



## Muntu: Ivory's Story

**Eugen Bacon**

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A killer is on the loose in Eugen Bacon's speculative novel *Muntu*.

Ivory heads an investigation into a possible serial killer who murders men, leaving behind ashes and the men's partners in catatonic states. With few leads and a superior breathing down her neck, Ivory turns to a medicine woman from a remote part of the country in the hopes that a spiritual approach will provide answers. The medicine woman's tactics guide Ivory in confronting the horrors of her childhood as an orphan, connecting her to the tradition that is her birthright.

The novella takes its time to get up to speed and exhibits drastic tonal shifts in its opening chapters. However, the layers build upon each other well until legend and reality combine, seeded by small details that gain significance over the course of the book. Ivory's opal necklace, which rejects people by burning them, is the most impactful of these. It connects her to the Valley of Dreams, a place ripped from time after Muntu, who also wore the necklace, was burned at the stake for loving the chief's daughter. His death becomes the catalyst for all that comes after.

The investigation is a vehicle to Ivory's self-understanding. While the mystery is given its due in both process and detail, it takes a backseat to the novella's exploration of Ivory's personal history through spiritual elements represented by the medicine woman and the Valley of Dreams. Ivory's embrace of these elements is made plausible because the novella presents spirituality as being on equal footing with traditional methods. The astral journey that Ivory undergoes is a particular standout in which colors, landscapes, and alien worlds collide.

*Muntu* is a surreal novel that brings together mysticism and murder.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (May / June 2026)

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