

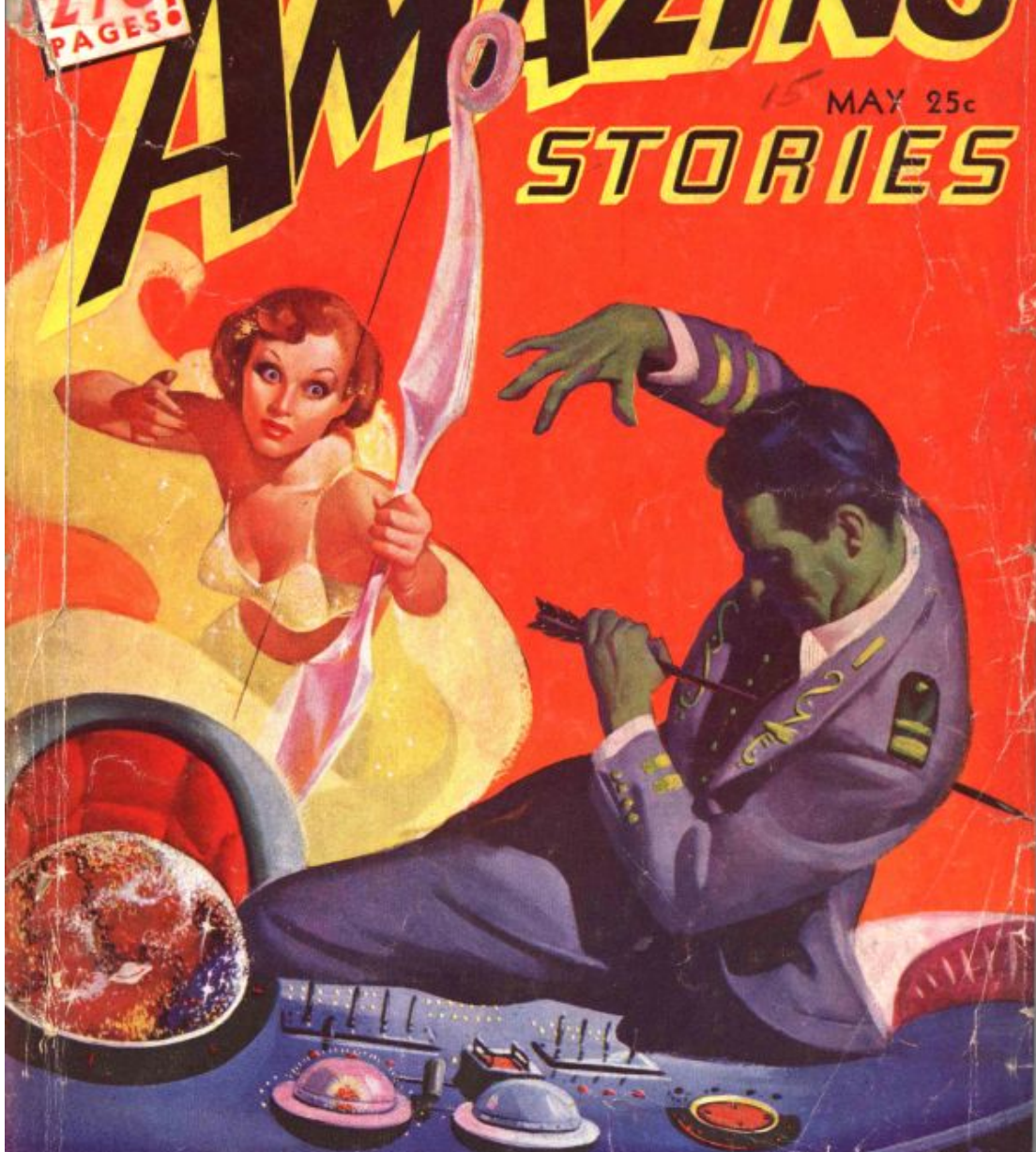
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STORIES



LORD of the CRYSTAL BOW

BY DUNCAN FARNSWORTH

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The giant pterodactyls soared over New York

The CASE OF THE MESOZOIC MONSTERS

By

John Russell Fearn

Writing under the pseudonym Thornton Ayre.

First published *Amazing Stories*, May 1942.

Brutus Lloyd had never faced a more amazing mystery than the one that confronted him when he saw those incredible dinosaur footprints!

“Lloyd! Damned glad you could make it!”

Inspector Branson caught Brutus Lloyd by the arm as he stepped from the 3:10 and led him into the waiting room. The little scientific detective took off his Derby and held it to the fire.

“Either give a good reason for this rush-trip or write yourself off the New York police force,” he growled in his bass voice. “Just what in hell did you mean over the phone by—*monsters?*”

“What I said! Monsters! Prehistoric things. . . . They belong definitely to science so I sent for you.”

Lloyd’s keen little eyes sharpened. “You don’t mean the things mentioned in an obscure corner of this morning’s papers? Creatures from the Mesozoic Era?”

“Just that,” Branson acknowledged bluntly. “The sheriff here is all steamed over the business—right out of his depth. He sent for help from New York. Having nothing particular on hand I came over. Dinosaurs, Lloyd—that’s what!”

Lloyd sighed. “Dammit man, dinosauria died out millions of years ago—and even supposing otherwise they’d sure have more sense than choose a dump like Trenchley to park in! Anyway, let’s have it—and be brief!”

“Better come with me in the car,” Branson said, and led the way outside the station. Then as he drove along the wet roadway through the wildest of drizzling, lonely country to the village of Trenchley itself he spat out laconic statements, mainly embellishing the unimaginative newspaper reports.

“Seems a group of villagers, residents, saw two dinosaurs on the outskirts of the village last evening. I’ve questioned them all, and they all have the same story.”

“*Deceptio visus*—optical illusion,” Lloyd sneered, too wet and uncomfortable to be interested. “And anyway dinosaurs cover a whole range of animals—but that would be way above your head of course. . . . Village gossip, Branson!”

“I don’t think it is!” the Inspector insisted. “They’re sensible people, all of ’em. A young electrical engineer and his wife; a traveling salesman; a clergyman; one or two members of the local church, and—yes, another guy. A spiritualist.”

“Huh?” Lloyd looked up sharply.

“A Dr. Phalnack—plays around with tamborines in the dark and puts the jitters in village folk o’ nights. You know the type. Odd looking chap. He has an Indian servant I didn’t like the looks of. Sort of dark, anarchistic guy with a towel round his head.”

“Hmm.” Lloyd fingered the J-shaped forelock poking under his uptilted Derby. Then he sneered, “I presume you looked for clues?”

“Sure—and I found ’em. Dinosaur’s footmarks.”

Lloyd rubbed his tiny hands together. “That’s better! This begins to smell more like my meat.”

Branson looked gratified; then he glanced ahead. “We’re coming into the village now. I asked the folks—the principal ones anyway—to gather in the village hall to meet you. They ought to be there by now.”

