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Stark Terror is the Keynote of This Strange Tale

The Hairy Monster

By NEIL MILLER



I AM not a scientific or learned man. If I were, perhaps I might be able to set down the events which I am about to chronicle in such a manner as would be of enormous value to the scientific world.

Had the events which I am about to relate been witnessed by a man possessed of a knowledge of science, the world would undoubtedly have been made richer by the passing of Doctor Carrol. For then we would have a true explanation of all that took place within the mysterious laboratory which he had fitted up for himself. We would then have a solution of the most mystifying series of circumstances which I have ever heard of.

Alas, that I alone know all the absolute facts surrounding the affair! And I alone, of all the world, am perhaps the man least fitted for the task of setting them down.

For, as I have stated, I know nothing of science or of the principles involved in the doctor's experiments. The best I can do is to write down the actual occurrences in the best way I know, and permit my reader to draw his own conclusions. Were I a writer of fiction, the reading of what is to follow might have been made much more pleasurable—but then, perhaps, I might have yielded to the temptation, which I have found to be very common to writers, to polish up and gloss over certain occurrences which

took place, with a view of making them more thrilling and interesting. The events themselves are thrilling enough, and if you do not find them interesting the fault lies only in my meager ability to relate what I know to be the absolute facts.

Why Doctor Carrol, with his host of scientific friends, should ever have taken a fancy to me, is more than I have ever been able to figure out. Certainly I am not one who would attract attention from such a learned man as he. In fact, I was but a servant of the doctor's—yet at times he treated me with more courtesy than he did his colleagues in science.

I was his gardener, with a little cottage of my own on the edge of his estate; and

very often in the evening the doctor would drop in for a quiet smoke and a few minutes' conversation. And on one or two occasions I have known of his actually deserting a learned company of savants, to come to my cottage and converse with me.

Naturally, I believe that Doctor Carrol thought a great deal of me; and I would have died for him.

I think his eyes were the most noticeable thing about him. Strange, magnetic eyes they were; which, when one once looked into them, seemed to possess the property of holding his gaze until the doctor chose to look away. Hypnotic, I guess you would call it. Certainly no man could ever forget the eyes of Doctor Carrol.

And because I could never forget the eyes of my master, a group of analysts judged me insane! Bah! They do not know what I know—and probably never will.

From time to time, the learned doctor had been engaged in scientific experiments. Though I never did know the complete details of those experiments, I did know that the doctor held an enviable place in the world of science, and that he was the author of several books which had caused sensational stir among his fellow scientists. In fact, I was at all times impressed with the depth of the doctor's learning.

And I never ceased to marvel at the things he sometimes showed me in his laboratory. Horrible, grotesque, and sometimes seemingly supernatural were the things which he brought before my attention. Had I been superstitious or of weak heart, I know that I would long ago have died of the horrors which he showed me.

But the calm, precise doctor often complimented me by saying that I was able to see such things in the calm, dispassionate light with which all scientists must view their experiments. Thus encouraged, I continued my infrequent visits to the laboratory and endeavored to manifest an enthusiasm for the horrible and eerie things which he showed me; though often, after seeing some of his terrible creations, I would return to my hut, and lie awake all night long, too shaken by the sights I had witnessed to go to sleep.

The result of the doctor's last experiment, however, made such a deep impression upon me that for three months after, I was confined to the violent ward of the state hospital, with the attendants despairing of ever restoring my sanity.

IT WAS in the latter part of May that I first began to miss the doctor from his accustomed haunts. No longer did he come down to my cottage in the evening for a quiet smoke and a few minutes' chat. From Mr. Barton, the doctor's son-in-law, I learned that he was spending most of his time in the concrete laboratory; appearing at the house only for his meals and to snatch a few hours sleep.

