

EBONY TORSO

By John C. Woodiwiss

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Synopsis of Previous Chapters
 Detective-Inspector HOPTON, of Scotland Yard, has been called to a case which presents some very unusual features.

At Lambeth police station he learns from Divisional-Inspector CARLINGFORD that a man FREDERICK DAVIS SCUTT had been strangled. Great violence was used, and there are several curious scratches and punctures on the throat, suggestive of marks made by some large animal or bird.

The finder of the body was the vicar, Mr. GALESBOURNE, who has been called to the station to make a statement. He tells Hopton that Scutt, an ex-blackmailer, was, at the time of his death, a bogus medium who had come to believe in his own powers. He had been imposing upon a MRS. ABERSHAW, who imagined herself to be in the power of some evil spirit—an incubus, she called it. Scutt had been attempting to free her from this obsession, but in his own imagination the thing, which he described as black and formless, had transferred itself to a black ebony carving of a headless torso which he said came from Africa and which had been given him by Mrs. Abershaw.

In the snow, outside the bedroom

window, still locked and barred, was found a single impression of a clawed foot, of a type unknown to science!

On visiting the scene of the crime, the lock of the bedroom door attracted Hopton's interest. He proves that a screw which had presumably come out when Galesbourne had forced the door had never been in the lock at all. The other facts are just as the vicar had described.

Back at Scotland Yard, the Inspector receives a call from Lambeth that a woman and two children were scared near the scene of the murder by a monster that vanished as suddenly as it had appeared.

(Now Read On)

Hopton, still to his disgruntled confrere, he climbed the kitchen stairs and left the house.

Hopton spent most of the day in the neighbourhood of St. Luke's and night had settled in before he returned to Scotland Yard. He was very tired and went up to his room to think over the results of his day's work.

He opened a drawer in his desk and took out the photograph of the strange footmark on the snow-covered sill of the room in Little Street which Carlingford had given him. For some time he examined it closely with his lens and leaned back with a decided shake of the head.

"Dash it, this spooky business won't do," he muttered savagely. "It's a lot of bunk. If this thing..."

A New Development

His soliloquy was cut short abruptly by the buzzer of the telephone, and he took up the receiver with a sigh:

"Hello? Inspector Hopton speaking."

"Oh, hello, sir, it's Morrell," came the voice from the other end. "Inspector Carlingford's just rung up to report a new development in the Scutt murder."

"Well?" Hopton's voice was tense with expectation.

"A woman and two kids were nearly scared to death this evening in Ritson Lane, quite close to where the murder took place, by something they describe as an enormous monster which suddenly appeared out of space."

"Anything else?"

"Yes, sir. They said the thing vanished as suddenly as it appeared."

"Vanished?" questioned the detective in an incredulous tone.

"Yes, sir. I'm bringing you Inspector Carlingford's full report at once."

"Right you are."

Hopton put up the phone and leaned back in his chair again. He gazed abstractly at the photograph until he was interrupted by Morrell, who entered with the promised report.

"Oh, Sergeant," he said, taking it from his subordinate. "I'm returning to Lambeth almost immediately. I want you to get Superintendent Ellis, of Kensington, and ask him to make inquiries as to the whereabouts of a Mrs. Clara Abershaw, who had a flat quite recently, near West Kensington Station—she's a Spiritualist. I understand."

"Yes, sir," replied Morrell making notes of the meagre facts. "I'll phone at once. Is that all sir?"

"That's all."

gettin' Inspector," grinned O'Mara mischievously. "You were sayin' just now that this monster, or whatever it is, vanished into thin air. Surely the good woman with the kids must have been drinkin' to see a thing like that?"

"I don't know what to make of it," Sergeant said Carlingford doubtfully. "It's a queer story altogether."

"Some queer things do happen, ye know. Did ye ever hear of the Banshees Sorrow?" inquired the Sergeant meditatively.

"I've read about 'em," nodded his superior. "Sort o' ghosts, aren't they?"

"They are that," replied the Sergeant. "Ghosts that come whimperin' and cryin' to every member of the family when one o' them passes away."

"It's a good yarn," grinned the Inspector.

"Me own family, the O'Mara's, have a banshee, Inspector," remarked the Sergeant proudly. "Not that it's ever condescended to visit me, however; but I suppose it's the uniform that drives it off."

"Maybe," agreed Carlingford as he peered up the street in an abstracted manner.