He swung the car off the main road into a gravelway, pulled up before a beetlelike tin-roofed shed. In a moment he and Lloyd were inside the place. Walking in slowly behind the burly Inspector the diminutive investigator glanced over, and appraised, the assembly.

There was a young man with an eager, intelligent face and a dark starry-eyed girl by his side. There was the vicar, calm and pale-faced; the waiting Sheriff, chewing thoughtfully; then a smallish man with immensely thick-lensed glasses, cape, and broad brimmed soft hat. Beside him, arms folded, was a Pathan, smoldering-eyed, high-joweled, turban wound flawlessly round his head. He was short, too—but lithe and muscular as a steel spring.

Branson rattled off the introductions, and the first one to come forward was the man with glasses and broad-brimmed hat.

“I’m so glad to know you, Dr. Lloyd!” His voice was soft, persuasive; and his handgrip crushing. “I’ve heard of you, of course.”

“That’s understandable!” Lloyd regarded him under insolently lowered eyelids. “Am I not the master of scientific mystery?”

“Quite—quite! I am Dr. Phalnack, a spiritualistic medium. Oh, this is my servant and confidant, Ranji. . . .”

The Indian gave a slight inclination of his head, but his eyes still glowered dangerously. Lloyd peered at him archly from under his upthrust hat brim; then he turned aside sharply as the young man and woman came forward. He was lanky, loose-jointed of movement.

“I’m Ted Hutton,” he volunteered. “This is my wife Janice.”

“Uh-huh,” Lloyd acknowledged impatiently. “But suppose we get down to matters? This talk of monsters—”

“It ain’t just talk,” Sheriff Ingle snorted. “I saw the danged things meself. . . . We all did. And plenty more besides.”

“True,” agreed the vicar mildly. “I was calling on Mrs. Westbury concerning the needy children’s charity when I saw two huge monsters against the sunset, just outside the village. They seemed to be coming towards me. I—ahem!—moved precipitately into Mrs. Westbury’s and sought sanctuary—”

“Then?” Lloyd snapped.

“I—er— Well, I guess they’d gone when I came out some thirty minutes later.”

Ted Hutton put in earnestly, “I saw them as I was coming back from an electrical survey just out of the village. I’m with the Government, you see—research engineer. And my wife saw the things too, didn’t you, sweet?”

“Gigantic!” she declared earnestly. “Dinosaurs. . . .!”

The lean-faced man in the dripping mackintosh who called himself Murgatroyd came forward.

“Guess I saw them as I was driving into the village. I’m a salesman, putting up here for a few days.”

Lloyd fondled his forelock and glanced at Dr. Phalnack. “And you, doctor?”

“Well, I didn’t actually see them, I’m afraid—but I certainly knew through my psychic experiments that there was a foreign power close to us—something, if you understand me, otherworldly!”

“We don’t!” Branson said, irritated. “Talk plain English!”

“I was aware of an unwanted dangerous element,” Phalnack elaborated. “It disturbed my communion with Beyond. The nearest way I can describe the interruption is that it resembled a thin, irritating hum.”

“What the heck!” Branson stared blankly.

“Imitate it,” Lloyd ordered.

Phalnack shrugged and doubled for a wasp. Lloyd eyed him very gravely then glanced at the others. “Any of you hear that?”

“I was so surprised I don’t remember,” said the Sheriff.

“I can’t be sure,” Janice Hutton said. “I had the radio on, you see—at least I was trying to but something must have been wrong with the battery for there was bad static—”

“There was a wind so I wouldn’t know,” her husband interrupted her, shrugging. “But those monsters existed all right! Besides, there are the prints!”

“And when were they found?” Lloyd asked.

“Took me to find them,” Branson said with pride. “I always begin a search at the beginning—”

“Wise of you,” Lloyd grunted. Then, “Let’s go take a look at ’em before it gets dark. All of you,” he added. “I might want to ask some questions.”

Branson led the way out into the main street, marched with determined strides to the soggy fields just beyond the village. Here, except for the village back of it, the landscape was sheer country, broken only by distant outcroppings of a fairly dense wood. . . .

“A monster or two might hide in those woods,” Branson pointed out. “We can look later—What’s the matter?”

Lloyd turned sharply. “Sorry—I was just admiring the village gaslights.”

“Gaslights?” Branson puzzled; then shrugged. “Here are the prints.”

Lloyd frowned down on a massive four-toed print in the sloppy mud. There was no denying that a monster possessing such a foot must by proportion have measured at least twenty feet high.

“And here—and here,” Branson indicated, moving further on—until altogether they had covered a mile.

“And leading back to the wood!” Dr. Phalnack observed. “That seems pretty conclusive, doesn’t it?”

“*Non sequitur*—it does not follow,” Lloyd replied sourly. “And I would point out I require no aid in this matter, Dr. Phalnack. I am Lloyd—therefore self-sufficient.”

He stooped and stared at one of the prints carefully, then from it he picked up bits of what seemed to be wood-shredding from the mud. Carefully he put them away in an envelope, then looked around him.

“Is it possible, Dr. Phalnack, that you heard a thin hum at such a distance as this? How far away is your home?”

“Over there.” And Phalnack nodded across the gas-lighted village to a solitary rain-misted residence maybe a mile on the far side of the dwellings.

“Hmm,” Lloyd said, scowling.

“The doctor sahib speaks truth,” Ranji observed gravely. “It is not well to even question his word—”

“Speak when spoken to!” Lloyd retorted, glaring. “Do not dare to cross swords with me, or—”

“But honestly, Dr. Lloyd, I’m sure Professor Phalnack is right,” Janice Hutton broke in earnestly. “He is too—too clever to need to tell falsehoods. His psychic demonstrations—they’re amazing!”

“Phony!” Ted Hutton sniffed.

Phalnack’s eyes seemed to gleam more brightly for a moment behind the thick lenses, but he said nothing.

“We might follow this trail to the wood anyway and see where it gets us,” Lloyd shrugged. “Just time before dark.”

They went forward swiftly, found the footmarks ever and again, leading finally into the wet, drizzling wood itself.

“Wait a minute,” Branson said uneasily. “If we walk right into a pair of sleeping dinosaurs I don’t fancy our chances! Better take it easy—”

Lloyd grinned faintly, then looking back at the others, “We’ll split up and search around. See what we can find. . . .” Then as they went in various directions he added to Branson, “I still don’t believe there are any monsters! Something happened to make these folks think so, that’s all. . . .”

Branson looked his wonder, then turned to prowl along at Lloyd’s side. They had hardly moved a dozen yards in the undergrowth before they were arrested by a gasping scream. It was followed by the unmistakable voice of Ted Hutton.

“Help, quick! Somebody—!”

Instantly the various members of the party converged through the bushes upon the spot where Ted Hutton was standing white and shaken, glancing about him. His wife was holding his arm tightly.

“Ted dearest, whatever’s the matter?”

“I—I don’t know.” He hesitated, looked around. “There’s something awful in this place,” he breathed. “An evil power—or something!”

