



**The Mind Master**  
Burks, Arthur J.

**Published:** 1932

**Type(s):** Short Fiction, Science Fiction

**Source:** <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/29416>

## **About Burks:**

Arthur J. Burks (September 13, 1898 – 1974) was an American writer and a Marine colonel.

Burks was born to a farming family in Waterville, Washington. He married Blanche Fidelia Lane on March 23, 1918 in Sacramento, California and was the father of four children: Phillip Charles, Wasle Carmen, Arline Mary and Gladys Lura. He served in the United States Marine Corps in World War I, and began writing in 1920. After being stationed in the Caribbean and inspired by the native voodoo rituals, Burks began to write stories of the supernatural that he sold to the magazine *Weird Tales*. In 1928 he resigned from the Marine Corps and began writing full time. He became one of the "million-word-a-year" men in the pulps by virtue of his tremendous output. He was well-known for being able to take any household object that someone would suggest to him on a dare, and instantly generate a plot based around it. His byline was commonplace on pulp covers. He wrote primarily in the genres of aviation, detective, adventure and weird menace. Two genres he was not to be found in were love and westerns. He wrote several series for the pulps, including the Kid Friel boxing stories in *Gangster Stories*, and the Dorus Noel undercover-detective stories for *All Detective Magazine*, set in Manhattan's Chinatown. The pressure of producing so much fiction caused him to ease off in the late-1930s. He returned to active duty as the U.S. entered World War II and eventually retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel. Burks moved to Paradise in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in 1948, where he continued to write until his death in 1974. Throughout the '60s, he wrote many works on metaphysics and the paranormal. In his later years, he lectured on paranormal activities and gave readings.

## **Also available on Feedbooks for Burks:**

- *Lords of the Stratosphere* (1933)

**Copyright:** Please read the legal notice included in this e-book and/or check the copyright status in your country.

**Note:** This book is brought to you by Feedbooks.

<http://www.feedbooks.com>

Strictly for personal use, do not use this file for commercial purposes.

**Transcriber's Note:**

This etext was produced from "Astounding Stories" January and February, 1932. Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed.

The original "What has gone before" recap section from the second part (February edition) has been removed from this combined version.

# Chapter 1

## The Tuft of Hair

"LET'S hope the horrible nightmare is over, dearest," whispered Ellen Estabrook to Lee Bentley as their liner came crawling up through the Narrows and the Statue of Liberty greeted the two with uplifted torch beyond Staten Island. New York's skyline was beautiful through the mist and smoke which always seemed to mask it. It was good to be home again. Once more Lee Bentley is caught up in the marvelous machinations of the mad genius Barter.

Certainly it was a far cry from the African jungles where, for the space of a ghastly nightmare, Ellen had been a captive of the apes and Bentley himself had had a horrible adventure. Caleb Barter, a mad scientist, had drugged him and exchanged his brain with that of an ape, and for hours Bentley had roamed the jungles hidden in the great hairy body, the only part of him remaining "Bentley" being the Bentley brain which Barter had placed in the ape's skull-pan. Bentley would never forget the horror of that grim awakening, in which he had found himself walking on bent knuckles, his voice the fighting bellow of a giant anthropoid.

Yes, it was a far cry from the African jungles to populous Manhattan.

As soon as Ellen and Lee considered themselves recovered from the shock of the experience they would be married. They had already spent two months of absolute rest in England after their escape from Africa, but they found it had not been enough. Their story had been told in the press of the world and they had been constantly besieged by the curious, which of course had not helped them to forget.

"LEE," whispered Ellen, "I'll never feel sure that Caleb Barter is dead. We should have gone out that morning when he forgot to take his whip and we thought the vengeful apes had slain him. We should have proved it to our own satisfaction. It would be an ironic jest, characteristic of Barter, to allow us to think him dead."

"He's dead all right, dear," replied Bentley, his nostrils quivering with pleasure as he looked ahead at New York, while the breeze along the Hudson pushed his hair back from his forehead. "He had abused the great anthropoids for too many years. They seized their opportunity, don't mistake that."

"Still, he was a genius in his way, a mad, frightful genius. It hardly seems possible to me that he would allow himself to be so easily trapped. It's a reflection on his great mentality, twisted though it was."

"Forget it, dear," replied Bentley, putting his arm around her shoulders. "We'll both try to forget. After our nerves have returned to normal we'll be married. Then nothing can trouble us."

The vessel docked and later Lee and Ellen entered a taxicab near the pier.

"I'll take you to your home, Ellen," said Bentley. "Then I'll look after my own affairs for the next couple of days, which includes making peace with my father, then we'll go on from here."

They looked through the windows of the cab as they rolled into lower Fifth Avenue and headed uptown. Newsies were screaming an extra from the sidewalks.

"Excitement!" said Bentley enthusiastically. "It's certainly good to be home and hear a newsboy's unintelligible screaming of an extra, isn't it?"

On an impulse he ordered the cabbie to draw up to the curb and purchased a newspaper.

"Do you mind if I glance through the headlines?" Bentley asked Ellen. "I haven't looked at an American paper for ever so long."

THE cab started again and Bentley folded the paper, falling easily into the habit of New Yorkers who are accustomed to reading on subways where there isn't room for elbows, to say nothing of broad newspapers.

His eyes caught a headline. He started, frowning, but was instantly mindful of Ellen. He mustn't show any signs that would excite her, especially when he didn't yet understand what had caused his own instant perturbation.

Had Ellen looked at him she might have seen merely the calm face of a man mildly interested in the news of the day, but she was looking out at the Fifth Avenue shops.

Bentley was staring again at the newspaper story:

“An evil genius signing his ‘manifestoes’ with the strange cognomen of ‘Mind Master’ gives the authorities of New York City twelve hours in which to take precautions. To prove that he is able to make good his mad threats he states that at noon exactly, to-day, he will cause the death of the chief executive of a great insurance company whose offices are in the Flatiron Building. After that, at regular stated periods, warnings to be issued in each case ten hours in advance, he will steal the brains of the twenty men whose names are hereto appended:” (There followed then a list of names, all of which were known to Bentley.)