"It is something big he is working on this time," said Mr. Barton. "He won't let any of us go near the laboratory—not even Bessie. When he does appear at the house, it is only to snatch a bite to eat, or to doze for a moment. Then he is all haste to get back to the laboratory. And he is so nervous and excited; I swear that I have never seen him so enthusiastic over an experiment. We'll see a lot of excitement around here when he finally throws open the door of the laboratory and invites his friends out to see what he has done."

Remembering some of the things I had seen within the grim walls of the laboratory, I could not restrain a shudder. But as days passed, I found that a certain morbid curiosity seemed to be continually drawing me toward the laboratory, in the hope that I might gain an inkling as to what was going on behind those closely-barred windows.

That it was something to strike fear to the heart of mortal man, I well knew—yet I could not keep away from the place. And the doctor disappeared entirely, and I learned that he was having his meals sent out to him, and was spending both days and nights within the walls of the laboratory.

About a month after the doctor had shut himself up in the concrete laboratory I had been working on the far side of the estate, and at sunset, as I turned my steps toward my cottage, I met Mr. Barton. He fell into step beside me and walked to my door. I knew at once that the young man was deeply worried about something, and though he spoke no word as we walked along, I knew that he wanted to confide in me. But I held my peace.

At last we left the shadowy woods and came out upon the concrete driveway which led to the house and the laboratory. For a time, we walked along, the only sound being the crunch of our feet on the gravel, which a recent rain had washed down. I was vainly trying to arrive at some conclusion as to what had so disturbed my young companion, when, suddenly, I stopped and stared in horror at a spot on the pavement. There, gleaming in the setting sun, lay a large pool of fresh blood!

Barton saw it about the same time I did; and I noticed that he shuddered. Then, as though desiring to lose sight of the crimson pool, he quickened his pace.

"Blood!" he muttered as though to himself. "Fresh blood every day, always at the same time—and every day there is more of it!"

"What's that, sir?" I asked respectfully.

He stopped suddenly and seized my sleeve.

"Greening," he said nervously, "this thing is getting on my nerves, and I've simply got to have someone to talk to. You saw that pool of blood back there; but do you know what it means?"

I admitted that I did not.

"I only wish I did," he said. "I do know that day after day the doctor has been receiving ever increasing quantities of blood. At first, it was only a quart; then it was a gallon. Today—" here, he lowered his voice—"today, it was ten gallons!"

"It probably has something to do with his experiments," I said with attempted lightness. "I have known of him having stranger things than blood in that old laboratory."

"What kind of an experiment can he be conducting which requires ten gallons of blood every day?" demanded Mr. Barton. "I tell you, man, I'm afraid. I have a feeling that something is going to happen! Something terrible!"

At last he left me, still muttering that something terrible was about to happen. For a long time after he had gone, I sat alone on the veranda of my cottage, watching the bright red glow of the western sky. Red—red like blood. And then I shuddered—why, I know not.

I do not think I had been influenced by Mr. Barton's fears—indeed, I had almost forgotten them. But suddenly there had come over me an overwhelming premonition of impending disaster. Though the night was hot and sultry, I felt suddenly cold and afraid. Thinking to lose this feeling of depression, I rose and entered the house. Inside, with the lights switched on, things began to assume a more cheerful aspect. Indeed, I managed to laugh at my fears, which seemed so groundless.

Would to God that I had heeded them!

AT LAST, as the clock struck twelve, I rose and began to prepare for bed.

After extinguishing the light, I stepped out onto the veranda, and looked up the driveway toward the laboratory. The night was hot and sultry, with promise of rain before the morrow. Light, scudding clouds raced across the sky, at times entirely obscuring the moon. I no-

ticed that the doctor had thrown open one of the big steel shutters, probably to gain air. Satisfied that all was well, I re-entered my cottage and promptly went to bed.

Sleep was long in coming, and when at last I drifted into a restless slumber my sleep was disturbed by a terrible dream in which I seemed to be drowning in an ocean of blood. Above me, the strange, magnetic eyes of the doctor smiled cryptically and seemed to hold me with their hypnotic power above the eddy currents which endeavored to engulf me.