“I understood we were searching for dinosaurs,” Lloyd murmured.

“Yeah, sure we were— But there’s something else, invisible! I was ahead of Janice when something I couldn’t see got hold of me! I felt as though something were trying to drag me down then—then it went away.”

“So,” Phalnack murmured, pondering, “my own conclusions of an evil presence were not far wrong perhaps.”

“Bunk!” observed Branson with healthy candor; but he went to search just the same. He came back shrugging.

“Anyway, the trail’s lost in this undergrowth,” he growled.

“You remark on an evil presence, doctor,” Lloyd said, turning to him thoughtfully. “Could you, for instance, really detect an evil power if it were present?”

“Certainly—but I’d have to start a seance.”

“Tonight?”

“Why yes, if you wish.”

“Mainly because the monsters, if any, are likely to appear at night, and also because the forces of evil are more pungent at night,” Lloyd embellished. “We’ll get some tea, then come along to your home around seven-thirty. Right?”

“I’ll be honored,” Phalnack said.

“In fact,” Lloyd added, glancing round, “it might help if we all went. . . .”

“I’m more than willing,” Janice Hutton said eagerly. “I was so glad when the Government moved Ted up here because it meant I could attend Dr. Phalnack’s seances. I first heard of him in the papers, you know, and—”

“You can count me out anyway,” Ted growled. “This holding hands in the dark is a lot of hooley!”

“Ted!” Janice pleaded.

He sighed. “Oh, all right. I’ve been before, so I guess it won’t hurt to go again—but you’ll never convert me. I’ll come this time if only to find out what attacked me. . . .” He broke off and regarded his watch. “Say, I’ve an electrical job to finish before evening! See you at home, Jan. ‘By, folks.”

He went hurrying off and Lloyd looked at the girl curiously.

“An electrical job in a village lighted by gas?” he asked in some surprise.

She smiled. “That’s his way of putting it. The Government sent him here to study the layout for electrical supply to be given to the village.”

“Ah,” Lloyd nodded. “I get it.”

“I’ll come along too,” Murgatroyd said. “But I must be getting back to my tea—”

“Come along with us,” Lloyd suggested.

“Thanks all the same, but I don’t stay in the village. See you all later.”

He, too, went off, and the rest of the party broke up, finally left Lloyd and Branson alone in the gathering dark.

“Queer for a traveling salesman to put up *outside* a village,” Lloyd reflected; then he shrugged. “Okay, let’s get back and dig up some tea. . . .”

CHAPTER II

Seance Extraordinary

"You know, I don't get the angle on this," Branson growled, as they tramped back through the wood. "How does a seance help find a prehistoric monster or two?"

"That," Lloyd beamed, "is what *I* want to find out—"

He broke off, jumped, jerked himself backwards sharply as something whizzed dangerously close to his face. It landed with a thud in a nearby tree.

Astounded, he and Branson stared at it—then the Inspector leapt forward and using his handkerchief tugged forth a knife from the bark.

"Looks sort of . . . oriental," he said, ominously.

Lloyd didn't answer; he raised a hand for silence. There came the momentary cracking of undergrowth away to their left. Instantly Lloyd raced in the direction of the sound, flying like a gnome over bushes, umbrella raised aloft. He left the cumbersome Branson far behind. But fast though he traveled he could not overtake the fleeing attacker.

He stopped at last, breathing hard. He had lost his quarry.

Branson came up, gulping. "I saw him," he gasped out. "Only for a second or two. It was that Indian guy. I saw his turban— Yes, I was right!" he cried, pointing. "Look there!"

Nearby was the outjutting branch of a tree, perhaps six feet from the ground. Caught against part of its rough bark was a small piece of white fabric.

"And footprints here!" Branson went on eagerly, pointing to the mud. "The Indian, sure as fate. It's as clear as day, Lloyd! He caught his turban on this branch and a piece ripped off—"

"Um," Lloyd said, pulling the fabric down and studying it. He reflected, then asked shortly, "How tall are you, Branson?"

"Six foot one. What's that got to do with it?"

"Plenty. You're not touching the branch. It's a bit higher than you. And that Indian isn't very tall—"

"Irrelevant!" Branson snorted. "Running makes a man go a lot higher than normal. If I had a turban on and were to run under this tree— What in hell are you grinning at?" he broke off sourly.

"Just picturing you in a turban! *Res est sacra miser*, Branson—a man in distress is a sacred object. . . . But skip it for the moment and let me have that knife."

Branson handed it over, looking disappointed. "Look, that was a deliberate effort to kill you. We ought to do things to that Ranji guy."

"At the seance tonight we probably will," Lloyd answered. "Right now I want my tea. Come!"

In the local apology for an hotel Lloyd spent a lot of time thinking after he had had his tea. Then finally he pulled out the oriental knife and studied it carefully. He nodded at length.

"Excellent fingerprints. Just what I need. A few more to tally will help. . . ."

Reverently he picked up his Derby hat and to Branson's amazement slipped a tight fitting rubber cover round the brim.

"What the heck?" Branson demanded, round his pipe.

“Rubber, coated with a special solution,” Lloyd beamed. “The merest touch leaves fingerprints and rain cannot eliminate them. You gaze on a supreme scientist, Branson!”

“I’ve heard that before. If you’re so supreme suppose you tell me how far you’ve gotten up to now? First we look for monsters, then we make an appointment to sit in the dark and hold hands. We’re getting just a bit too old for that!”

“The monsters,” Lloyd said, with his most arrogant glare, “do not exist. Only the feet exist—and they’re made of wood!”

“*What!*”

Lloyd shook the wood shreds from the footprint out of their envelope.

“Let us consider,” he said slowly. “A—a flat board cut out to resemble a monster’s foot would leave the right impression. B—but whoever did it forgot that the mud would cling to the board and drag off bits of the surface. Obviously rough wood was used. C—a monster, or even a human being, when running or moving swiftly, leaves a deeper imprint at the toe end than at the heel end. Yet those footprints were level both ends! D—a monster of the dinosaur genus would weigh in the neighborhood of twenty tons. Therefore in soggy soil like it is around here a depression of an inch is absurd. It should be around four to six inches! Lastly—a dinosaur belongs to the saurian or alligator class, so why in heck should it want to choose *land*? It was a water beast mainly . . . The whole set-up smells!”

Branson ran his pipe-stem along his jaw. “Sounds logical . . . But everybody saw the monsters!”

“That,” Lloyd admitted, “has me stymied at the moment. But a supreme brain is never balked. I hope to get it clearer after the seance tonight. Phalnack’s ‘evil presence’ angle rather interests me. A curious sort of guy—and it’s possible he may be *actually* psychic: we’ve no proof otherwise. Anyway, he’s got to be fitted into the picture— And it’s time we were going.”

“And probably get our throats cut,” Branson growled, buttoning up his coat. “After this afternoon I’m putting nothing past that Ranji anarchist.”