He understood why the story had startled him, too. “Mind Master!” Anything that had to do with the human brain interested him mightily now, for he knew to what grim uses it could be put at the hands of a master scientist. Around his own head, safely covered by his hair unless someone looked closely, and even then they must needs know what they sought, was a thin white line. It marked the line of Caleb Barter’s operation on him that terrible night in the African jungles, when his brain had been transferred to the skull-pan of an ape, and the ape’s brain to his own cranium. Any mention of the brain, therefore, recalled to him a very harrowing experience.

It was little wonder that he shuddered.

Ellen noticed his agitation.

“What is it, dearest?” she asked softly, placing her hand in the crook of his arm.

HE was about to answer her, desperately trying to think of something to say that would not alarm her, when their taxicab, with a sudden application of the brakes, came to a sharp stop. Bentley noticed that they were at the intersection of Twenty-second Street and Fifth Avenue. The lights were still green, but nevertheless all traffic was halted.

And for a strange reason.

From the west door of the Flatiron Building emerged a grim apparition of a man. His body was scored by countless bleeding wounds which looked as though they had been made by the fingernails of a giant. The man wore no article of clothing except his shoes. Apparently, his

clothing had been ripped from his body by the same instrument which had turned his body into a raw, dripping horror.

The man staggered, half-running, at times all but falling, toward the traffic officer at the intersection.

As he ran he screamed, horrible, babbling screams. His lips worked crazily, his eyes rolled. He was frightened beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals. His screams began and ended on the high shrill notes of utter dementia, and as he ran he pawed the air with his bleeding hands as though he fought out on all sides against invisible demons seeking to drag him down.

“Oh, my God!” said Ellen. “Even here!”

What had caused her to speak the last two words? Did she also have a premonition of grim disaster? Did she also feel, deep down inside her, as Bentley did, that the nightmare through which they had passed was not yet ended?

Bentley now sat unmoving, his eyes unblinking, as he saw the naked man stagger over to the traffic officer. The color drained from his face.

He looked at his watch. It was exactly noon.

Even without further consideration Bentley knew that this gruesome apparition had some direct connection with the newspaper story he had just read.

UNOBTRUSIVELY, trying to make it seem a preoccupied action, he folded the newspaper again and thrust it down at the end of the seat cushion. But Ellen was watching him, a haunting fear gradually coming into her eyes.

She quickly reached past him and snatched the paper before he realized her intent. The item he had read came instantly under her eyes because of the way he had automatically folded the paper. She read it with staring eyes.

“So, Lee,” she said, “you think there’s a connection with—with—well, with *us*?”

“Absurd!” he said heartily, too heartily. “Caleb Barter is dead.”

“But I have never been sure,” insisted Ellen. “Oh, Lee, let’s get away from here! Let’s take the first boat for Bermuda—anywhere to escape this terrible fear.”

"No!" he retorted harshly. "If our suspicions are correct, and I think we're unwarrantedly keyed up because of our recent experiences, the officials of New York may need my help."

"Your help? Why?"

"I know more about Caleb Barter than any other living man, perhaps."

"Then you *do* have doubts that he is dead!"

Bentley shrugged his shoulders.

"Ellen," he said, "drive on home without me. I'm going to drop off and find out all I can. If we're in for it in any way it's just as well to know it at once."

"You'll come right along?"

"Just as soon as I can make it. And I hope I'll be able to report our fears groundless."

Bentley stepped from the cab. He ordered the chauffeur to turn right into Twenty-second Street and to proceed until Ellen gave him further directions.

Then Bentley hurried through the congestion of automobiles toward the traffic officer who was fighting with the naked man, trying to subdue him. Other men were running to the officer's assistance, for it could be seen that he alone was no match for the lunatic. Bentley, however, was first to arrive.

"Give me a hand!" gasped the officer. "I can't handle 'im without usin' my club and I don't wanna do that. The poor fella don't know what he's a-doin'."

BENTLEY quickly sprang to the patrolman's assistance. Between them they soon reduced the stranger to a squirming bundle and dragged him to the sidewalk; another officer was phoning for an ambulance. The stricken man was now mumbling, babbling insanely. Blood trickled from the corners of his lips. The sight of one eye had been destroyed.

Bentley watched him, sprawled now on the sidewalk, surrounded by a group of men. The man was dying, no question about that. The talons, which had scored him, had bitten deeply and he was destined to bleed to death soon even if the wounds were not otherwise mortal.

Bentley noticed something clutched tightly in the man's right hand—something that sent a chill through his body despite the heat of a mid-July noon. The officer, apparently, had not noticed it.



Soon a clanging bell announced the arrival of an ambulance, and as the crowd stepped aside to clear the way, Bentley bent over the dying man. The man's lips were parted and he was trying with a mighty effort of will to speak.

Bentley put his ear close to the bleeding lips through which words strove to bubble. He heard parts of two words:

"... ind ... aster... ."

Bentley suddenly knew what the man was trying to say. The half-uttered words could mean only—"Mind Master."

Bentley suppressed a shudder and extended his hands to the closed right hand of the dying man. Carefully he removed from between the fingers three tufts of thick brown hair, coarse and crude of texture. There was a rattle in the naked man's throat.

Five minutes later the ambulance intern hastily scribbled in his record the entry, "Dead on Arrival."

Bentley, more frightened than he had ever been before, entered a taxicab as soon as the body had been removed and the streets cleared. He stared closely at the tufts of hair in his hand. Maybe he had been wrong in taking them before detectives arrived on the scene, but he had to know, and he felt that these hairs proved his mad suspicions.

Caleb Barter was alive!

The hairs came from the shaggy coat of a giant anthropoid ape or a gorilla.

## Chapter 2

### Ultimatum

HOW terribly far-fetched it seemed! It was unbelievable enough that Bentley had once reposed in the body of an ape. That had been in the African wilds. But the idiocy of the thing now rested in Bentley's belief that here, immediately upon landing, he was again facing something just as horrible.