I awoke, gasping for breath and sweating from every pore of my body, and possessed of such a feeling of horror as I had never known before. For a time, I could not believe that the whole thing had been but a terrible dream. The billows of blood still seemed to surge about me—and there, directly above my bed, shone a pair of round, luminous eyes! How long I stared at them, too shaken to move, I do not know. It seemed an eternity that those two awful eyes glared unblinkingly into mine as I lay, trembling and impotent.

Then, suddenly, the thing dropped upon me! I was instantly smothered beneath the horrible, clawing thing. The soft, yielding, hair-covered body seemed to weigh me down, while the unseeable stench sickened and suffocated me. Great, sinewy arms, at least a dozen in number, wrapped themselves about my body as though in an effort to crush me to death.

I felt the hot, stagnant breath of the beast close to my face, and realized that the murderous jaws were ever drawing nearer to my throat. In vain did I rain blows upon the body of the creature. Though at times my fate sank deeply into the flesh, they made no impression. At last, with the final remnant of my rapidly ebbing energy, I managed to roll over and throw the beast to the floor.

There followed a sound of confused scuffling, and a moment later I caught sight of a large shadow at the window. The accursed thing had gone!

For several minutes I lay on my back, striving to get back my breath and strength. Then I rose unsteadily to my feet, switched on the lights, and, securing a shotgun which I always kept handy, I stepped outside, with the view of pursuing this ungodly creature.

I must have slept longer than I thought, for the sky was now completely overcast; and off in the west lightning flashed incessantly. The rumble of thunder and the freshening breeze gave promise of rain in a very short time. Though the obscuring of the moon had deprived

me of a very powerful ally, I was determined to sleep no more that night until I had found the beast.

Attracted by the dim light which still glowed in the laboratory, I made my way toward it and peered in through the open window. There, so close that I could have touched him had I cared to reach through the bars, sat the doctor. He had his back turned toward the window and was bending over his desk, writing.

Apparently, there was nothing wrong here—except that the doctor was slowly wearing himself out with his experiment. I tarried there in the light from the open window. Somehow, after my ordeal with that terrible thing, the proximity of another human seemed comforting. And as I stood there, watching the doctor writing away so quietly, I began to wonder if, perhaps, the whole thing had not been a terrible nightmare. Long I stood there, pondering on the question, and when I next looked at the doctor, his head had slumped down upon the desk, and the sound of his breathing told me that he slept.

Meanwhile, the storm had rapidly been drawing nearer. Great ragged ropes of fire flashed across the leaden sky, and the thunder rumbled. Even as I stood, mentally debating if I hadn't better dismiss my nocturnal visitor as a product of my imagination and go back to bed, the storm broke in all its fury. I was about to make a dash for the shelter of my cottage, when suddenly above the tumult of the storm I heard a shrill, unearthly scream, as of a mortal thing in deadly terror!

Instantly there surged into my mind a vision of that great, hairy, many-armed beast; and I raced away through the swirling rain toward the shadowy bulk of the house. Apparently others had heard the scream, for in the servants' quarters a light suddenly sprang into being. Other lights appeared, and I heard the sound of excited voices. Then, again, that horrifying scream!

Driven by a fear of I knew not what, I dashed through the house and up the broad stairway in front, to the rooms occupied by the doctor's daughter and her husband. A small group of excited servants had gathered in a hysterical group before the door and were making a vain effort to force it in. Even as we struggled with the heavy oaken door, the scream was repeated—very feebly this time. Burrows, the chauffeur, and I drew back and threw our combined weights against the door.

And then, as the massive panel crashed in, I saw a scene, the like of which I never wish to see again.

THE room was literally drenched in blood. On the floor lay the lifeless and horribly mutilated body of Mr. Barton, while on the snowy expanse of the bed lay his wife. The throats of both had been terribly mangled, as though gnawed by some ferocious beast.