Muffled to the ears they tramped through the gas-lighted village street to the psychiatrist’s home, were admitted by Ranji in person. Lloyd handed over his hat with a gloved hand—then just as quickly snatched it back from Ranji’s grasp.

“What am I thinking of!” Lloyd gasped. “That I should part with my Derby! Huh! Must be wool gathering.”

“This way, gentlemen,” the Indian invited, with steely calm—and glided to a curtained lounge. The rest of the party—the vicar, Ted and Janice Hutton, Murgatroyd, and the Sheriff—were already present, seated in a semicircle on hardwood chairs and gazing at the ornate table and falderals of the doctor’s seat of operations.

Lloyd nodded to them and sat down—then Branson eyed him as he snapped off the rubber band from his hat brim and put it carefully away. He had just done it when Dr. Phalnack came in, attired now in a flowing gown with comets and stars embroidered all over it.

His odd eyes peered through the dense spectacle lenses. With his black brimmed hat off he seemed all head—and that as bald as an egg. Ranji took up a position to one side of him, folded his arms and surveyed the assembly dispassionately. The smell of incense began to fill the air.

“Lights!” Phalnack said softly, sitting down—and they went out. Then his face was thrown into relief by a rosy glow from a hidden globe in the table.

“You will hold hands,” he requested, “so that the chain of mediumship will not be broken. Mr. Hutton, you will take my left hand; you, Murgatroyd, will take my right. That completes the circle. If there are evil presences around us—or indeed anywhere within five miles—they will be detected. Now, hold hands, please!”

The assembly obeyed, Branson clutching Lloyd’s tiny palm and Lloyd himself holding onto the vicar. For a long time there was deathly quiet, except for the wind moaning behind the thick black draperies— Then there came a horrible strangulating gasp from where Phalnack sat. It ended in a sobbing, soul-freezing groan.

“What’s he doing?—throwing a fit?” Branson whispered uneasily.

“Going into a trance!” Janice Hutton hissed. “Ssssh!”

“*Quantum mutatus ab illo*,” Lloyd murmured. “How changed from what he was!”

But at last the howling anguish ceased and there came into the room a faint humming sound, so inaudible one felt rather than heard it. Branson felt Lloyd stiffen intently.

“Evil presence—show yourself!” Phalnack droned.

Surprisingly enough, things *did* show themselves—but not evil presences. There were tamborines and trumpets. They banged and they blew. Then they gave place to other things, moving diaphanous objects which swept with gossamer unreality through the heavy dark. Faces began to leer out of the void—unpleasant, rascally faces—

“No! No! I cannot go on!” Phalnack screamed suddenly. “Evil power is present! I cannot —”

Lloyd hurtled suddenly to his feet, flung himself at the nearest floating face to seize it. But instead he went flying—and the abrupt return of the lights found him bundled into a corner, rubbing his head where it had hit the wall.

“I apologize, doctor,” he said gravely, getting up. “I thought those manifestations were phony— But they’re not. No solidity in them.”

“I am true psychic subject,” Phalnack answered calmly. “It is a pity you should have ever doubted it.”

“You actually mean these things we saw—tamborines, faces, and what-have-you—were not tricks?” Branson demanded.

“They were not solid anyway,” Lloyd said; then he glanced round. “Hm—so you have electric lights in a gas-supplied village, doctor?”

“My own generators.”

“Ah . . .” Lloyd pondered a moment, then, “I think I heard that thin waspy hum you mentioned during the seance.”

Phalnack shook his bald head quickly. “That was not the evil influence I told you of: it was purely the normal establishment of psychic contact. But there *is* an evil presence here just the same! It balked my efforts.”

“It’s a pity it broke up the party,” Lloyd sighed, putting on his Derby again. “Thanks all the same, Phalnack—it was good while it lasted.” He turned to the Sheriff. “I’ve a few things to check up but I’ll be back tomorrow. ‘Night everybody.”

Out in the fresh air Branson gave his big form a violent shake.

“Uh! That place gave me the jitters!”

“And yet it was a valuable experience,” Lloyd commented. “I got what I hoped to get—the first foundations of a solution. That Phalnack is an extremely clever man, Branson!”

“Struck me as an out and out phony!”

“But nobody, unless he were a scientist, could *prove* him a phony!” Lloyd said modestly. “Those manifestations of his were not done with the usual occult trickster’s gadgets, such as wires and things. No, they were done by the *mind*! I’ll prove it later, too. Right now we’re getting back home.”

They returned to the village hall and Branson’s car, started out into the dark country road citywards. The rain had ceased now and the moon was shining through ragged clouds.

“A bit odd that a spiritualist of Phalnack’s accomplishments should be content to do his stuff in so lonely a spot,” Branson reflected. “You’d think he’d get busy in a city, frisking devotees of the upper classes.”

“Unless this is his initial experiment and he’ll move later,” Lloyd replied; then suddenly he shook his head a little and jabbed a finger irritably in his ear.

“Do you hear something?” he demanded finally. “I thought I’d gotten bells in my ears. Now I’m not sure if—”

“Hey, will you look at that!” Branson yelled hoarsely, pointing ahead.

Lloyd jerked his head up—and simultaneously swung the steering wheel frantically out of Branson’s grasp. He seemed too stunned to act—paralyzed.

For right ahead of them in the dim moonlight was the shape of a monstrous animal. They had time to notice a spined back—then it swung sideways to them as the car went bounding and bumping into a thickly plowed field. It halted with a jolt.

They scrambled out and raced back to the roadway. But by the time they had reached it the monster had disappeared. There was nothing visible—but there was a faint sound, a dull purring slowly receding into distance.

“Well, well?” Branson snapped impatiently, as Lloyd pondered.

“That noise . . .” he meditated. “A car’s engine— Yes, here are its tracks! Unique sort of tread too— Notice it in the wet gravel here? Here’s our track where we turned off.”

He stooped, pulled a white card from his pocket, and in the light of the moon made a pencil design of the tire tread.

“So what?” Branson snorted, glaring round the landscape. “I’m not interested in tire treads; I want that monster!”

“*Spero meliora*—I hope for better things,” Lloyd sighed. “The monster doesn’t exist, I tell you! But the tire tread does! And it is recent—so obviously it was a car following us. Look, *did* you hear a queer sound before the monster turned up?”

“Yeah—sure I did; like a wet finger squeegeeing glass.” Branson had his imaginative moments. “But the sight of that thing put me right off answering you—”

“Clearly,” Lloyd said, “the monster was intended to hurl us off the road and involve us in a nasty accident. Thanks to my everlasting coolness in taking the wheel we are still here. . . Hm, this gets more fascinating as it goes on. And if it was the same monster as seen by the villagers it was a diplodocus. That puts it out of court straight away since the diplodocus is a marsh and water dweller— Come on, back to the car. Sooner we get to my laboratory the better.”

They went back through the field to the car.

Branson said, “Look, you mean that whoever followed in that car was deliberately trying to bump us off with a phony diplo—doplo— Whatever you called it?”

