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A CROWN PUBLICATION

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ALL STORIES IN THIS ISSUE BRAND NEW

The Project Gutenberg EBook of Jimsy and the Monsters, by Walt Sheldon

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*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK JIMSY AND THE MONSTERS ***

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Science fiction, in collaboration with the idea-men and technicians of Hollywood, has been responsible for many horrors, dating back to “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari” and “The Lost World.” But Hollywood has created one real-life horror that tops all creations of fantasy—the child star. In this story we at last see such a brat meet Things from Alien Space.

jimsy and the monsters

by ... Walt Sheldon

MR. MAXIMILIAN UNTZ regarded the monsters with a critical eye. Script girls, cameramen, sometimes even stars quailed under Mr. Untz's critical eye—but not these monsters. The first had a globelike head and several spidery legs. The second was willowy and long-clawed. The third was covered with hair. The prop department had outdone itself.

Hollywood could handle just about anything—until Mildume's machine brought in two real aliens.

“Get Jimsy,” said Mr. Untz, snapping his fingers.

A young earnest assistant producer with a crew cut turned and relayed the summons. “Jimsy—Jimsy LaRoche!” Down the line of cables and cameras it went. *Jimsy ... Jimsy...*

A few moments later, from behind the wall flat where he had been playing canasta with the electricians, emerged Jimsy LaRoche, the eleven-year-old sensation. He took his time. He wore powder-blue slacks and a sports shirt and his golden hair was carefully ringleted. He was frowning. He had been interrupted with a meld of a hundred and twenty.

“Okay, so what is it now?” he said, coming up to Mr. Untz.

Mr. Untz turned and glared down at the youth. Jimsy returned the glare. There was a sort of cold war between Mr. Untz and Master Jimsy LaRoche, the sort you could almost hear hotting up. Mr. Untz pointed to the monsters. “Look, Jimsy. Look at them. What do you think?” He watched the boy's expression carefully.

Jimsy said, “To use one of your own expressions, Max—*pfui*. They wouldn’t scare a mouse.” And then Jimsy shrugged and walked away.

Mr. Untz turned to his assistant. “Harold,” he said in an injured tone. “You saw it. You heard it. You see what I’ve got to put up with.”

“Sure,” said Harold Potter sympathetically. He had mixed feelings toward Mr. Untz. He admired the producer’s occasional flashes of genius, he deplored his more frequent flashes of stupidity. On the whole, however, he regarded himself as being on Mr. Untz’s side in the war between Mr. Untz and the world and Hollywood. He knew Mr. Untz’s main trouble.

Some years ago Maximilian Untz had been brought to Hollywood heralded as Vienna’s greatest producer of musicals. So far he had been assigned to westerns, detectives, documentaries, a fantasy of the future—but no musicals. And now it was a psychological thriller. Jimsy played the killer as a boy and there was to be a dream sequence, a nightmare full of monsters. Mr. Untz was determined it should be the most terrifying dream sequence ever filmed.

Only up to now he wasn’t doing so good.

“I would give,” said Mr. Untz to Harold Potter, “my right eye for some *really* horrible monsters.” He gestured at the world in general. “Think of it, Harold. We got atom bombs and B-29’s, both vitamins and airplanes, and stuff to cure you of everything from broken legs to dropsy. A whole world of modern science—but nobody can make a fake monster. It looks anything but fake and wouldn’t scare an eleven-year-old boy.”

“It’s a thought,” agreed Harold Potter. He had a feeling for things scientific; he had taken a B.S. in college but had drifted into photography and thence into movie production. He had a wife and a spaniel and a collection of pipes and a house in Santa Monica with a workshop basement.

“I got to do some thinking,” Mr. Untz said. “I believe I will change my clothes and take a shower. Come along to the cottage, Harold.”

“Okay,” said Harold. He never liked to say yes for fear of being tagged a yes-man. Anyway, he enjoyed relaxing in the office-cottage while Mr. Untz showered and changed, which Mr. Untz did some three or four times a day. When he got there Mr. Untz disappeared into the dressing-room and Harold picked up a magazine.

There was a knock on the door.

Harold got up and crossed the soft cream-colored carpet and opened the door and saw a goat-like person.