Everywhere about the room, the splatterings of blood gave mute, though tragic, testimony of the mighty struggle which had taken place. Burrows and I grimly drove the others away that they might not look upon the terrible sight. We dispatched the woman who had been the doctor's cook to the telephone, with instructions to notify the police and summon a physician—though I knew he could do nothing. Then, for a few moments, Burrows and I stood shuddering in the room of death. For my part, I was attempting to collect my wits and decide on what to do.

"Of course, who ever committed this terrible crime came and went through the open window," I remarked absently. "Since the only door to the room was securely locked from the inside, it is quite apparent that the murderer must have entered through the window."

"But it is a sheer drop of fifty feet!" remonstrated Burrows with a shudder.

I looked out the open window, and saw that he was right. Nor was there any visible means by which a person might raise himself up the smooth brick surface of the house.

"I tell you, no man did this," muttered Burrows between his chattering teeth. "It is the work of some damned beast. I read a story once by a guy called Poe, and that story told about two women who were murdered—by an ape!"

And suddenly I remembered that terrifying nightmare in my cottage. Could Burrows be right? Could it have been a gigantic ape which had attacked me and murdered this couple?

I shuddered at the thought—yet there instantly surged into my mind a thought even more terrifying—for now I knew that I had not dreamed about the creature. There, before me, lay the mute tragic testimony that the beast actually existed. But the many arms? Surely, no ape ever possessed such a number! But if not an ape—then what was it?

"I'll tell you what I think!" said Burrows slowly, and with a visible effort to regain his self-possession. "I think it was some damned thing the doctor has been experimenting with. Some terrible monster. You know about the blood he has been getting!"

I nodded. Burrows leaned toward me and seized my sleeve nervously.

"I know what he has been doing with it," he whispered. "One day, the man from the sbattoir did not come, and I had to drive in and bring it out. The doctor took the can inside the laboratory, and dumped the blood into a long trough—just like a hog trough. One end of it stuck out through a partition which the doctor had built across the laboratory. And as the blood ran down the trough, I heard a movement behind the partition, like some animal rushing to its feed."

"What sort of an animal?" I asked.

"What sort?" he echoed. "What sort of an animal do you expect to drink ten gallons of blood every day?"

And then a sudden thought struck me. "It couldn't have been that animal which committed this crime, whatever it was," I said. "At the time I heard the scream I was standing just outside the window of the laboratory. The doctor was awake when I first saw him, and therefore it would have been impossible for the beast to have escaped. As I stood there, the doctor went to sleep—but I was just outside the window, the only open one in the building, and would have seen anything which came out."

"Then who—or what did do it?" demanded Burrows.

"I don't know—but we are going to find out, if possible," I replied. "Get a gun, if you can find one, and join me outside. We will go, first, to the laboratory, to inform the doctor. Then we will search the grounds thoroughly."

Outside, the storm had increased in fury, and we had great difficulty in making our way through the driving rain to the laboratory. The brilliant flares of lightning intermittently revealed our surroundings as light as day, and the next instant we were plunged into darkness so deep that often we stumbled and fell. It seemed that all the elements of nature were against us, yet we persisted in our attempt to reach the doctor.

At last we succeeded in reaching the grim walls of the laboratory. Burrows raised the butt of his rifle and pounded loudly upon the steel door; then we waited impatiently for the doctor to open it. There was no response.

Again we beat upon the door, and, while Burrows waited, I made my way around the building to where I had seen the open shutter. A sudden clutch of dread seized my heart as I saw that it was closed. Of course, it would have been perfectly natural for the doctor to have closed it against the rain—but still I shuddered. Wondering and fearful, I made my way back to the door, where Burrows waited.

"He doesn't answer!" he shouted to me above the tumult of the storm.

Vainly did I try to reason with myself that nothing could have happened to the doctor, safe as he was behind those walls of solid concrete. A growing fear came over me that behind the unyielding steel door we would find another tragedy. And I was unable to throw the feeling off, even though I reasoned that the doctor had been sleeping when last I saw him, and that perhaps his sheer exhaustion or the fury of the storm made it impossible for him to hear our efforts to get in. At last I yielded to my fears and suggested that we break down the door.

