuum. The blue light grew fierce. The reddish glow became a savage flame. The humming

noise from the huge coil grew louder until it was a roar, then a thunder, and then an unbearable tumult. The glass tubes glowed iridescent. The elements within them became incandescent.

"You've shorted it!" panted Tommy Burns.

Dick Thomas flung open a door. Something stirred within it. Dick Thomas fired grimly, and a choked cry followed. He plunged in and came out again, stuffing a welter of papers and photographs into his pocket.

"Nothing more there," he said composedly. "Just one man. I killed him. Let's look this way. I've picked up some photos that ought to be good."

The roar from the coil in the corner was now an insupportable din. A figure ran into view, and Danny whirled. But it was Anne.

"What's happened? Are you—hurt?" Only the thin tones of her voice could be heard above the uproar, but the terror in her eyes was only for him. Danny caught her hand.

"This way!" he roared, trying to make himself audible. There was still the long, glass-roofed shed to examine. He plunged for a doorway seeming to open there. Subconsciously, he knew that the coil in the corner, from which all this din was coming, was beginning to smoke. It was heating from the passage of an unimaginable current through its winding. The roar it emitted was become a bellow. Later on, of course, it was decided that this noise came from the alterations in the volume of its armature under a varying magnetic field. And the estimates of the magnetic field necessary to produce such changes of volume led to estimates of the amount of power available in this laboratory of the Monster-makers. But now, of course, it was merely a thing

which cried out as if in anguish, and its coil smoked and heated. . . .

A door slammed upon the uproar and lessened it a little. And now the four of them were in a place amazingly different from anything they could possibly have foreseen. It was a long shed, plank-walled and glass-roofed. There were two tables on which were flat things of shining metal, and there were gigantic frames of metal which held plates of some black substance near those tables. There were innumerable tiny boxes upon shelves along the wall, and each one was faced with wire gauze as if to serve as a cage for something very small indeed. . . .

Something exploded in the room they had left. Smoke shot upward, visible through the clear glass roof. But in this long shed there was a queer, fictitious tranquillity. Danny searched for human beings. There were none. Dick Thomas gripped his arm suddenly and pointed to the black plates within their frames.

"Those black things!" he shouted. "They're lenses! They don't focus light but they're lenses! Look at their curvature!"

"We'll smash 'em," snapped Danny. He sprang to the supports. But the supports were massive. There were micrometer-screws and vernier dials. Dick Thomas came quickly.

"Throw 'em out of focus!" he panted. "Don't destroy them! Throw 'em out of focus! That'll stop the Monsters!"

"You do it!" commanded Danny. He turned to survey the tables. Dick would know more about lenses than he would. He felt Dick moving frantically. He knew that things moved. But Danny was staring at the gleaming sheet of metal on the larger table. It was twenty feet long and five wide, and the white sheet of metal . . . was a city! A city in miniature, made all of gleaming metal!

There were streets and houses, unbelievably tiny and incredibly perfect. Windows, doors, pent-houses and even chimneys, with impossibly thread-like projections that were flagpoles, and gossamer webbing that were fire-escapes. And in the streets there were cars and trolleys, and even infinitesimal scratches that must be trolley-tracks, and specks that would be—that must be—human beings. A roughening of the pavement in what would be Union Square. A crowd. A string of specks in orderly array along what would be Riverside Drive. Automobiles. . . .

At first glance, Danny knew that he was looking at a model of New York. But such a model! *And over it crawled a multitude of tiny insects! Minute hunting-spiders, questing mites to devour. Baby centipedes, in search of things more helpless still. The model of New York was swarming with miniature hunters, puny demons of ferocity—and it was the many-times magnified and amplified images of these small creatures which made the actual New York a hell of terror!*

Danny reached out his hand—and jerked it back.

"Smash those lenses, for God's sake!" he said hysterically. "I could smash the Monsters with my fingers, but I'd wreck the city doing it!"

HE HAD reached out his hand to kill a speck of a spider which was busy upon that narrow ribbon which was Riverside Drive. And he knew that if he did, a many-times-magnified image of his hand, with perhaps millions of times the strength he exerted, would reach down out of the sky and crush buildings, human beings, and the very ground itself!