“Yes?” said Harold.

“Mildume,” said the goat-like person. “Dr. John Mildume. Don’t ask a lot of questions about how I got in. Had a hard enough time as it was. Fortunately I have several relatives connected with the studio. That’s how I heard of your problem as a matter of fact.”

“My problem?” said Harold.

Dr. Mildume pushed right in. He was no more than five feet five but had a normal sized head. It was domelike. Wisps of tarnished white hair curled about his ears and crown. He had an out-thrust underjaw with a small white beard on its prow. He was dressed in moderately shabby tweeds. He moved across the room in an energetic hopping walk and took the place on the sofa Harold had vacated.

“Now, then, Mr. Untz,” he said, “the first thing we must do is come to terms.”

“Just a minute,” said Harold. “I’m Mr. Untz’s assistant, Harold Potter. Mr. Untz is in the shower. Was he expecting you?”

Dr. Mildume blinked. “No, not exactly. But he can’t afford *not* to see me. I know all about it.”

“All about what?” asked Harold.

“The beasts,” the doctor said.

“The *which*?”

“Beasts, Potter,” snapped the goat-like man. “The nightmare monsters. Get with it, lad. And what is a dream sequence without them? Ha!”

“Uh—yes,” said Harold a little uncertainly.

Mildume’s finger shot out. “You fellows understand that I’m no dreamy-eyed impractical scientist. Let’s face it—it takes money to carry on experiments like mine. Good old-fashioned money. I’ll need at least ten thousand dollars.”

Harold raised his eyebrows. “Just what, Dr. Mildume, do you propose to give us for ten thousand dollars?”

“Beasts,” said Mildume. “*Real* monsters.”

“I beg your pardon?” said Harold. He began to work out strategies in his mind.

Maybe he could casually walk over to the phone and pick it up quickly and call the studio police. Maybe he could get the jump on this madman before he pulled a knife. The thing to do was to humor him meanwhile....

Dr. Mildume said, "I will not deal with underlings. I demand to see Mr. Untz himself."

"Well," said Harold, "you understand that Mr. Untz is a busy man. It's my job to check propositions people have for him. Suppose you tell me about these beasts of yours."

Mildume shrugged. "Doubt if you'll understand it any better than Untz will. But it's no more complicated than television when you boil it right down. You're familiar, I take it, with the basic principle of television?"

"Oh, sure," said Harold, brightening. "Keep things moving. Have a master of ceremonies who keeps jumping in and out of the act. Give something away to the audience, if possible, to make them feel ashamed not to tune in."

"No, no, no, no, *no!*" said Mildume. "I mean the technical principles. A photo-electric beam scans the subject, translates light and dark into electrical impulses, which eventually alter a cathode ray played upon a fluorescent screen. Hence, the image. You grasp that roughly, I take it?"

"Roughly," said Harold.

"Well," continued Mildume, "just as spots of light and dark are the building blocks of an image, so sub-atomic particles are the building blocks of matter. Once we recognize this the teleportation theory becomes relatively simple. There are engineering difficulties, of course.

"We must go back to Faraday's three laws of electrolysis—and Chadwick's establishment in nineteen thirty-one of the fact that radiation is merely the movement of particles of proton mass without proton charge. Neutrons, you see. Also that atomic weights are close integers, when hydrogen is one point zero zero eight. Thus I use hydrogen as a basis. Simple, isn't it?"

Harold frowned. "Wait a minute. What's this you're talking about—*teleportation*? You mean a way of moving matter through space, just as television moves an image through space?"

"Well, not precisely," said Mildume. "It's more a duplication of matter. My Mildume beam—really another expression of the quanta or light energy absorbed by atoms—scans and analyzes matter. The wave variations are

retranslated into form, or formulae, at a distant point—the receiving point.”

Harold lowered one eyebrow. “And this really works?”

“Of course,” said Mildume. “Oh, it’s still crude. It doesn’t work all the time. It works only along vast distances. I won’t announce it until I perfect it further. Meanwhile I need more money to carry on and when, through certain relatives, I heard of Mr. Untz’s problem—well, it was simply too much to resist. You see, I’ve managed to teleport a couple of frightful monsters from somewhere out of space. I was wondering what on earth to do with them.”