“Naturally,” Lloyd growled impatiently.

They climbed back into the car, bumped back to the road, and in the glare of the headlamps followed the trail of the unknown car as far as the wet road carried it. Then they lost it on macadam. Lloyd grunted and relapsed into thought. Around midnight they were back in New York.

“What happens now?” Branson asked, as he followed the little scientist through his cozy home to the laboratory.

“Please yourself,” Lloyd shrugged. “I’ll be working for the rest of the night. Maybe you’d better give your brain a rest and come and see me in the morning.”

“Okay!” Branson knew better than take offense, or stay on where he wasn’t wanted. . . .

CHAPTER III

Monsters Over New York

Branson turned up again at eight the next morning, was admitted to the laboratory to find Lloyd wrapped in his oversize smock and huddled over coffee and toast. A bench was littered with odds and ends, and scientific instruments, testifying to the kind of night he had spent.

“Brain refreshed?” he asked sardonically, glancing up; and added, “It’ll need to be to absorb what I’m going to throw at it.”

“You found something definite then?”

“I am Brutus Lloyd! Have some coffee. . . .”

And as Branson helped himself Lloyd went on, “The hatband fingerprints and those on the oriental knife don’t tally. It was not the Indian who threw the knife at me in the wood. Not that that is any surprise to me. Remember the tree branch? The Indian is only shortish—he could not, despite your fanciful ideas of leaping into the air with a turban on, have hit his head on that branch. It was somebody taller, posing *as* him.”

“Whom?”

“I don’t know, you damn fool! Might be anybody we’ve met—even Phalnack himself, who though short is taller than Ranji. Or, it may be somebody we have not yet encountered. Once I’ve found who owns the prints on the knife I’ll get some place— For the moment we can skip that. What really is of interest is the solution of the monsters.”

“You’ve got it?” Branson cried eagerly, and was rewarded with a droop of insolent eyelids. Then Lloyd swung off his high stool and crossed to the complicated apparatus he’d assembled on his work bench. Now as Branson looked at it closely he decided it was rather like a camera, only it had dynamos attached to it.

Lloyd switched on the power, turned the instrument so it faced Branson. He looked uneasy for a moment but Lloyd grinned his fears away. A thin irritating hum began to pervade the air almost at once.

“Take a look!” Lloyd ordered suddenly—and instantly Branson dropped his coffee cup with a yell and dragged on his revolver. He backed to the wall hastily, fired desperately—three times at the form of a tiger slinking toward him!

The bullets whanged right through it, however— Then, miraculously, the tiger was an ape; then a rabbit; finally a cat! Lloyd switched off and the manifestations vanished utterly.

“What the sweet, suffering hell . . .” Branson relaxed and mopped his sweating face; then glared at Lloyd as he gave a slow, impish smile. “What was it, man? Movie film?”

“No—I hypnotized you! A trifle when a brain like mine is pitted against a withered walnut like yours.”

“Hypnotism?” Branson started. “Now wait a minute—”

“Joking apart,” Lloyd said grimly, “this business is the most ingenious scientific trick I’ve struck! It is perfectly clear now—ignoring the monsters for the moment—that Dr. Phalnack has utilized the method used by Professor Cortell in Nineteen Thirty at the British University of Sound Research. In that year, Professor Cortell made a thorough research—mainly for discovering how to make cities quieter—into sound problems. He produced an array of decibels ranging from airplane motors to leaves on a windless day. . . .”

“But he *also* went deeply into the higher researches of sound and discovered what he tentatively called the ‘ultimate vibration.’ He suggested it as a war weapon to the British authorities, but it was turned down or else pigeonholed.^[1] That doesn’t matter. But it is clear that Dr. Phalnack has used the system for his own psychic demonstrations. You see, Branson, Professor Cortell stated quite accurately that the highest audible sound to the human ear is twenty-five thousand vibrations a second. Anything outside and above it is in the ultrasonic range—”

[1] From Magazine *Science For All*—April, 1936.—Ed.

“But we heard that hum!” Branson protested, trying to grasp the idea.

“No: we *felt* it! Just as certain aids for the deaf rely solely on an instrument contacting the maxillary bone. Vibration—*not* sound. Anyway, Professor Cortell’s instrument generated a wave of twenty-five and a half thousand vibrations a second, and at that pitch it affects the brain-centers. Even as unheard noises—to us that is—can stampede the different hearing range of a herd of animals or flock of birds, so a wavelength of twenty-five and a half thousand vibrations can upset a human brain completely. There Professor Cortell ended his research—but obviously Dr. Phalnack had other ideas about the matter.”

Lloyd pondered a moment before he went on. Then,

“By means of electrical amplification he is able to direct his thoughts into the minds of those who have been semi-paralyzed by that ultrasonic hum. Thereby, unconscious of the fact that their normal power of perception is haywire, they believe what *he* wills they shall believe. Mass hypnotism, Branson. And I know it is correct. Last night at the seance I had an inkling of the truth by the insistence of everybody on a thin hum accompanying their visions of the monsters. I felt ultrasonics might play a part somewheres.

“When it became evident at Phalnack’s and the spectral visions appeared simultaneously I dived for them to see if they were solid. When they were not, I suspected hypnotism on a scientific scale. Getting back here I looked up researches into ultrasonics and found Professor Cortell’s theory in the files. I duplicated the method—a simple matter of vibrating flanges with air current between them—and produced the desired pitch. I turned it on you and at the same time thought *hard* of a tiger—and the rest of the animals. As I had hoped, a subsidiary electrical beam directed towards you amplified my thoughts to you. Easy enough, for a brain is only an electrical machine. Thought amplification is done any day at the National Physics Laboratory for that matter. . . . But don’t mix it with telepathy. That *would* be something! This is only plain, but clever, hypnotism.”

“So that’s it!” Branson gulped the rest of his coffee from another cup. “That phony occultist just makes his audience see things, huh? But why? As I said, what’s the use of trying out such ideas on a lot of villagers? And anyway, what’s the idea of the prehistoric monsters? You’ve made it clear that *anything* could be induced—so why monsters? What’s the motive?”

“There,” Lloyd sighed, fingering his forelock, “you’ve got me! But having found the method I don’t doubt we’ll find the rest—”

He broke off and picked up the phone as it rang sharply. He listened, then tossed it to Branson.

“What!” Branson yelled, after he’d listened for a moment or two; then with a startled, “Okay, I’ll be right over!” he flung the instrument down and turned a dazed face.

“Pterodactyls—over New York!” he gulped. “Over *my* precinct!”

Lloyd stared blankly for an instant, genuinely astounded for once in his life. Then his little chin set firmly. He wheeled round and tore off his smock, bundled into his coat.

“Come on—let’s go!” he shouted to the half stunned Inspector; and with that he recovered and raced after Lloyd’s hurrying form. Outside they each went to their own cars. Then with siren blaring noisily Branson led the way through the city streets into the precinct where he held sway—but on the outermost edges of it he began to slow down as he became aware again of that hum that was felt rather than heard.