But the coincidences were too clear. The palaver about "brains," and "Mind Master"—and those ape hairs in Bentley's hands. He wished he knew all that had led up to that story he had read in the paper just prior to the appearance of the naked man from the west door of the Flatiron Building. However, the killing would get front page position now, due to the importance of the dead man—Bentley never doubted it was the man whom, in the paper, the "Mind Master" had promised to slay.

Great apes in the heart of New York City! It sounded silly, preposterous. Yet, before he had gone through that dread experience with the mad Barter, Bentley would have sworn that brain transplantation was impossible. Even now he was not sure that it hadn't all been a terrible dream.

Should Bentley go at once to the police to give them the benefit of whatever knowledge he might have of Caleb Barter? He wasn't sure. Then he decided that sooner or later he must come out into the open. So he caught a cab and went to police headquarters.

"I wish," he said, "to talk to someone about the Mind Master!"

If he had said, "I have just come from Mars," he could scarcely have caused a greater sensation.

BUT his calm statement got him an instant audience with a slender man of thirty-five or so, whose hair was prematurely gray at the temples, and whose eyes were shrewd and far-seeing.

"My name's Thomas Tyler," said the detective. He certainly didn't look the conventional detective, but Bentley knew instantly that he *wasn't* the conventional detective. "I work on the unusual cases. If you hadn't sent in your name I wouldn't have seen you, which means that as soon as you leave here you are to forget my name and how I look."

He motioned Bentley to a seat. Bentley sat back. Suddenly Thomas Tyler was around his desk and had pushed back the hair from Bentley's temples. He drew in his breath with a sharp hiss when he saw the white line which circled Bentley's skull.

"It's not exactly proof," he said, as though he and Bentley had been in the midst of a discussion of that awful operation Barter had performed on Bentley, "but I'd take your word for it."

"The story, in the main, was true," said Bentley.

"I thought so. What made you come here?"

"I saw that naked man run across Fifth Avenue from the door of the Flatiron Building. I saw the officer subdue him, helped him do it in fact, and saw the man die. Since there was no detective there, I took the liberty of removing these from the fingers of the dead man."

Bentley gave Tyler the coarse hair, stained with blood. Tyler looked at it grimly for a moment or two.

"Not human hair," he said, as though talking to himself. "Not like any I know of. But ... ah, you know what sort of hair, eh? That's what sent you here!"

"It's the hair of an ape or a gorilla."

"How do you know, for sure?"

"Once," said Bentley grimly, "for several horrible hours ... I was a giant anthropoid ape."

TYLER'S chair legs crashed solidly to the floor.

"I see," he said. "You think this thing has some connection with your own experiences. How long ago was that?"

"Slightly over two months."

"You think the same man...?"

"I don't know. But who could want, as a newspaper story I just read says, to steal the brains of men? What for? It sounds like Barter. I've never heard of anybody else with such an obsession. I'm putting two and

two together—and fervently hoping they'll add up to seven instead of four. For if ever in my life I wanted to be wrong it's now."

Tyler pursed his lips. Bentley saw that his eyes were glinting with excitement.

"But there's a possibility you're right. Do you know what the Mind Master's first manifesto said? It was published by a tabloid newspaper as a sort of gag—a strange crank letter. Here it is."

Tyler tossed Bentley a newspaper clipping a week old. Bentley read quickly:

"The white race is deteriorating physically at a dangerous rate. In fifty years, if nothing is done to prevent it, the world will be filled with men whose bodies are so soft as to be almost worthless. But I shall take steps to prevent that, as soon as I am ready. I need a week. Then I shall begin my crusade to make the white race a race of supermen, whom I alone shall rule. They shall keep the brains they have, which shall be transferred to bodies which I shall furnish.

(Signed) The Mind Master."

TYLER squinted at Bentley again.

"You see? Brains are all right, he says, but the white race needs new bodies. If he isn't suggesting brain substitution, what is he suggesting? Though I confess I never thought of your story until your name was sent in to me a while ago. For the world thinks of Barter as having been killed by the great apes."

"Yes, I told newspaper reporters that. I thought it was true. But this Mind Master must be Barter. There couldn't be two persons in the world with mental quirks so much alike."

"Tell me what Barter looks like. Oh, there are plenty of pictures extant of the famous Professor Caleb Barter who disappeared from the world some years ago, but he'll know that, of course, and he won't look like the pictures.

"Alteration of his own features should be easy for a man who juggles brains."

"He may have changed his features since I saw him, too," said Bentley. "But I'm sure I'd know him."

Tyler's telephone rang stridently.

He took down the receiver. His mouth fell slackly open as his eyes lifted to Bentley's face. But he recovered himself and slapped his hand over the transmitter.

"Anybody know you came here?" asked Tyler.

Bentley shook his head.

"Well," went on Tyler, "I don't know how it happens, but this telephone message is for you!"

Bentley's heart seemed to jump into his throat. One of those hunches which sometimes were so valuable to him had struck him, as though it were a blow between the eyes. His lips tightened. His face was pale, but there was a grim light in his eyes.

He hesitated for a second, the receiver in his hand, his mouth against the transmitter.

"Well, Professor Barter?" he said conversationally.

THERE came a gasp from Thomas Tyler. He jumped to the door and motioned to someone. A man in uniform came to his side. Bentley distinctly heard Tyler tell the man to have this telephone call traced.

From the receiver came a well-remembered chuckle.

"So you were expecting me, eh, Bentley? You never really believed that one of my genius would fall such easy prey to the great apes did you?"

"Of course not, Professor," said Bentley soothingly. "It would be an insult to your vivid mentality."

"*Vivid mentality! Vivid mentality!* Why, Bentley, there isn't another brain in the world to compare with mine. And you of all people should know it. The whole world will know it before I'm finished, for I have made tremendous strides since you helped me to perform that crowning achievement in Africa. By the way, tell your friend Tyler, who just called the officer to the door, that it's useless to try to trace this call!"