“Where—where are they?” asked Harold.

“In my back yard,” said Dr. Mildume.

At that point Mr. Maximilian Untz abruptly reappeared. He smelled of lotion and he was now dressed in a relatively conservative gabardine of forest green with a lavender shirt and a black knitted tie.

“Hello,” he said. He looked at Mildume. “So who is this?”

“He says he has monsters for the dream sequence in his back yard,” explained Harold. “*Real* ones.”

“Look,” said Mr. Untz, “kindly ask the gentleman to get lost, will you, Harold?”

“No, wait,” Harold said. “He may have something. He explained some of it to me. It sounds almost possible. We can’t lose much by taking a look.”

“Only a few thousand dollars a minute,” said Mr. Untz.

“*Bah—money!*” said Dr. Mildume. “Which reminds me—these monsters of mine are going to cost you. Let’s have that understood, right now.”

MR. UNTZ’S eyebrows went up. This kind of talk he understood. He reached into the side pocket of the gabardine for his cigarette case. He kept a separate gold case in each suit.

“*Yeeeeow!*” said Mr. Untz.

His hand came out of the pocket with a small green snake in it.

“Drop it! Stand back!” said Harold, being cool.

“Don’t worry about it,” said Dr. Mildume in a calmer voice. He was blinking

mildly at the snake. “It’s merely an ordinary species of garden snake, sometimes erroneously called garter snake. Curious it should be there.”

Harold looked at Dr. Mildume sharply. “This teleportation of yours wouldn’t have anything to do with it by any chance?”

“Of course not,” snapped Mildume.

“I know how it got here!” said Mr. Untz, his jowls trembling. He had already dropped the snake. “A certain child star whose initials are Jimsy LaRoche! Last week he gives me a hotfoot. Monday a wet seat—soaked newspapers in my chair under one thin dry one. Yesterday a big frog in my shower. I should take that brat over my knee and spank him to his face!”

“Mm—ah—of course,” said Dr. Mildume without much interest in the topic. “Shall we go to inspect the monsters now?”

Mr. Untz thought it over, only long enough to keep himself within the time limits of a Man of Decision. Then he said, “Okay, so we’ll go now.”

They passed Jimsy LaRoche on the way out. He was drinking pineapple juice and sitting with his tutor, studying his lines. He smirked as Mr. Untz passed. Mr. Untz scowled back but didn’t say anything. In Jovian silence he led the way to his car.

It turned out to be a longer ride than they had expected. Dr. Mildume lived in Twenty-nine Palms and, as Mr. Untz explained it, this was too short for an airplane and too long for an automobile. Mr. Untz was not in his best humor when they stopped before Dr. Mildume’s stucco and tile-roof house.

Mildume directed them immediately to a walled-in patio in the rear of the place. A shed-roof covered one side of the patio and under it were racks of equipment. Harold recognized banks of relays, power amplifiers, oscillographs and some other familiar devices. There were also some strange ones.

Mildume waved his long fingers at all of it. “My teleportation set-up is entirely too bulky so far for practical use, as you can see.”

“Nph,” said Mr. Untz, eyeing it. During the drive Dr. Mildume and Harold had explained more to him about teleportation and the monsters and he was more doubtful than ever about the whole thing. “So let’s see the monsters,” he said now. “Time is fleeing.”

Mildume went in his hopping step across the patio to a huge tarpaulin that covered something square and bulky. He worried the tarpaulin away. Two steel

cages stood there.

“Sacred carp!” said Mr. Untz.

Two *somethings* were in the steel cages.

They were both iridescent greenish-gray in color, they had globular bodies, no discernible heads and eyes on stalks growing from their bodies. Three eyes apiece. If they *were* eyes—anyway, they looked like eyes. Sweeping fibrillae came down to the ground and seemed to serve as feet. Great saw-toothed red gashes in the middle of each body might have been mouths.

“They’re—they’re *real*. They’re *alive!*” said Harold Potter hoarsely. That was the thing about them. They had the elusive quality of life about them—and of course they were thus infinitely more terrifying than the prop department’s fake monsters.