Lloyd’s roadster drew alongside.

Both he and Branson looked about them. People on the sidewalk were staring up into the morning sky, astounded—some of them frightened. Certainly there was a flock of birds circling up there—monstrous batlike objects flying in and out of the lofty buildings.

“Same stunt—more power,” Lloyd summed up tensely. “That hum has got us, man. Force yourself against it—”

“But how? Unless I stop my ears—”

“No dam’ good! It’s inaudible sound. That’s what is so smart about it. Got the people too from the look of ’em. Use your will power, man—what there is of it!”

“Yeah—I get it!” But Branson had an obvious struggle with himself to drive onwards. So for that matter had Lloyd himself though he’d never have admitted it.

Somehow they managed to keep going and by the time they’d gained the precinct headquarters the flying monsters had gone from the sky. People were moving again, talking excitedly to one another.

Confused, bewildered, Branson floundered after Lloyd into the private office.

“Get busy,” Lloyd ordered curtly. “Have all traffic from this section of the city barred on its way out of the city. There’s a chance the culprit we want will try and get out of New York—and we’re going to stop him. Go on.”

“But what’s the use of—?”

“Get on that phone!” Lloyd yelled, slamming his umbrella on the desk emphatically. “Time’s precious, you dope!”

Branson obeyed; then looked at Lloyd puzzledly. His little face was puckered.

“We can consider the facts,” he mused, pushing up his Derby. “A—whoever’s back of this knows you are on the job and knows your precinct, therefore the act was staged in your area. Maybe as an effort to convince you that the monsters are *real* by providing so many other witnesses of them. B—our unknown friend used pterodactyls no doubt so they’d be up in the air and beyond examination; and also to avoid having to leave traces for later study—as in the case of the wood-made footprints. C—a vast increase in the power of the mass-hypnotism is evidenced, for to get so many people under the influence for even a short time points to plenty of juice. And D—that car which followed us last night was obviously heading this way.”

“Then,” Branson said, “he must have come here for other reasons than to upset me. He no doubt figured he’d disposed of both of us!”

“Unless he came here to be certain of his work. . . .”

Lloyd began to pace up and down, clutching his forelock savagely. “Dammit, there must be a motive behind this monster business, but I can’t figure what it is! *At spes non fracta*—but hope is not yet crushed! Right now our job is to find a car with the particular tire tread of last night. Let’s be off.”

They hurried outside, Branson to his squad car and Lloyd to his roadster. In three minutes they were threading their way through the busy city traffic, Branson clearing a track with the siren. Presently speed cops moved up in front and assisted him.

Lloyd, a little way behind, sat thinking as he drove swiftly along—thinking so much he had to put the brakes on suddenly several times. Then he looked ahead of him uneasily as the road seemed to shift horribly before his vision. At the same moment an uneasy tickling sensation burned his throat. Blurred of eye, dazed, he could scarcely see where he was going.

He glanced down, alarmed now at the vision of curling vapor coming up through the car floorboards, enveloping him. He gave a strangled cry, fell back helplessly in his seat. Uncontrolled, his car slewed round in a wild half circle, slammed into a taxi, then rebounded and drove its gleaming radiator into a lamp standard. . . .

Lloyd returned to consciousness to find his shirt band open and collar gone while brandy was still searing his throat. He opened his eyes to a doctor's surgery, then beheld the doctor himself and a burly police officer.

"What the—?" He sat up with a jerk, winced at unexpected bruises. "What the devil happened?" he demanded aggressively.

The officer answered, "Guess somebody made an attempt on your life, Dr. Lloyd. You were lucky to get away with it! Some wise guy had fixed a small gas bomb under your brake pedal. When you put the brake on the bomb was crushed and the fumes escaped. The rush of wind stopped them doing serious injury to you, though—"

"And my car?" Lloyd got groggily to his feet, fumbled with the collar the doctor handed him.

"Smashed badly. It's in the Excel Garage—"

"*Hic labor, hoc opus est,*" Lloyd growled in fury, scrambling back into his big overcoat and clutching at his Derby. "This is the labor, this is the toil! Where's Branson, anyway? How long have I been unconscious?"

"About an hour, sir. Inspector Branson is back at his headquarters if you—"

"Quick—drive me to him. It's urgent! Oh—and thanks, doctor. Send the bill in—Brutus Lloyd. All know me."

He whisked outside with the officer to the waiting car and inside a few minutes was back in Branson's precinct headquarters. The Inspector looked relieved when he saw him.

"Lloyd! Thank goodness you're okay. I was afraid—"

"Be damned to that! What are you doing here? I thought I told you to stop all traffic!"

"Sure—but that was over an hour ago. I couldn't hold things up indefinitely until you recovered so I—"

Lloyd slammed his gamp down savagely on the desk. "Did you find what we were looking for? That tire tread?"

"Well, searching the tires of some hundreds of cars isn't easy." Branson scratched his bullet head. "But I found one that might have been it: you had the pattern card so I couldn't be sure. It was a gray truck, inclosed, streamlined. Nothing we could pin on the driver, though. Clean license and so on— But I took a print of his tires for confirmation."

"Hm! What did he look like?"

"Middle aged apparently, mustached, cap, scarf—"

"And what happened to the truck?"

“We let it go with the rest of the traffic—but I had tabs kept on it. It was followed but did nothing suspicious. Went round some of the streets then retraced into New York and stopped finally outside the *Evening Clarion* offices.”

“Then?” Lloyd insisted.

“What is this?” Branson asked irritably. “We couldn’t keep on tagging it when it was harmlessly occupied. We let it go— But I took the license number.”

Branson stopped at Lloyd’s cold glare, then tossed down the tire tread impression card on the desk, together with the license number. Lloyd compared the former with his own card, took off his hat, then tore savagely at his J-forelock.

“And you let the car go!” he groaned. “*Hiatus valde deflendus!* A deficiency greatly to be deplored! Fool! Imbecile! It’s the very truck we want! Don’t you understand, man? He must have had portable ultrasonic equipment in that truck and produced those pterodactyls—and the monster we saw on the country road last night—by that method!”

“But the driver was a stranger!” Branson shouted hotly.

“Naturally,” Lloyd sneered. “The guy we want was probably *inside* that truck—but that wouldn’t occur to your clogged brain.”

Branson looked uncomfortable. Lloyd drummed his fingers on the desk irritably for a time.

“The motive?” he reiterated. “Just what can be the sense of throwing a fright into people this way? It doesn’t even— Did you say the *Evening Clarion*?” he broke off sharply. “Which department?”

“Classified advertisements.”

“Hm . . .” Lloyd cooled off a little. “Maybe we’ll find something when the paper comes out. In the meantime we have work to do. I have got to find the tallying fingerprints to those on the oriental knife; and since it was not the Indian we’ve to check on Phalnack himself. Guess we’ll grab some lunch, then motor over to Trenchley and wait for nightfall. Soon be dark this time of year.”