"Ah, but I've met a many as it has visited, Sorrow," the Irishman informed him in a tone that showed he was not altogether a sceptic. "Tis a most unpleasant experience, too, they tell me."

The Inspector was just going to make some facetious reply, when he suddenly saw something which made him grab his companion's arm with a half audible "Flash!" that brought instant silence. The indistinct shape of a man had suddenly appeared from the pall of fog, a slow-moving, suspicious figure in a long coat and bowler hat, that slouched across the dim smudge of light from a gas lamp and was gone as suddenly as it had come.

"See that?" whispered Carlingford.

"I did so!" was the excited reply.

"Let's get a closer look at that chap."

"Toight, sorr," agreed the Sergeant. "Come on!"

The officers had rubbed soled boots and, leaving the shelter of their doorway, walked quickly towards a point where their quarry had disappeared. But when they reached the street corner there was no sign of any living creature.

"Where the deuce has he gone to?" whispered the inspector. "He can't have got far."

"That he cannot," agreed the Irishman in the same low, mystified tone.

"Ah, I have it! There's a little lane in between the houses. He must be there."

"Yes," replied Carlingford excitedly. "Come on, and keep your lamp handy."

Like two shadows the policemen tiptoed towards the entrance of the lane and peered around the corner into the inky blackness.

THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

Presently, with almost alarming suddenness, came the sound of a match being struck and, as it flared up, they could see the man clearly as he bent forward, shielding the flame with his left hand, and examining the path as if looking for something.

"What's his game?" inquired the Inspector, so softly that his voice scarcely reached his subordinate.

"Looks as if he was diggin' up the path," returned O'Mara. "Seems to be gettin' up soil."

"Queer," muttered Carlingford.

The man had his back to the officers, but they could see his outline clearly against the flickering light.

"Goin' to question him?" whispered the Sergeant.

"Yes, Careful!"

As the Inspector uttered the warning the light wobbled and went out, and they stood listening in darkness until the man struck a second match.

"What the deuce is he doing?" whispered Carlingford. "I thought he might have lost something, but it's not that."

His voice must have reached the ears of the mysterious man, for he suddenly straightened up into a listening attitude and blew out the light.

Sergeant O'Mara's nerves began to pringle with the primitive instinct of the hunter as he and his superior crouched back in the shadow of the wall and waited to pounce on their victim. Nearer came the slow footsteps and, almost before they had time to realize his presence, the dark figure of their man emerged from the lane. The Inspector took a quick step forward and gripped him by the coat sleeve.

"Excuse me, I want a word with you!" he snapped, as Sergeant O'Mara pressed over the switch of his lamp.

Their quarry swung round, and as he did so the light flashed on something bright in his hand. In a second the Sergeant had grabbed his wrist and snatched away a revolver.

"Bit too smart for ye, laddie," he remarked firmly. "Tis no use to struggle, we're police officers."

The man ceased his efforts to escape as he heard the caution, and began to chuckle.

His amusement offended the Inspector's dignity.

"You'll find it's no laughing matter to be creepin' about armed at night," he said, panting from the exertion of the capture. "Who are you?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I'm the Chief Commissioner, Inspector," replied the prisoner. "Sorry I scared you."

The shock reduced both officers to horrified inaction until the Sergeant at last regained his presence of mind and focussed the beam from his lamp on to the other's face. One look was

KING INSPECTS BRITAIN'S AIR FIGHTERS



Wearing the uniform of an officer in the royal air force, the King LEFT, is shown chatting with Captain A. H. Orlebar, RIGHT, during his flying tour of English air stations. King George takes a deep interest in the building up of Britain's air forces. He recently made a tour of aircraft factories.

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was one of the original vendors of the Poulet Vet claims in the Pamour section of the Porcupine district to Hallnor Mines, the latter controlled and operated by Noranda Mines. Hallnor is preparing for production, and is expected to pour its first gold brick by mid-summer. Noranda is also one of the largest shareholders in Porcupine Quartet Gold Syndicate.

The Amplifier

(Just Staff Stuff)

Many local people have taken pity on many of the unemployed men who are in town, and tried to assist them in several ways. Imagine how disgusting it is to a "helping hand" to find out that the money he generously handed out for "a bite," was used to purchase a couple of pints of beer. That is exactly what happened to a local gentleman the other day. He happened to be walking in the same direction as the "poor man" he befriended, and just as he passed the "hungry man" heard him say to a friend "Let's go for a pint of beer; I got money!"