“They’re alive all right,” said Dr. Mildume chattily. “Took me quite a bit of experimenting to discover what to feed them. They like glass—broken glass. They’re evidently a silicon rather than a carbon form of life.”

“This I’ll buy,” said Mr. Untz, still staring.

“Of course,” said Mildume. “I knew you would. They will cost you exactly ten thousand dollars per day. Per twenty-four hour period.”

“Profiteer—burglar!” said Mr. Untz, glaring at Mildume.

Mildume shrugged.

There was an abrupt, high-pitched squeak. Harold stared at the monsters. The smaller one was quivering.

“They do that when they’re angry,” Dr. Mildume said. “Some sort of skin vibration. This smaller one here seems to take the initiative in things. Must be a male. Unless there’s female dominance, as in birds of prey, wherever these things come from. I’ve—uh—been unable to ascertain which is which, if any.”

Mr. Untz frowned suddenly. “Look—just how dangerous are these things?”

“Don’t know *exactly*,” said Dr. Mildume. “A pigeon got too near the cages the other day. They seemed to enjoy it. Although, as I say, their staple appears to be silicon forms. I carelessly set a Weston analyzer too near them the other day and they had it for lunch.”

“If they’re too dangerous ...” began Mr. Untz.

“What if they are?” said Mildume. “You make pictures with wild lions and tigers and alligators, don’t you? Seems to me you can find a way. I don’t recommend letting them out of the cage however.”

Mr. Untz nodded and said, “Well, maybe we can get Etienne Flaubert to do something with them. He’s the animal trainer we call on. Anyway Untz always figures something out. Only that’s why I like musicals better. There isn’t so much to figure out and you can play Victor Herbert backwards and get new tunes out of him. So anyway, we’ll get a truck and get these monsters to the studio right away.”

It was arranged. It was arranged with utmost secrecy too. There were other studios, after all, and in spite of their wealth of creative talent it was easier to steal an idea than cook up a new one. Atom bomb secrecy descended upon the Crusader Pictures lot and most especially upon Sound Stage Six, where the dream sequence for the psychological thriller, “Jolt!” was being filmed.

Even Jimsy LaRoche, the star of the picture, was excluded from the big barn-like stage. Mr. Untz prepared to get his first stock shots of the beasts.

There were gasps and much popping of eyebrows when Dr. Mildume—who had come along as technical adviser—removed the tarpaulins from the cages. The cameramen, the grips, the electricians, the sound men—all stared unbelievably. The script girl grabbed Mr. Untz’s hand and dug her fingernails into it. The makeup stylist clutched the lapels of his mauve jacket and fainted.

“Nothing to be afraid of,” Mr. Untz said to everybody. He was sort of convincing himself too. “Dr. Mildume here knows all about the monsters. He’s got everything under control. So tell everybody about them, Doctor.”

Mildume nodded, bobbing his short white beard. He thrust his hands into his tweed jacket, looked all around for a moment, then said, “I don’t know exactly where the monsters are from. I had my Q-beam pointed into space, and I was focussing it, intending to put it on Mars at the time of proper conjunction. All very complicated. However the beam must have worked prematurely. These monsters began to form in the hydrogen chamber.”

Several of the listeners looked at other listeners with unmistakable doubt. Unruffled, Dr. Mildume went on, “Now, we can make certain rough assumptions from the form and structure of these monsters. You will notice that except for their appendages they are globularly formed. Any engineer can tell you that the arch and hemisphere sustain the greatest weight for their mass.

“We may concede that they come from a planet of very strong gravity. Their skin, for instance, is tough and rigid compared with ours. They have difficulty staying rooted to earth—often a simple multipod movement will send them bouncing to the top of the cage. There is one other factor—the smaller of these creatures seems the more dominant—suggesting that on their home planet smaller beings are more agile and therefore better able to take care of themselves.”

“There, you see?” interrupted Mr. Untz, slipping into a pause. “That’s all there is to it. So now let us please get down to business.”

So they got down to business. And it was not easy business, photographing these monsters. Keeping the cage wires out of focus required a critical distance for each lens but whenever a camera came too near a fibrilla would shoot forward—at the glass, no doubt—and scare the wits out of the cameramen.