CHAPTER IV

Trail's End

Lloyd was right. The short fall day had closed into frosty night when they parked the squad car outside the village near Phalnack's isolated home. Silently they moved toward it in the gloom.

"I suppose you know you're figuring on burglary—anyway house-breaking?" Branson asked grimly. "Can't investigate without a warrant."

"But *I* can," Lloyd retorted. "And I'm going to! None can balk the will of Brutus Lloyd. You can arrest me afterwards for trespass if you like. Here we go. . . ."

They had come to the rear of the somber residence. With his penknife he opened a window and they slid silently into a gloomy, deserted library. The whole place was deathly quiet, apparently deserted.

They made their way out to the hall, then knowing the set-up from the previous night's visit headed towards the room where the seance had been held. Lloyd moved slowly across to the table from where the demonstration had been controlled by Phalnack. He pulled out a torch, dimmed the light with his fingers, and gave a low chuckle.

"Here we are, Branson! A small ultrasonic instrument. What a brain I've got! Amazing isn't it?"

"Incredible," Branson agreed, sourly.

Lloyd pulled some powder from his pocket and sprinkled it on the smooth arms of the chair. Instantly fingerprints came into view—

Then something else happened. A silk-clad arm came out of the shadows and closed under Lloyd's chin and round his neck. He gave a yelp and struggled violently, but the arm increased with steely tension, forcing him backwards— So he relaxed abruptly, then jerked forward, flinging up his hand. With a violent ju-jitsu movement he dislodged the hold and lashed out with his tiny fist. It made little effect—

But Branson was on the job now, lunging out with hamlike paws. Gasps and grunts came from the gloom, then as a knife flashed wickedly Branson yanked out his revolver.

"Drop it!" he barked. "Drop it, or I'll let you have it!"

The knife fell to the carpet. Panting Latin curses Lloyd stumbled to the wall and found the light switch. The glare revealed the sullen face of Ranji, his dark eyes flashing.

"I guessed as much," Branson growled. "What the hell did you think you were doing?"

"You have no right here!" the Indian shouted passionately. "They who seek to kill my honorable master must die! You have tried for too long to discredit him! He is a master-medium, en rapport with the unknown—"

"Yeah?" Branson eyed him suspiciously; then he looked up quickly as Dr. Phalnack himself came in, dressed in a lounge suit over which was a silk dressing gown. The napkin in his hand suggested he'd come from the dining room. He stared round him amazedly.

"Why, gentlemen, what is the meaning of this?"

Branson tried to think of a good lawful reason, but there was none. Lloyd simply went on comparing the chair fingerprints with those on the oriental knife he brought from his pocket. At last he straightened up and handed it over.

"This yours, doctor?" he asked quietly.

"Why—yes!" He took it, clearly surprised. "I lost it some time ago from this very room; from this table in fact. Where in the world did you discover it?"

"You should ask!" Branson said bitterly. "Somebody tried to kill Lloyd with it yesterday evening—"

"Silence!" Lloyd commanded; then he went on, "You'll have to forgive this impromptu entry into your home, doctor. Or if you prefer you can have me arrested. Branson here represents the law—I think. You see, I'd something to verify. These fingerprints on the chair are yours of course?"

"Certainly. Nobody else ever uses that chair."

"Uh-huh." Lloyd looked at the Indian, and the look was returned with slumbrous, vengeful eyes.

"I'm sure there is some mistake here," Phalnack said. "Ranji naturally is concerned for my safety but he wouldn't try to kill you!"

"You are wrong!" Ranji said hotly. "These accursed fools are trying to discredit you, doctor! I tried only this morning to be rid of this bumptious little Dr. Lloyd. I saw his car in town outside police headquarters when I went into the city to make your purchases, doctor. It saved me going to his home to settle accounts with him. I hoped I'd kill him—"

"With a gas bomb?" Lloyd asked sharply.

"Why not? I was going to throw it into your home; instead I found a better way. But you still live."

"Shall I make out a warrant for—"

Branson stopped as Lloyd raised his hand. "No. Maybe Ranji was under the impression I was out to do Dr. Phalnack here an injury; his fanatical loyalty is rather touching—and illuminating in other ways."

"I never realized—" Phalnack started to say; but Lloyd cut him short with a question.

"Naturally you have heard of Dr. Cortell's interesting experiments in ultrasonics?"

"So you have tumbled to my psychic demonstrations?" Phalnack gave a slow, uneasy smile. "Yes I've heard of him—and elaborated his ideas. I rather feared a scientist like you would grasp the idea. But I am psychic too—to a degree."

Lloyd expanded at the flattery. "Tell me, why do you practice your—er—phony art in a lonely spot like this? Why not a city?"

"Later perhaps. To begin with I prefer to test the stunt on unsophisticated people. Ranji, of course, provides 'noises off.'"

Lloyd shrugged. "Well, what you choose to do with phony spiritualism is no direct concern of mine: the law will handle that. I'm looking for monsters—and I've got all I need here. If you think of pressing the trespass charge remember what this Indian of yours did to me. I'll lodge counter-charges. Good night!"

Out in the dark roadway again heading to their car Branson gave a grunt of impatience. "You crazy, Lloyd? If that Indian tried to have you gassed he sure threw that knife also!"

"Humph!" was Lloyd's illuminating answer.

"Anyway," Branson said aggrievedly, "Phalnack must be crazy to admit his ultrasonics that easily."

“Either that or else he believes like many criminals that the best defense is admission of apparent guilt. As to the knife, it is his and he admits it. But the fingerprints were *not* his on the knife; nor were they Ranji’s.”

“Gloves!” Branson grunted.

“But the fingerprints belong to somebody, you dope. . .” Then Lloyd relapsed into silence, thinking, clambered back into the car at Branson’s side. He turned the car round.

“Where to?”

“Home. I want an *Evening Clarion*.”

Once back in New York Lloyd got the first copy he came across and hurried with it into headquarters beside Branson. Together they went through the classified advertisements carefully, page after page of them. An hour passed; an hour and a half— Then Lloyd gave a yelp.

“*Flammo fumo est proxima!* Where there’s smoke there’s fire! A possible motive at last, Branson! Listen to this— ‘Monsters! Why not insure yourself against possible attack? Small premiums. Absolute cover guaranteed. Write Box 42/2.’ ”

Branson scowled. “But what the heck? Who’d want to insure themselves against monsters on the strength of that stunt this morning?”

“Probably dozens of people! Think of the weird things which *are* insured! It’s possible after this morning that hundreds of New Yorkers—more nervous ones anyway—may answer this ad., and be willing to pay for supposed safety. That’s human nature—and damned clever psychology on the advertiser’s part. Later it could build up into quite a racket, especially if monsters—or other terrifying things—reappear! Money for ultrasonics!”

“Lord!” Branson gasped. “You mean somebody—probably Phalnack—is having the face to create monsters just so he can insure against them? Make money out of premiums, knowing he will never have to pay out anyway?”