Bentley jumped as though he had been stung. How had Barter known what Tyler was doing? How had he guessed what Tyler had told the man in uniform? How had Barter known Bentley was visiting Tyler? How had he discovered even that Bentley was back in the United States? Why, besides, was he so friendly with Bentley now?

"You speak, Professor," said Bentley softly, "as though you could see right into police headquarters."

"I can, Bentley! I can!" said Barter impatiently, as though he were rebuking a schoolboy for saying the obvious.

"You're close by, then?"

"No. I'm a long way—several miles—from you. But I can see everything you do. And you needn't look at Tyler in such surprise!"

BENTLEY started. He had looked at Tyler in a surprised way and, clever though he was, he didn't think that Barter could have *guessed* so accurately to the second the gesture he had made. Barter chuckled.

"It's a good jest, isn't it? But listen to me, Bentley, I've a great scheme in hand for the amelioration of mankind. I need your help, mostly because you were such an excellent subject in my greatest successful experiment."

"Will it be the same sort of experiment as the other?" Bentley's heart was in his mouth as he asked the question.

"Yes, the same ... but there are improvements I have succeeded in perfecting since the creation of Manape. My one mistake when Manape was created was in that I allowed myself to lose control of him—of you! That will not happen again. Oh, if you'll help me, Bentley, that operation will not be performed on you until you yourself request it because I shall have proved to you that it is better for you. You shall be my assistant and obey my orders, nothing more."

Lee Bentley drew a deep breath.

"If I prefer not to work with you again, Professor?"

A chuckle was Barter's answer. The chuckle broke off shortly.

"You should not refuse, Bentley," said the scientist at last. "For then I should find it necessary to remove you. You might stand in my way, and though you would be but a puny obstacle, you still would be an obstacle. For example, consider Ellen Estabrook, your fiancée. I can find no use for her ... and she knows as much about me as you do. Therefore, at my convenience, I shall remove her."

"CALEB BARTER," Bentley's voice was hoarse with anger as he dropped his soothing mode of address toward the man he knew was insane, "if anything happens to Miss Estabrook through you I shall find

you no matter how well you are guarded ... and I shall destroy you bit by bit, as a small boy destroys a fly. For every least evil thing that happens to Miss Estabrook, a hundred times that will happen to you at my hands."

"Good!" snapped Barter, no longer chuckling. "I am happy to know how much she means to you. It shows me how easily I may control you through her. It means war then, between us? I'm sorry, Bentley, for I like you. In a way, you know, you are my creation. But in a war between us, Bentley, you haven't a chance to win."

Bentley clicked up the receiver.

"Could you trace the call, Tyler?" he snapped.

Tyler shook his head ruefully.

"We couldn't locate the right telephone, but we could tell which exchange it came through, and the lines of that exchange cover a huge section of the city."

"Can you find out exactly the section and the address of each phone on every line?"

"Yes. The exchange is Stuyvesant."

"That gives me some help. I used to live in Greenwich Village and I had a Stuyvesant number. I'm going after Barter. Say, Tyler, how do you suppose Barter knew exactly what was going on in this room?"

Tyler's face slowly whitened as his eyes looked fearfully into the eyes of Lee Bentley. He shook his head slowly.

Bentley squared his shoulders and spoke quietly and determinedly.

"Mr. Tyler," he said, "I am in a great hurry. May I be conducted in a police car? Might as well. I'll be working with you hand and glove until Barter is captured."

Bentley rode behind a shrieking siren to the home of the Estabrooks ... while from a distance of two miles Caleb Barter watched every move and chuckled grimly to himself.

# Chapter 3

## Hell's Laboratory

THE huge room was absolutely free of all sounds from anywhere save within itself. The walls, the floors, the doors were of chrome steel. The cages were iron-ribbed and ponderous.

The long table which ran down the strange room's center was covered with retorts, test tubes, Bunsen burners—all of the stock-in-trade of the scientist who spends most of his time at research work. The man who bent over the table was well past middle age. His hair was snow-white, but his cheeks were like rosy red apples. He literally seemed to glow with health. He was like a strange flame. His hands were slender, the fingers long and extraordinarily supple. His lips were redder even than his cheeks, and made one, strangely enough, think of vampires. His eyes were coal-black, fathomless, piercing.

On the bronze wall directly across the table from the swiftly laboring man was a porcelain tablet set into the bronze, and in the midst of the table were a score of little push-buttons. Above each was a red light; and below, a green one.

Several inches below each green light was a little slot which resembled a tiny keyhole, something like the keyhole in the average handbag. There was a key in each hole, and from each key hung a length of gleaming chain which shone like gold and might have been gold, or at least, some gold-plated metal. On the dangling end of each chain was another key which might have been the twin of the key in the hole above.

In the space between the keyholes and the green lights there were the letters and figures: A-1, B-2, C-3, D-4 ... and so on up to T-20.

Plainly it was the beginning of a complicated classification system with any number of combinations possible.

BEHIND the working man the row of cages partially hid the brooding horror of the place. There were twenty cages—and in each one was a



sulking, red-eyed anthropoid ape. Plainly the fact that the number of apes coincided with the number of push-buttons, and with the number of keys, to say nothing of the red lights and the green lights, was no accident. The apes were sullenly silent, proof that they feared the man at the table so much that they were afraid to move.

At last the white-haired man stopped and breathed a sigh of satisfaction. Carefully he placed in the middle of the table the instrument which he had been examining. It looked like a slightly concave aluminum plate or tympanum, save that on the apex appeared a tiny ball of the same metal. Except for the color and the fact that the thing was almost flat, it looked like a small Manchu hat.

"Naka Machi!" said the man suddenly in a conversational tone of voice.

The chrome steel door swung open swiftly and silently and another man entered. He was about the same height as the first man, but he was younger and his eyes were blacker. His hair was as black as the wings of a crow. He was a Japanese dressed in Occidental garb.