The shorter lenses got too much of the surrounding area into the picture. The crew tried and tried. One technician muttered darkly that the organization contract didn’t cover this sort of thing. Mr. Untz pleaded and cajoled and heckled and moved about and tried to keep things going. Somehow, anyhow.

Eddie Tamoto, the chief cameraman, finally came up to him and said, “It’s no use, Max. These cages simply don’t allow us to do anything. Why don’t we put them in the cages they use for jungle pictures? They’re big and camouflaged, and the mesh size is right.”

“So maybe we’ll have to do that,” said Mr. Untz.

Dr. Mildume dipped his head. “I don’t know. I’d like to see these other cages first.”

“Look,” said Mr. Untz. “Don’t worry about it. If they hold lions they will hold your whatever-you-call-thems. I’ll get the animal trainer, Flaubert, to stand by. He practically talks to animals—except horses, which is his hard luck.”

The jungle cages were duly summoned and so was Etienne Flaubert of the Golden West Animal Education Studios on Sunset Boulevard. While they waited Mr. Untz stood aside with Harold Potter. He mopped his brow—he gestured at the whole group. “This,” he said, “is the story of my life.”

“It is?” asked Harold.

Mr. Untz nodded. “Me, I am an expert on musicals. Musical I can do with my left hand. But ever since I am in Hollywood I do everything *but* a musical. And

always something gets fouled up. Always there is trouble. You will not believe this, Harold, but I am an unhappy man.”

“I believe it,” said Harold.

Mr. Untz looked at him sharply and said, “You don’t have to believe it so quickly. You could give me a chance to explain.”

“Look,” said Harold—now being truly interested and forgetting some of the first principles of buttering-up one’s boss, “take the scientific attitude. Everything is *relative*.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Untz, “In Hollywood everything is relatives, believe me.”

“No, no—I wasn’t referring to nepotism,” said Harold. “I was thinking that you and many others, of course, prefer musicals. But there are vast other groups who prefer westerns, detectives, comedies or what have you. One man’s meat is another’s poison.

“But nourishment stays the same in principle. The artistic demands still hold and a good picture is a picture, whatever its field. Now, if you, as a producer, can shift to the other fellow’s viewpoint—find out why the thing that terrifies you amuses him—or vice versa.”

“Harold,” said Mr. Untz, not without suspicion, “are you an assistant producer or a philosopher?”

“Sometimes to be the one,” sighed Harold, “you have to be the other.”

The big jungle cage arrived presently. While it was being set up another assistant came to Mr. Untz and said, “Jimsy LaRoche is outside, yelling to get in, Mr. Untz.”

Mr. Untz whirled on the assistant and said, “Tell that overpaid brat—who I personally didn’t want in my picture in the first place—tell him in the second place the President of the United States could not get in here this afternoon. No, wait a minute, that wouldn’t mean anything to him—he makes more money than the President. Just tell him no.”

“Yes, sir,” said the assistant. He left.

About then the animal trainer, Etienne Flaubert, was admitted. He walked right up to Mr. Untz. Flaubert was nearly seven feet tall. He had tremendous shoulders and none of it was coat padding. He had a chest one might have gone over Niagara Falls in. He had a huge golden beard. When he spoke it sounded like the

bass viol section of the Los Angeles Symphony tuning up.

He said to Mr. Untz, “Where are these monsters I hear about? I’d like to see the monster that isn’t just a big kitty, like all the rest. Big kitties, that’s all they are. You gotta know how to handle them.”

Mr. Untz led Flaubert to the cage and said, “There.”

Flaubert gasped. Then he steadied himself. The monsters had been maneuvered into the bigger cage by now—Dr. Mildume had enticed them with broken electric light bulbs and slammed the drop-doors behind them by a remote-control rope. They had finished their meal of glass. They were curled in a corner of the cage now, tentacles wrapped about each other, squeaking contentedly.

Flaubert recovered a bit.

“Kitties, just big kitties,” he growled.

Eddie Tamoto called, “Hey, Max, we’d like to get ’em in the center of the cage for a shot.” He was gesturing from the camera boom seat. “Only moving around. You know—looking fierce.”

“Can you do it, Flaubert?” said Mr. Untz, turning to the big trainer.