And did you hear about the local young lady who asked her brother which was larger, a river or a lake?

Advice to the lady who was having such a "time" with her two youngsters the other day. Both the little girl and boy insisted upon running across the street every few minutes and would not heed their mother's word, when she warned them that a car might come along. Luckily one didn't although several times the youngsters were very lucky. However, this is the idea. About two years ago a local gentleman was having the same trouble with his son. No ordinary treatment could make the young lad stop jumping in front of cars, and giving his parents plenty to worry about. Finally, the father hit upon a scheme. As the child started to cross the street in front of a speeding car, the father quietly remarked, "Hurry up and run in front of the

SNAP

Cleans Dirty Hands

car." The boy looked up, firmly planted his right foot in front of him, pointed his lips and said "NO, NO, I won't!" Try it sometime.

Blairmore Enterprise:—Another rule for motorists is always to drive at the speed to which you slow down when you see a motor cop.

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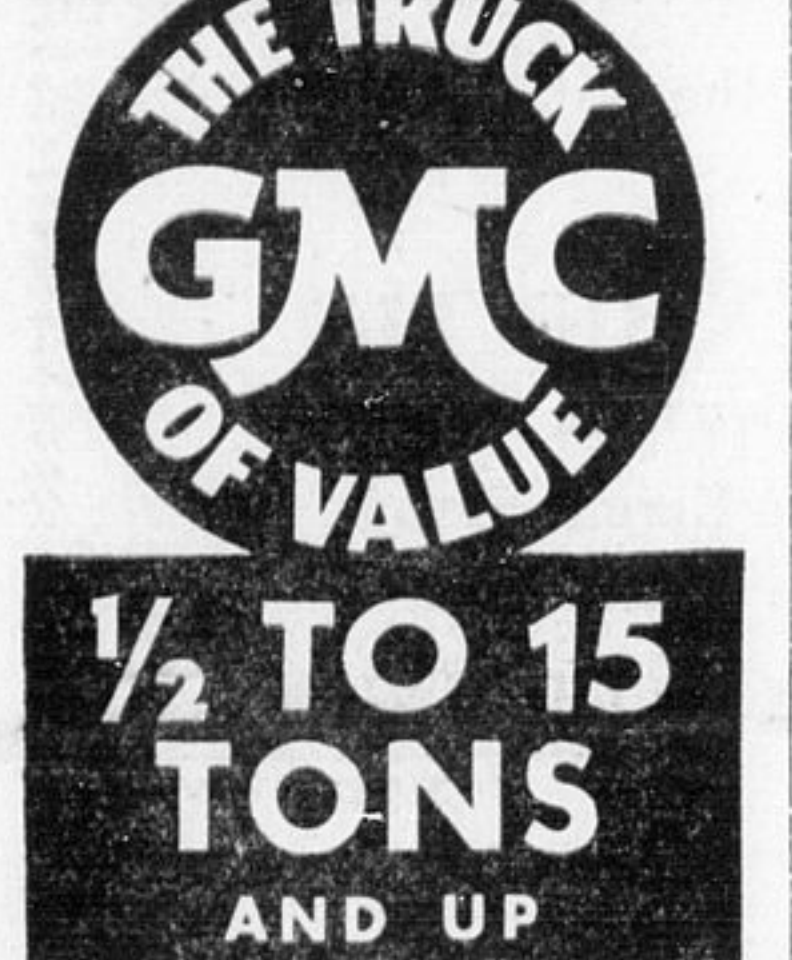
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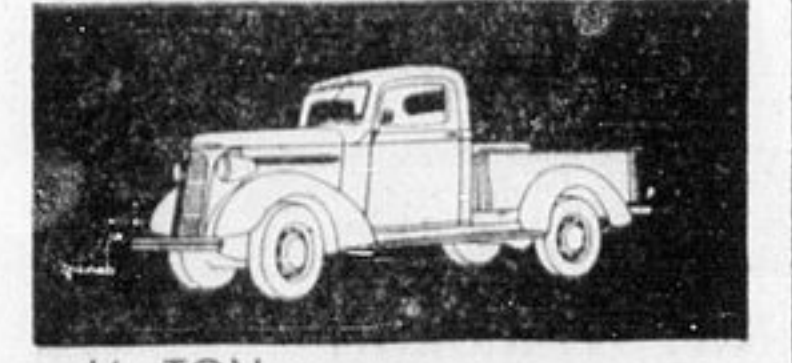
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LOW-PRICED TRUCKS COVER ALL NEEDS

Virita Acquire Two Groups of Claims

Company Now Holds Twenty-one Claims, Plans Drilling and Shaft Sinking.