"Naka Machi," said the white-haired one again, "I have examined every bit of the infinitesimal mechanism in the ball on this tympanum. It is perfect. You are a genius, Naka Machi. There is only one genius greater—Professor Caleb Barter!"

Naka Machi bowed low, and as he spoke his breath hissed inwardly through his teeth after the Japanese manner of admitting humility—"that my humble breath may not blow upon you"—which never needed really to be sincere.

"I am merely a genius with my fingers, Professor Barter," said Naka Machi in a musical voice. "The smaller the medium in which I work the happier I am, Professor; and in that I am a genius. But the plan for this so marvelous little radio-control, as you call it, came entirely from your head, my master. I did exactly as the plans bade me. Will it work?"

CALEB BARTER'S red face went redder still. His eyes shot flames of anger. His lips pouched. Almost he seemed on the point of striking down his Japanese assistant.

"Will it work?" he repeated. "Have you not just told me that you followed my plans exactly? Have I not just now checked your every bit of work and pronounced it perfect? Then how can it fail to work? Have you another one ready?"

“Yes, my master. Now that I have perfected two, the work will become monotonous. If the master wishes, I can create still another radio-control, inside the head of a pin, which I should first render hollow with that skill which only Naka Machi possesses?”

Caleb Barter almost smiled.

“It will not be necessary. But it will be necessary for you to make eighteen additional radio-controls of the same size as this one, or say make twenty-four so that we shall have some extra ones in case of accident. These two will be put into action at once. Naka Machi, bring me Lecky, completely uniformed as a smart chauffeur! Have you laid in a store of clothing, as I bade you, to fit every conceivable need of Lecky, Stanley, Morton and Cleve?”

“Yes, my master.”

“Then bring in Lecky accoutered as a chauffeur.”

Ten minutes later a young man entered behind Naka Machi. He was slender and his chauffeur’s uniform fitted him like a glove. He looked like a soldier in it. Indeed his bearing, his whole stance, spoke of many years as a soldier—and a proud one. The fellow was brimful of health. His cheeks were rosy with vitality. He looked like a man with health so abundant he never found means to tire himself to the point where he could sleep dreamlessly.

But, nevertheless his arms hung listlessly at his sides. His eyes seemed empty of hope, dull and lifeless, and one looked into those eyes and shuddered. One tried to gaze deeply into them and found oneself baffled. There was no soul behind them.

“Come here, Lecky,” said Barter coldly.

LECKY glided effortlessly forward to stand before Barter.

“You’ve no brains, Lecky,” said Barter emotionlessly; “no brains of your own. You have a splendid body which moves only at the will of Caleb Barter. I need that body for my purposes. But a man with brains is dangerous. That’s why you haven’t any.”

Barter now took the silvery tympanum with the ball atop it and set it on the head of Lecky. On top of it he placed the chauffeur’s cap, bringing it down tightly to keep the tympanum in place.

“If I had it to do again I’d insert the tympanum under the skull as part of the operation, Naka Machi,” said Barter as he worked. “We’ll do that

hereafter. And we begin work immediately. I'm going to send Lecky out now to get the first subject."

"The first subject, sir?"

"Yes. Manhattan's richest man. A man must have brains to become Manhattan's richest man, and I need men with brains. His name is Harold Hervey. He will be leaving his office in the Empire State Building in about half an hour. I want Lecky to be on hand to meet him."

On his own head Barter placed a second tympanum which Naka Machi had brought him. Over it he pulled a rubber cap, like a bathing cap with a hole cut in the top.

"Now, we'll try it out, Naka Machi," said Barter. "Which one of these lights is Lecky's?"

"B-2, my master."

Barter sat down under the light marked "B-2" and lifted the key which dangled from the end of the golden chain. This key he inserted in a tiny orifice in the ball atop his head. Then he turned in his chair to look at Lecky. Barter's face was a mask of concentration as he gazed intently at the young man.

LECKY stiffened to attention. His right hand shot to his cap visor in salute. His lips twisted into a travesty of a smile. For a few seconds he went through a strange series of posturings. He stood in the attitude of a boxer preparing to attack. He danced smartly on his toes. He bent double and touched the floor with the palms of his hands. He jumped up and down with his legs stiff. He stopped suddenly with his right hand at rigid salute. But his eyes were still vacant through every posture.

Barter's face showed a glow of satisfaction.

"He did exactly what I willed him to do! I am his master. He is my slave—even more abjectly than you are my slave, Naka Machi!"

"But that would be impossible, my master," said Naka Machi, hissing again through his teeth as he sucked in his breath. "None could be more abjectly your slave than I."

"Do not say anything is impossible," said Barter peevishly, "when I say otherwise. Anything is possible to me! Now, we'll send Lecky forth. I'll watch him through the heliotubes and control his every move. While I am directing Lecky you will prepare the table behind me for the first of our world-revolutionizing operations."

“Yes, my master,” said the Japanese humbly.

“But first, it’s just as well that Lecky is in a good humor, even though he is my slave. Where are the walnuts, Naka Machi?”

The Japanese tendered a large walnut to Barter. Barter rose and approached Lecky who still stood at salute. He stopped a couple of paces in front of the soldierly man and held up the walnut as a man sometimes holds up food to a dog, bidding him “speak” before he may be fed.

THEN Lecky did a strange thing.

He began to jump up and down like a pleased child. His jumping caused him to lose his balance, but he recaptured it by pressing the backs of his hands against the floor. His hitherto expressionless eyes lost their dullness. Saliva dribbled at the corners of his mouth. Barter tossed him the walnut. Lecky held it under his right forefinger, against the *heel* of his thumb, instead of between thumb and forefinger, as he lifted it to his mouth.

Barter chuckled.

“Even the human casement cannot wholly hide the ape, eh, Naka Machi?” said Barter.

Naka Machi hissed.

Barter returned to the porcelain slab banked with the lights and the keys. He readjusted the keys and his face became thoughtful again.

Lecky turned smartly, still nibbling at his walnut, strode to the bronze door and let himself out.