“Just big kitties,” said Flaubert.

He had brought his own whip and blank cartridge pistol. His assistant stood by with a .30-30 rifle. Dr. Mildume opened the door quickly and Flaubert slipped into the cage.

“Okay—get set, everybody!” yelled Mr. Untz. People scurried. An attendant switched on the warning light and rocker arm that warned people outside of the stage not to barge in. “Quiet!” yelled Mr. Untz. “Quiet—*quiet!*” yelled several assistants. The order went down the line. Through channels.

And there stood Etienne Flaubert, huge and more or less unafraid, in the middle of the cage. The monsters in the corner began slowly to uncoil their tentacles from about each other. Their eye-stalks rose and began to wave slowly. Their red saw-toothed mouths worked into pouts, gapes and grins.

The smaller of the two suddenly shuddered all over. Its angry chirping noise shrilled through the sound stage. Its tough skin vibrated—blurred. It sprang suddenly to its multipods and charged Flaubert.

Flaubert screamed an unholy scream. He threw the chair and the whip and the gun at the monster and dove from the exit. Dr. Mildume opened the cage door

with his rope and Flaubert went through it—himself a blur. The monster, in his wake, slammed into the door and stayed there, trembling, still chirping its rage.

“Hully gee, what kitties!” said Flaubert, pale and sweating.

Mr. Untz groaned.

“I got some of it!” yelled Eddie Tamoto from his camera. “It was terrific! But we need more!”

Then—simultaneously—there were several loud screams of alarm. Mr. Untz looked at the cage again. The smaller monster had found a crack, and was moving the cage door and squeezing through.

“Harold!” shouted Mr. Untz. “*Do something!*”

Harold stepped forward. “Back everybody,” he said in his best calm voice. “Walk—do not run—to the nearest exit.”

The second monster was already vibrating across the cage and the smaller one was holding the door open for it. Dr. Mildume had tried to maneuver the control ropes to close the door again, but hadn’t been able to work them—and now he had left his post.

Harold pointed to the man with the rifle and said, “Fire!”

The rifleman fired.

Nothing—nothing at all happened. He fired several times more. The monsters didn’t even jerk when the bullets hit them.

“They’re—they’re impervious yet!” cried Mr. Untz.

After that it was every man for himself.

Moments later Harold found himself outside of the sound stage and on the studio street, bunched with the others and staring at the thick closed door. Nobody spoke. Everybody just thrummed silently with the knowledge that two alien monsters were in there, wreaking heaven knew what damage....

And then, as they stared, the thick door began to open again. “It isn’t locked!” breathed Mr. Untz. “Nobody remembered to lock it again!”

A tentacle peeked out of the crack of the door.

Everybody scattered a second time.

Harold never remembered the order in which things happened amidst the

confusion that followed. It seemed he and Mr. Untz ran blindly, side by side, down the studio street for awhile. It seemed all kinds of people were also running, in all kinds of directions.

Bells were ringing—sirens blew—a blue studio police car took a corner on two wheels and barely missed them. Harold had a glimpse of uniformed men with drawn pistols.

They ended up somehow at Mr. Untz's office-cottage. They went inside and Mr. Untz locked the door and slammed his back to it. He leaned there, panting. He said, "Trouble, trouble, trouble. I should have stayed in Vienna. And in Vienna I should have stood in bed."

The door of the shower and dressing-room opened and Jimsy LaRoche came out. He had a number of snails in his out-stretched hand and he coolly kept them there, making no attempt to conceal his obvious purpose in the shower. He looked directly at Mr. Untz with his dark disconcerting eleven-year-old eyes and said, "Well, Max, what goof-off did you pull this time?"

"*You!*" roared Mr. Untz, whirling and shooting a finger at the child star. A focusing point for all his troubles, at last. His jowls shook. "You, Jimsy LaRoche," he said, "are going to get your first old fashioned spanking on the bottom! From me, personally!" He advanced toward the boy, who backed away hastily.

Jimsy began to look a little frightened.

"Now wait a minute, Max," said Harold, stepping forward. "We've got enough *big* monsters to think about without worrying about this *little* monster too."