"Do you think—" began Burrows chatteringly.

"I don't know," I replied. "But we are going to find out. I believe that it will be possible for us to remove the door from its hinges."

"Oh, why didn't I return to the city tonight!" moaned Burrows. "Blood—blood and murder. First, the doctor's daughter and her husband—now the doctor!"

"Shut up and bring some tools," I commanded gruffly. "I believe we will find the doctor perfectly well; but we must get to work."

Reluctantly, he went to the garage for tools, and we fell to work on the massive steel door. How long we labored I have no means of knowing, for we lost all account of the time in our frenzied efforts to reach our master.

At last we succeeded in driving out the last pin. A strong pull on the crowbar, and the immense steel door crashed to the ground, where the rain beat upon it relentlessly. There remained a wooden door which we must also force if we were to gain entrance to the doctor's workroom. This yielded quickly to our efforts, and then we paused, suddenly stricken with an unknown fear. For the place was in absolute darkness—like that of a tomb!

"Doctor Carroll!" I called nervously.

An empty, mocking echo from the vault was my only response. And then suddenly I knew that we would never find the doctor alive—that, for the second time that evening, I stood in the presence of a horrible and mysterious death.

Death—and something else! Some subtle intuition told me that in this vault of the dead was a living, breathing thing.

"For God's sake, get a flashlight!" I said huskily, as I took a firmer grip on my shotgun.

Burrows hastened away, to return a moment later with the desired article.

Not without some misgivings, I stepped inside the building, directed the lamp toward the chair where I had last seen the doctor, and pressed the button.

I think I must have screamed at what I saw. There, by the window, his throat jaggedly torn from ear to ear, sat the lifeless body of the doctor. I had no doubt that the doctor had been attacked while he slept, and that the same beast which had killed his daughter and her husband had also slain the doctor. One peculiar thing impressed itself upon me; and that was the complete absence of blood. Nowhere about the doctor was there a drop to be seen, and this, in spite of the fact that his throat had been ripped and torn in a most fiendish manner.

Then I saw how it happened that the building was in total darkness. In death, the doctor's head had been thrown back against the wall, and, coming into contact with the switch, had broken the current.

Warning Burrows to keep a close watch, I took a firmer grip on my shotgun and entered the room. Tremblingly, I strode over to the lifeless body of the doctor, lifted his head, and switched on the lights. No sooner had they flashed on than I heard a horrible, terror-stricken scream from the doorway. Burrows had disappeared!

With a sudden clutch of dread upon my heart, I slowly wheeled about, reluctant to gaze upon the sight which must have driven Burrows screaming from the doorway. The thing I saw was even more hideous than my wildest imaginings had made it.

There, not ten feet distant from me, I beheld the most horrible creature ever seen upon this earth! Measuring fully six feet from head to tail, and possessing a head as large as my own, this creature suddenly raised itself upon its long, slender legs.

And then I realized for the first time what it was. In spite of its monstrous size, I quickly recognized it as a spider—a gigantic, horrible, grotesque spider!

I PRAY that never again may I be brought face to face with such a hideous parody on nature. How long I stood, staring in fascinated horror at this terrible monstrosity, I do not know. The body and the legs of the creature were literally saturated in fresh, smelly blood—the blood of Mr. Barton and his wife. With a shudder, I realized how closely I had escaped the fate which had overtaken the other two, and, last of all, the doctor. With a sudden rage against this blood-spattered murderer, I raised my

gun. And then, it raised its head, and I saw the eyes!

It was then that madness finally came over me. I screamed aloud in my terror, while the gun went clattering unheeded to the floor. I think I would have fled screaming from the building, had I not been held there by the spell of those eyes.