Virita Porcupine Gold Mines has entered into deal, approved by directors, whereby it acquires an option to lease two groups of claims from Porcupine Quartet Gold Syndicate, adjoining its main property in the Porcupine district, for a period of ninety-nine years. The new properties will give Virita holdings of twenty-one claims in a single block, and negotiations also are pending whereby still another property may be taken in.

The new groups taken over from Porcupine Quartet are Cotton Vet and Penny Vet, each consisting of four claims. The Cotton Vet group ties on to Virita on the north, and the Penny Vet claims adjoin on the southeast, while the Virita holdings lie a short distance to the east of the Dome Mines and the Preston East Dome.

Plans are under consideration for more extensive development of the Virita holdings, in connection with which financial arrangements have been made. Under the new campaign plans call for diamond-drilling the original claims and shaft-sinking on the Penny Vet group.

Porcupine Quartet Gold Syndicate

sufficient. The long, cadaverous face, with its mischievous blue eyes and the famous monocle was too well known to be mistaken for a moment, and the crestfallen officers promptly released him, looking remarkably small.

"I'm very sorry, I'm sure, sir," stammered the Inspector, as Sir Hallard Costigan recovered his pistol from the Sergeant and replaced it in his pocket. "You quite took us in, sir. We imagined you were acting suspiciously..."

"You were quite right, Inspector; I was, very suspiciously," chuckled the Commissioner, adjusting his monocle more firmly. "And the joke of it is, I thought you were a brace of crooks—hence the gun!"

"If you'd only let us know you'd be down this way, sir, we'd have been prepared for you," replied Carlingford, with more confidence as he saw the Chief was not in a vengeful mood.

"I wanted to take a look at the district more or less incognito—it's a little bad of mine as you probably know, Inspector," replied Sir Hallard. "By gad! You've got a strong paw, my man. What's your name?"

"Sergeant O'Mara, Sorr," answered the officer smartly. "I hope I didn't hurt you, Sorr."

"I'm afraid your hopes are blighted," chuckled the Commissioner. "I'll have a bruise on my wrist for a week to come."

"Indeed, and I'm sorry to hear it, Sorr," commented the Sergeant in a penitent tone. "There's a tough lot round here, Sorr, and I daren't risk 'em' too gentle when I saw yer gun."

"You were quite in order, Sergeant. It served me right for creeping about in this suspicious manner at night," Sir Hallard assured him. "Glad to see the men in your division are so efficient, Inspector."

Carlingford thrilled with pride at this commendation.

"We're on the alert because of this extraordinary creature that's been scaring people in this neighbourhood, sir," he said. "I've got over fifty men posted at various points in the district on the chance that something might occur. That story about the 'Ebony Torso' and the mysterious footmark has got round the district, and people are inclined to imagine things—especially women and children."

"Quite so," agreed the Commissioner taking at his pipe and tobacco pouch and filling up thoughtfully. "I expect you wondered what the deuce I was doing in that lane just now?"

"Well, we thought your behaviour a little—er—suspicious, especially in view of this scare, sir," Carlingford admitted.

"I was hoping to get a sight of this mysterious animal, or whatever the thing is," the Chief assured him. "I came down here quite alone because I felt that several people moving about might scare it off, don't you know, I suppose you haven't seen anything of Inspector Hopton?" inquired Sir Hallard, ignoring the offer and lighting up.

Report of the Geological Survey Made North of Amos

Results of field investigations by J. T. Wilson in the Mistawak Lake area Quebec, are presented in two preliminary reports (papers 38-18 and 38-19, east and west halves respectively) issued recently by the Geological Survey Division, Department of Mines and Resources, Ottawa.

Located about 29 miles north of Amos, the east half of the area may be reached by canoe from Amos by the Harricaneau River, or from Villefontaine by Octave and Chicobi Rivers. Travel is rather difficult, and except along the main water routes, prospecting has not been thorough. The west half of the area is twenty-three miles north of Taschereau, and is reached by canoe route from La Sarre. Like the east half it is underlain by rocks of Precambrian Age.

Both reports contain helpful suggestions as to the most favourable sections for prospecting, and are accompanied by large scale geological maps. Copies may be obtained from the Director, Mines and Geology Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, Ottawa.

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