Through the heliotube directly above the key marked “B-2,” Caleb Barter watched him go, and kept watching him as he made his way to the street. Barter looked ahead of his puppet, noting the cars which were parked at the curb. He saw a stately limousine. He grinned. The chauffeur was not in sight. Barter looked for him and found him at a table in a nearby restaurant, his back to the window.

Barter looked back at his puppet and his face became serious with concentration.

Lecky walked blithely along the street and turned right when he was opposite the limousine. Without a moment’s hesitation, he stepped into the limousine, pressed the starter, shifted gears, turned in the middle of the block and started swiftly uptown.

After Lecky had shifted gears he drove with his left hand alone. His right was still busy with the walnut.

Barter now looked like a man in a trance, so deeply did he concentrate on his task of guiding his soulless, ape-brained puppet, Lecky, through the heavy traffic of Manhattan.

# Chapter 4

## The Opening Gun

"THAT list, Tyler," said Bentley, after he had somewhat calmed the fears of Ellen Estabrook and had returned to the task of tracing Barter, "is headed by Harold Hervey, the multi-millionaire. I know Barter well enough to know that he'll go down the list methodically, taking each person in turn. We'd best take immediate precautions to guard the old man's home. For Barter, if not entirely ready to take drastic steps, must be almost ready, else he couldn't issue his manifestoes and take a chance of some slip-up before he could get really started."

"Why do you suppose he named Hervey on the list?" asked Tyler.

"Because Hervey is a financial genius. Barter wishes not only to carry out his plan of creating a race of supermen, but wishes at the same time to maintain personal control of them. And to control Manhattan, from which he logically hopes to extend his control to the whole United States, then to the whole world, Barter must also control the money marts. Hervey is the shrewdest financier in the world."

"But won't we frighten Hervey's family if we take steps now?"

"Better to frighten them now than to be too late entirely. However, we can place his house under surveillance without the knowledge of the family for the time being. And you'd better send a couple of men to his office in the Empire State Building to see that nothing happens to him on the way home this evening. I talked to him by telephone and he pooh-pooed the whole thing. Hard-headed business executives have no imagination."

Bentley and Tyler rode uptown in the back seat of a speeding police car driven by one of the best chauffeurs Bentley had ever ridden behind. He edged through holes in the traffic where Bentley could scarcely see any holes at all. He estimated the speed of cars which might have collided with the police vehicle and slipped through with inches to spare. In

his way the man was a genius. But Bentley was yet to see the driving of a master genius... .

FAR out in the residential district the police car came to a stop. Other police cars arrived at intervals to disgorge men in plain clothes who immediately entered upon their guard duties as unobtrusively as possible. If Hervey's family noticed at all they would scarcely attach any importance to the arrival of cars and the discharging of passengers who seemed to have nothing to do except dawdle on the sidewalks.

But all the way uptown a hunch had ridden Bentley. He had the feeling that no matter how fast the police car traveled, no matter how skillfully the chauffeur inched his way through the press, they would be too late to save Hervey. The feeling became an obsession. Many times he called through the speaking tube.

"Faster, driver, for God's sake, faster!"

Now near the home of Harold Hervey, Bentley found himself unable to walk slowly, with the air of nonchalance, which the other police officers wore like a cloak.

"Something's happened," said Bentley, "I'm sure of it. I feel that Barter is so close to me that I could touch him if I knew in which direction to extend my fingers."

Suddenly a speeding car, with horn bellowing, came crashing up the street toward the Hervey residence. It was traveling at great speed, careening from side to side like a ship in a storm at sea.

"There comes Hervey's car," said Tyler. "And something has happened to make him travel like that. Old man Hervey doesn't allow his chauffeur to go faster than twenty miles an hour."

TYLER and Bentley were near by when the car squealed to a stop before the Hervey residence and a hatless, disheveled man leaped out almost before the car stopped rolling.

"That's not Hervey," said Tyler. "That's his private secretary. Something's up. It's time we took a hand in things."

Tyler and Bentley grasped the young man by the elbow.

"What's up?" demanded Tyler.

"It's Mr. Hervey, sir," panted the secretary. "It just happened. He's been kidnaped!"

The secretary was a slight man, but fear had given him strength. He almost dragged Tyler and Bentley off their feet as he strode on up the walk leading to the home of Hervey.

"You'll scare his family half to death!" said Tyler.

"It'll have to come sometime, Tyler," said Bentley. "It might as well be now. They'll have to know. We'll have to sit inactively from this moment on. Tyler, there's nothing that can be done for Hervey. Barter has scored. We couldn't catch him now to save ourselves from perdition. But his next step will involve the Hervey menage. We'll have to wait there for his next move."

Tyler and Bentley entered the vast gloomy structure of the old-fashioned Hervey domicile on the heels of the frightened secretary. Mrs. Hervey, a faded woman of sixty or so, met them at the door. Her head was held high, her lips grimly drawn into a straight line.

"So," she said evenly, "they've got Mr. Hervey. I begged him to take those threats seriously. He's been either killed or kidnaped."

"Kidnaped," said Bentley, continuing brutally because of the courage he saw in the old woman's face. "And that means he'll be dead within the hour, if he isn't dead already. We've got to stay here for a few hours, to await the next move of the madman calling himself the Mind Master, in the hope that we can trace him when he makes his next move."

Mrs. Hervey lifted her head still higher.

"We'll place no obstacles in your path, gentlemen," she said, "if you are from the police. The family will confine itself to the upper floors of the house."

TYLER and Bentley took possession of the living room. Outside a dozen plain-clothes men were to patrol the grounds during the hours of darkness.

Other men were at every adjacent street corner. A rat could not have got through unobserved.

Tyler and Bentley took seats at a table facing the door. The police car in which they had arrived stood at the curb, with the chauffeur at the wheel, the motor humming softly.

"Timkins," said Bentley, addressing the private secretary who stood in the most distant corner of the room, his eyes fearfully fixed on the street door, "how was Mr. Hervey captured?"