Master analysts have judged me to be insane, yet I know as surely as I know that I am alive that the thing which had taken the life of the doctor, had also taken something else. Something—I do not know what—unless it could have been his soul. For the eyes—the eyes of that abominable creature were undoubtedly the magnetic, unforgettable eyes of Doctor Carroll!

And in those eyes was such a look of horror as I have never seen, the look of a damned soul. Then, as those magnetic eyes gazed into mine, I fancied that the expression changed, that they seemed to be beseeching me mutely—trying vainly to break across the intervening gulf and convey some message to me.

This look gave way to one of disappointment. I wondered if it were possible that the doctor had been trying to communicate with me through the medium of those eyes, and was now disappointed because I was unable to read his thoughts. I never could decide. The expression changed quickly to one of utter despair.

Then, slowly and deliberately, the great beast turned about and began to move across the room. At the wall, it paused and again looked toward me. From the grotesque head the eyes of the doctor stared at me, with an expression of horror—horror and something else. At first, I did not understand, but now, I know. Doctor Carroll was telling me good-bye!

An instant, and one of the long, ungainly legs reached up along the wall. Slowly, the beast raised itself to an upright position. Then, slowly, almost re-

luctantly, I fancied, one of the legs reached up to a shelf which hung upon the wall. While I waited, an immense jug came crashing down, spilling the contents all over the creature. A horrible odor of burning acid assailed my nostrils as the beast sank back to the floor, yet I stayed on—too horrified to move. Slowly, but surely, the all-devouring acid burned away the body of the beast.

I stood and impotently watched the death throes of the accursed thing, watched the slow destruction of the loathsome body, which in some unaccountable way held the soul of my master!

At last it was over. Where the spider had lain, nothing remained but a few shreds and a pool of discolored acid. I must have been totally insane as I tottered out through the open door of the laboratory, into the dawn of a new day, to babble to the police an incredible tale of a gigantic spider which possessed itself of the soul of a man. They told me that I was insane—that the spider's possession of the soul of a man was a product of my disordered imagination.

But the doctor's notebook, which we found in the laboratory, proves beyond a doubt that the creature existed, and, incredulous though they were, they were forced to believe that Mr. Barton, his wife and the doctor were all murdered by the creature. Only my statement that the soul of the doctor had, in some unaccountable way, entered into the body of the spider, they have steadfastly refused to believe. Yet, if it is not true—if the authorities are right in declaring such a thing to be impossible—then why did the creature deliberately destroy itself?

IN CLOSING, I will be as brief as possible, for my story is done, and except for a few comments on the doctor's notebook, there is nothing more to be said.

It appeared from the notebook that for some time the doctor had been interested

in a theory that certain animals might be increased in size to a limit prescribed only by the desire of the experimenter. He had begun his experiment on a spider in preference to other creatures, on account of some technical reason which he carefully explained in the notebook, but which I did not understand.

Day by day, he traced the results of his attempt, from the time he first began his experiment, up to a very few minutes before his death. Although at the time he wrote it, the doctor could have had no idea of the fatal end of his experiment, he made this notation:

"It is quite apparent that I have made a miscalculation in arranging my daily feeding schedule. The amount of blood I have been feeding is proving woefully inadequate; and, to make matters worse, the man from the abattoir made a serious error in my order for today. The beast is growing much more rapidly than I had expected, and I fear that I am going to have serious trouble unless I can arrange to feed him early tomorrow morning. I must send Burrows to town as soon as possible, and have him bring out enough blood to feed him. I hesitate to think of what might happen should this powerful creature feel the pangs of hunger."

And there the manuscript ends, as I presume it ended when I, from my post of vantage outside the laboratory window, saw the doctor slump down upon his desk and fall asleep.

I have pondered considerably on the question of how the beast managed to escape while the doctor was seated within a few feet of the pen. And finally I arrived at a satisfactory solution, which is that the doctor had been in the habit of dropping off for a few moments sleep at irregular intervals, and that it was at one of these times that the spider made his escape.