Mr. Untz stared at Harold queerly. Suddenly he said, "Why didn't I think of it before?"

"Think of what?" asked Harold.

But Mr. Untz had already grabbed Jimsy LaRoche's hand and dragged him through the door.

There were several reasons why Harold Potter did not immediately pursue. For one thing he stood there for several moments stupified with surprise. Then, when he did recover, he plunged forward and promptly tripped on the cream-colored carpet and fell flat on his face. He tripped again going over the step to the cottage door. He bumped into a studio policeman rounding the next corner. He snagged his coat on a fence picket going around the corner after that. But he kept

Mr. Untz and the dragged youngster in sight.

Eventually he came to the door of Sound Stage Six.

Speaking from a police standpoint all laymen had disappeared. A ring of studio police and firemen, along with some policemen and detectives from the outside, had been drawn around the monsters and everybody and his brother was shooting off pistols and rifles at them. With no result, of course. Nor did anyone dare get too close.

Harold caught up with Mr. Untz about the time a man he recognized as a reporter did. The reporter was stout, freckled and bespectacled.

“*Untz!*” barked the reporter, with all the power of the press in his voice, “do you realize this is a national danger? If those monsters can’t be stopped by bullets, what will stop them? Where will it all end? Where did they come from?”

“Look in tomorrow’s paper!” growled Mr. Untz, brushing the reporter aside. He kept Jimsy’s arm in a firm grip. Jimsy was bawling at the top of his lungs now. Mr. Untz breasted the police cordon, broke through.

“Max! *Stop!*” shouted Harold. “Max—have you gone mad?”

Max evidently had. He moved so swiftly that everyone was too surprised to stop him. He burst into the small human-walled arena where the two bewildered monsters squatted and he thrust little Jimsy LaRoche out before him—right at the monsters.

An extraordinary thing happened. The monsters suddenly began to quiver and squeak again but this time—it was clear to the ear somehow—not with rage, but with *fear*. Pure and terrible fear. They trained their eye-stalks on Jimsy LaRoche, they paled to a lighter shade of brown and green, then slowly they began to back away.

“Hold your fire, men!” called a police captain, probably just to get into the act.

Dr. Mildume appeared again from somewhere. So did Etienne Flaubert. So did Eddie Tamoto and some of the other technicians. They gaped and stared.

Slowly, inexorably, using Jimsy LaRoche as his threat, Mr. Untz backed the two monsters into the studio, and gradually to the cage. Dr. Mildume leaped forward to shut them in once more.

And through it all Jimsy LaRoche continued to bawl at the top of his lungs.

LATER, in Mr. Untz's office-cottage, Harold read the newspaper accounts. He read every word while Mr. Untz was in the other room taking a shower. He had to admit that Max had even thrown a little credit his way. "My assistant, Mr. Potter," Untz was quoted as saying, "indirectly gave me the idea when he said that one man's meat was another man's poison.

"Dr. Mildume had already explained that the monsters came from a high-gravity planet—that the smaller of the species evidently seemed the more capable, and therefore the dominant one." Harold was sure now that the statement had been polished up a bit by the publicity department.

"The only logical assumption, then," the statement continued, "was that small stature would dominate these life forms, rather than large stature, as in the environment we know. They were, in other words, terrified by tiny Jimsy LaRoche—whose latest picture, 'The Atomic Fissionist and the Waif,' is now at your local theatre, by the way—as an Earth-being might have been terrified by a giant!"

Mr. Untz came out of the shower at that point. He was radiant in a canary-colored rayon sharkskin. He was rubbing his hands. He was beaming.

"Harold," he said, "they're putting me on a musical next. I got them twined around my little finger. Life is good. I think that screwy Dr. Mildume was smart to send those things back out into space before they could get to him. Otherwise we might have *had* to put them in pictures and with contracts yet."

"Max," said Harold, staring at him quietly.

"Yes, Harold?"

"Just answer me one thing truthfully. I swear I'll never repeat it—or even blame you. But for my own curiosity I've got to know."

"Why certainly, Harold, what is it?"

Harold Potter swallowed hard. "Did you," he asked, "*really* figure out that Jimsy would scare the beasts—or were you about to *throw* the little brat to them?"

Transcriber Notes

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