"I was accompanying him to his car, sir," replied the young man, "when a dapper fellow in a chauffeur's uniform confronted us on the sidewalk. He stood as stiff and straight as a soldier. He didn't say a word. He just looked at Mr. Hervey. Mr. Hervey stopped because the man was blocking the sidewalk. I looked into the chauffeur's eyes. They seemed utterly dead. I shivered. I'd have sworn the man had no soul, now that I look back at it. Suddenly he lashed out with his fist, striking Mr. Hervey on the jaw. Mr. Hervey started to fall. The man caught him under the arms and tossed him into the tonneau of a limousine at the curb. The car was away before I could summon the police."

Bentley nodded.

"Which way did the car go?" he demanded.

"Downtown, at top speed," replied Timkins.

Bentley turned to Tyler.

"The Stuyvesant exchange is downtown," he said. "Now Timkins says that the kidnaper's car went downtown. And the naked man was killed in the Flatiron Building, which is well downtown in its turn. Tyler, fill all the area covered by the Stuyvesant exchange with plain-clothes men. Telephone Headquarters to see whether a stolen limousine has been reported from somewhere in the area. Barter wouldn't have cars of his own for fear they could be traced. He'll use stolen cars when he uses cars at all. And he had his puppet pick up the limousine close to his hideout."

TYLER nodded and quickly spoke into the telephone on the table at his elbow.

The telephone reminded Bentley of Ellen Estabrook.

When Tyler had finished issuing pointed instructions Bentley called the residence of the Estabrooks in Astoria, Long Island.

Carl Estabrook answered the telephone.

"Is Ellen all right?" asked Bentley. "May I speak to her?"

Carl Estabrook's answering gasp came plainly over the wire.

"Are you crazy, Lee?" he asked. "Not ten minutes ago you telephoned Ellen and told her to meet you near the arch in Washington Square. I asked her if she was sure the voice was yours, and she was... ."

But Bentley, white-faced, had already clicked up the receiver.

"Tyler," he said, "Ellen Estabrook, my fiancée, is walking into a trap. It's Barter again. He'd know how to imitate my voice well enough to fool

Ellen. It would be simple enough for a man like him. He probably had that long conversation with me at headquarters to make sure he hadn't forgotten the timbre and pitch of my voice ... and to hear how it sounded over the telephone. Please have plain-clothes men pick up Ellen in Washington Square. And that, Tyler, if you'll notice, is also downtown."

Bentley felt that he would go mad with anxiety as he awaited some news from the plain-clothes men Tyler had ordered to look for Ellen Estabrook.

He had asked Tyler to issue rather unusual instructions to the plain-clothes men around the Hervey residence. They were to make no attempt to halt anyone who might approach the house, but were to permit no one to depart. It was a weak plan, but knowing the supreme egotism of Barter, Bentley felt that the old scientist would deliberately accept such a challenge. He wouldn't mind risking the loss of a minion.

"HE controls his puppets from his hideout, Tyler," Bentley explained, "and won't hesitate to send them into danger since it can't touch him. And he watches every move they make, too. He's made some television adaptation of his own. I'll wager, if he so desires, he can see us sitting here right now, even perhaps hear what we say. I can fancy hearing him chuckle, and Tyler...?"

"Yes?"

"I can see old man Hervey on an operating table with Barter bending over him, working fiendishly. Behind Barter are cages of apes."

"But how could he transport apes to his hideout?"

"He could manage to smuggle anything anywhere. Money paves the way to any accomplishment, Tyler. We needn't concern ourselves with how he does it, but with the fact that he must surely have apes in his hideout."

There came suddenly an imperious ringing of the doorbell.

Bentley and Tyler leaped to their feet, their hands streaking for their automatics which they had placed within easy reach on the table. Side by side they sprang for the door, and flung it open.

A chill of horror ran through Bentley.

"Mother of God!" cried Tyler.

“Mr. Hervey!” shrieked Timkins. The secretary, noting the figure which toppled so grimly into the room, fainted. The thud of his body followed the thud of the old man’s body to the floor.

In that first moment of overwhelming terror, all three men noted that Hervey’s skull-pan was missing.

“Look after details here, Tyler!” cried Bentley, quickly recovering himself. “I’m after whoever brought the old man home.”

Bentley was racing down the path for the street, where a man in chauffeur’s uniform was hurling himself into a limousine, while bullets from half a dozen plain-clothes men, racing to head him off, sang about his ears. But the stranger gained the driver’s seat and the limousine was away like a shot. The police car was rolling as Bentley leaped upon the running board, then eased in beside the driver.

“Don’t stop for anything!” cried Bentley. “Keep that car in sight!”

The car headed downtown at breakneck speed.

# Chapter 5

## To Broadway's Horror

BENTLEY would never forget that nightmarish ride downtown. It was a dream as terrifying and ghastly as had been his experience in the African jungles when he had been Manape. Added to the utter fear of the ride was his fear for the safety of Ellen Estabrook. Caleb Barter, so far, was utterly invincible. It seemed he could not be beaten or outwitted in any way. But Bentley set his lips tightly.

Caleb Barter must have some weak spot in his insane armor, some way by which he could be reached and destroyed—and Bentley swore to himself that it would be he who would find that weak spot.

The limousine ahead was going at dangerous speed. The police chauffeur beside Bentley crouched low over the wheel as he drove. His eyes never left the speeding limousine. People on the sidewalks stared in astonishment as the two cars flashed downtown.

The leading car sped on, the driver obviously expecting ways to open in the last second before threatened collision. He passed cars on the left and the right. There were times when his wheels were up on the curb as he went through lanes between cars and sidewalks. He was determined to go through.

Only Bentley understood that the driver ahead was an automaton, a man whose brain did not know the meaning of fear. He knew that from his hideout Caleb Barter was directing the flight of the escaping car. He could fancy the old man of the apple-red cheeks, sitting in a chair in his hideout, his hands in the air as though they gripped the wheel of a car, sweat breaking forth on his cheeks as he guided his puppet through the press of cars.