"I've—got them off!" panted Dick. "They're heavy!"

The lenses crashed to the floor, loosened from their frames. And suddenly a monstrous detonation sounded beyond the door through which they had entered. Flames spouted beneath the door itself. The column of smoke visible through the glass roof was a dense black cloud.

"Power's off," said Tommy Burns, his teeth chattering. "I—I saw it go! Lord! The power they had. . . . We've got to get out of here! That fire's coming through!"

There was smoke already seeping into this place. Danny gazed swiftly all about. The smaller table, with its smaller set of black, opaque lenses. . . . He raced to it. There, in gleaming metal, was the infinitely tiny replica of the building they stood in. Its own structure was fenced in by wire gauze. A second fence of wire gauze extended in a larger circle outside it. And between the two rings of gauze there swarmed a multitude of small and battling creatures.

"The Monsters we came through," said Danny, sick. "They projected 'em right around themselves when they saw us coming."

The smoke was thicker. Much thicker. Danny took out his pen-knife, suddenly, and set to work. The metal was soft. He dug. The smoke grew strangling. A door was open somewhere. There was no longer the humming roar from the coil in the other room. That was silent, now. Instead, there came a vast crackling and the roaring of a fire feeding upon something infinitely inflammable. . . . The door burned through. Tongues of flame leaped into the room.

"Come on!" shouted Tommy Burns.

Danny had stopped by the larger table. Some one materialized through the thick smoke. A hand grasped his arm. It was Anne.

(Please turn to page 143)

The Monsters

(Continued from page 30)

"Danny!" she cried. "Come on! Come on!"

"Just a moment," said Danny. "Let me present you with the Empire State Building. I'm taking the Chrysler Building for Tommy and the Metropolitan Museum for Dick. . . ."

Seconds later they dashed out of the door as flames began to roar furiously behind them. And Danny stuffed certain fragile but perfect miniatures of giant buildings into his pockets as the commanding officer of the expedition staggered up to him. He was horribly mauled and torn.

"You—you got them?" he asked thickly. "We were—fighting the damned Monsters. Half my men are killed. More than half. But the Monsters vanished. . . . You got them?"

"We did," said Danny grimly. "We smashed up the whole outfit, killed two men and——"

Anne wavered a little on her feet and went off into a dead faint. And Danny dropped all other matters to attend to her.

EVERYBODY knows what happened next. The Monsters disappeared from New York as the laboratory on the hilltop was smashed. Danny and Dick and Tommy Burns were heroes, because they alone — with Anne — had won through the defending hordes of Monsters and smashed the Monster-makers' projector. And Dick, having swept photographs and papers from a desk in the power-station, produced documents which told of the immediate purposes of the sinister geniuses who had built and operated that place. Their immediate purpose

was, of course, a vast hold-up. The City of New York was to be held to ransom. The letter making the demands of the Monster-makers was ready to mail, and it is on display in the Metropolitan Museum together with the tiny metal replica of the Chrysler Building and the Museum itself. Nobody knows how those models were made, except that Danny has suggested that if one projected a magnetic-field image of a city and then poured molten metal into its hollow interior, if the metal were sufficiently fluid it would produce a perfect casting of the city. That is probably as good a guess as any.

But nobody knows—yet—how the Monsters were made. There is just one clue available. When Danny gave Anne the Empire State Building—some four inches tall—he put something else very carefully into a box lined with cotton-wool. Later, he put that away in a safe-deposit box which he rented at the extravagant outlay of seven dollars for the year. And Anne knows what is in the other box and why he put it away. That is the clue to the method of making the Monsters. She kissed Danny rather more worshipfully than usual when he explained it to her. . . .

Oh, yes. That was quite all right. You remember, of course, that pictures of Danny and Dick and Tommy Burns were in the papers for three days running, so that they became national heroes. But Danny's engagement to Anne wasn't announced until nearly two months later. And then, of course, he wasn't news any longer. The announcement filled four lines under a twelve-point head on page eight of the *Tabloid*. It fitted in neatly under the carry-over of a second-page story Danny had written. And that story went under the headline, "LOVE NEST RAID BARES RUM KING'S DOUBLE LIFE."