“Exactly—a streamlined version of an old insurance racket. Supply a demand: then make the supply. This is where we go to town. Ah, masterful mind that I have! *Ecce homo*, Branson—behold the man! But come—to the *Evening Clarion* offices.”

They were soon there and Branson’s official capacity opened Sesame to many things. In a few minutes they had the address of the advertiser—a remote spot in the country, but significantly it wasn’t very far outside Trenchley.

“Whoever is the advertiser is our man,” Lloyd said exultantly, as they came out on the sidewalk again.

“Phalnack for sure,” Branson growled. “This spot is only about a mile from his place. Let’s see—Hawthorn Filling Station, Trenchley Main Road. Damned funny spot to have an insurance office!”

“Not if it’s worked on the mail order system. Nobody will question the address much as long as they get insurance. An insurance actuary doesn’t always have a high class office.”

Branson nodded thoughtfully, then got into the car. For the second time that evening they headed out of New York—and the place they sought demanded a good deal of wandering, of searching by headlamps; then at last they located it. It was a rather decrepit filling station well off the main highway to Trenchley and apparently deserted. Certainly no lights were on. How anybody could hope to keep the business flourishing in such a dead-alive hole was problematical.

“Stop here,” Lloyd ordered finally; and with all the car lights switched off they halted a hundred yards from the garage. Then together they moved towards it. From one window they caught a glimpse of light through an imperfectly drawn shade.

“Here we go!” Lloyd murmured, and suddenly raising his bass voice he bawled, “Hey there, any gas? Give us some service!”

Instead of a response there were the sounds of shuffling from inside the building and the light snapped out.

“Go for ’em!” Lloyd snapped; and brought his umbrella down on the window with shattering force. Branson was just as quick, thrusting his revolver and torch through the smashed pane, tearing the shade down the center.

“Hold it!” he ordered, as two figures twirled in the torch beam; then as they slowly raised their hands he began to clamber through—

But the shade got in his way and finally fell on top of him. The two still unidentified men took instant advantage, dodged into the dark, and were gone. Cursing furiously Branson stumbled into the little badly furnished office with Lloyd behind him. They had hardly got themselves disentangled before the sound of a car’s engine starting up assailed them.

“They’re getting away!” Branson yelled. “Come on—after ’em—”

Lloyd swung round and bumped into the table. He stopped, seized Branson’s torch.

“The evidence!” he ejaculated, and indicated a portable ultrasonic equipment on the table, not unlike the one he had himself devised. “Probably a small scale model of the one they’ve got in that truck of theirs. . . Okay, let’s go. We’ve got Exhibit A anyway.”

He whisked it up and they pelted outside to their own car. Lloyd sat with the portable instrument on his knees as the car whisked out of the dark down the solitary road. For safety’s sake the fleeing truck had to use its headlights, identifying itself instantly. Branson jammed down the accelerator and tore out onto the main road like a rocket, continued on whistling tires through the dark. His headlights began to show the truck up. It was dove-gray all right, inclosed, streamlined—

“That’s it!” Branson snapped. “Same license number!”

Then things began to happen. The road in front of them started to blur, seemed to shift in two directions. There were two gray trucks now and four sets of headlights! A thin hum was in the air—Branson shook his head confusedly, pinched his eyes momentarily.

“They’re using that ultrasonic stuff to ditch us,” Lloyd said quickly. “But maybe we’ve a trick left ourselves—!” He began fumbling with the apparatus on his knees, found a power lead and clamped it into the socket usually used for the car radio. Power of sorts surged into the instrument for it glowed. Scowling at it, directing the lens ahead, Lloyd concentrated.

In a moment or two he got results—surprising ones, for the truck went careening off the main road into a field, bounced, turned right over and finished on its side. Instantly they hopped from their own car and chased after it.

“What did you do?” Branson panted, as they ran.

“Same as he did to us! Concentrated on two roads. They didn’t know I *had* apparatus to do the trick and took it as the real thing!”

They’d arrived at the truck now. A figure was crawling from the driving seat; yet another was making frantic efforts to get out of the back doors. Branson went to the front; Lloyd to the back. He paused as he was about to grasp the metal handle on the door and instead yanked a

card and powder from his pocket. He gave a grim smile at what he found, then pulled the door open.

It was Ted Hutton who came staggering out, disheveled, a bruise on his head where he'd the instruments in the truck.

"Say!" Branson exclaimed, appearing with the other man, "this guy is Murgatroyd, the traveling salesman—He was disguised with a phony mustache and cap pulled down—Hutton!" he ejaculated, staring at him.

"Hutton," Lloyd acknowledged grimly. "And the fingerprints tally with those on the knife. Okay, Branson—the bracelets."

"To sum up," Lloyd said, towards midnight when he and Branson were at precinct headquarters after taking Hutton's full confession of an effort to launch a super-insurance racket; "A—I suspected Hutton when I suspected ultrasonics, because being an electrician he would probably know about them. B—his story of being present in the village for Government reasons—in a village with only gaslight—sounded phony. C—he cut his wife short when she said she had bad static on her radio on the night of the monsters. But I was quick enough to see static was impossible in a village devoid of electricity; therefore, the monsters were probably electrical in basic origin. D—his wife made a remark that she'd heard of Phalnack in a newspaper. Hutton knew that too; and as he has since confessed, moved in to Trenchley because he had heard Phalnack was an expert in ultrasonics. He figured, knowing his wife's weakness for spiritualism, that he might get ideas from Phalnack. Which he did. . . .

"Then," Lloyd proceeded; "we come to Point E. Hutton decided on 'monsters' because their unusual and terrifying nature would be best calculated to scare people into insurance. F—his colleague owned the truck in which he put the equipment; and I suspected Murgatroyd because he lived outside the village. G—Hutton did his best to blacken Phalnack as much as possible, hence his early theft of the oriental knife owned by Phalnack—but in his urgency to throw it he did nothing to save *his* fingerprints getting onto the hilt as well as Phalnack's numerous ones from normal handling of the knife. Phalnack's were blurred and numerous: Hutton's new and distinct. Obviously he'd had plenty of chances to steal that knife at earlier seances. H—the appearance of the monsters in the village was, as Hutton has admitted, his first test. To his consternation it brought me on the job, and he tried to get rid of me by various clumsy expedients. He resorted to the knife, the turban disguise, a make-believe evil spirit in the wood, and running us off the road. Accidentally, his 'turban' caught the tree."

Lloyd sighed, gave a shrug. "Altogether, Branson, an ambitious young scientific adventurer who took the wrong turning. . . . A last word: Phalnack probably *is* somewhat psychic, even, as he said. The evil presence at the seance was doubtless Hutton. . . ."

"By and large," Branson commented, "we cleaned everything up in fine style, eh?"

Lloyd's eyelids drooped. "*Veni, vedi, vici,*" he growled. "I came, I saw, I conquered—Now get the hell out of here and let me get on with my diatomic culture research!"

[The end of *The Case of the Mesozoic Monsters* by John Russell Fearn (as Thornton Ayre)]