But by now in that uncanny way that sometimes happens the streets were being cleared as if by magic before the flight of one whom all observers must have thought a madman. Only Bentley knew that the driver ahead was not a madman.

HIS own car careened from side to side. Bentley wondered what the chauffeur would think if he knew he was driving a race against one of Barter's supermen. He would perhaps have realized that no man could possibly follow with any degree of success. The police driver had succeeded so far only because, Bentley guessed, he felt that where any other man could drive, so could he.

Only Bentley knew that the driver up there was not a "man" in the normal meaning of the word. He wondered who "he" really was—not that it mattered greatly, for the entity required to make "him" a normal man had perhaps been destroyed, or had become part of some giant anthropoid to be used later in Barter's ghastly experiments.

"I wonder if Tyler will send out calls for police cars in other parts of the city to try and cut off the runaway," shouted Bentley above the shrieking of the motor and the wailing of the siren. "Are any police cars equipped with radio?"

"Several," answered the police chauffeur. "And they are able to cut in on various public radio stations, too. By this time warnings are being heard on every blaring radio in Manhattan."

The two cars sped on. For a brief space the car ahead took to the sidewalk. Suddenly a human body was tossed violently against the side of a building, and the fleeing car passed on. As the pursuing car passed the spot Bentley knew by the shape of the bundle that the enemy had killed a woman. At that speed he must have crushed every bone in her body. In a matter of seconds the information would be telephoned to radio studios and people would be warned to take to open doorways when they saw cars traveling at undue rates of speed.

"I'm a better driver than he is!" yelled the police chauffeur, out of the side of his mouth at Bentley. "I haven't killed anyone yet."

The words had scarcely left his mouth when a blind man, tapping his way with a cane, came from behind a building at an intersection and stepped into the gutter. The fool, couldn't he hear the shrieking of the siren? But perhaps he was deaf, too.

THE police chauffeur turned sharply to the left and for a second Bentley held his breath expecting the careening car to turn over. If it did it would roll over a dozen times, and destroy anything that happened to be in its path. But with a superhuman manipulation of the wheel the police

chauffeur righted the car, got it straightened out again, and was on his way. The old man had not been touched, but there was no doubt that he had felt the wind of the great car's passing.

The fleeing car was gaining now.

It rode madly down Broadway. The great pillared intersection where Broadway cuts through Sixth Avenue was dead ahead. The fleeing car continued on, crashing through, while cars evaded it in every direction, and into Broadway beyond. After it went Bentley, all other matters forgotten as he prayed to the god of speed to guide them through.

Two cars came out of Thirty-first Street. Their drivers saw their danger at the same time. But they turned different ways, and as Bentley's car flashed past them the two cars seemed welded solidly together. They were rolling across the sidewalk toward the huge plate glass window of a restaurant. Just as the pursuing car lost them as they swept past, the two cars went through that plate glass window. Bentley, in his mind's eye, saw the two dead, mutilated drivers, and the passengers with them, he saw the wreckage of the restaurant, the mangled diners who sat at the tables nearest the fatal window.

"More marks against Barter," he muttered to himself. "How long will the list be before I'll be able to drag him down?"

ON and on went the two cars. People packed the sidewalks, but they kept close against the buildings. The streets were almost deserted now, for that warning had got ahead. Three other police cars were careening down the street, too. Bentley saw them with pleasure. Other cars would be coming in to head off the fleeing limousine. This one puppet of Barter's, at least, would be pocketed before he could find time to leap from his car and escape.

"Barter's sweating blood as he saws with both hands at an imaginary driver's wheel," thought Bentley. "When will he give up—and what will his driver do when Barter relinquishes control?"

For the first time the grim thought came to him. He knew that the creature there had the brain of an ape. What would an ape do if he suddenly found himself at the wheel of a car going down Broadway at eighty miles an hour? He would chatter, and jump up and down. The plunging car, with accelerator full on, would be out of control.

"God Almighty, I never thought of that!" yelled Bentley. "As soon as he sees he can't save his puppet he'll let him get out the best way he can,

himself ... and that car will be traveling, uncontrolled, at eighty miles an hour."

As though his very statement had fathered the thought, two police cars swept into the intersection at Twenty-third Street and Fifth Avenue. The fleeing limousine was turning right to go down Fifth Avenue.

The police cars were brought to a halt to effectively stop the further progress of the speeding limousine. Three other cars plunged in to make the box barrage of cars effective. The fleeing car was trapped. Barter must know that. If he did know, it proved that he could see everything that transpired. The next few seconds would show.

BENTLEY gasped as he put his hand on the driver's arm to have him slow down to prevent a wholesale pile-up in the busy intersection. He gasped with horror as he did so, for the fleeing car was now going crazy. It zigzagged from side to side. Now it rode the two right wheels, now the two left.

And suddenly the driver swung nimbly out through the left window, his hands reaching up over the top, and in a moment he was on the roof of the careening car.

"I've seen apes swing into trees like that," Bentley thought.

While the car plunged on, the creature stood up on the doomed limousine, and in spite of the fact that the wind of the car's passing must have been terrific, the ghastly hybrid jumped up and down on the top like a delighted child viewing a new toy or riding a shoot-the-chutes.

Suddenly the creature's right leg went through the top's fabric. It struggled to regain its footing as an ape might struggle to regain position on a limb in the jungles.

At that moment the fleeing car crashed mercilessly into the two nearest police cars ahead. The men inside had expected the driver to slow down to avoid a collision. How could they know what sort of brain lurked within the driver's skull? They couldn't ... and three policemen paid with their lives for their lack of knowledge as their bodies were hurled beneath a mass of twisted wreckage, crushed out of human semblance.

THE hybrid atop the fatal car was hurled through the air like a thunderbolt. His body passed over the railing of the subway entrance before

the Flatiron Building and Bentley knew he had crashed to his death on the steps.

The police car had already come to a stop, and Bentley was running toward the subway entrance.

The shapeless bleeding bundle on the steps no longer even resembled a man. Fortunately nobody had been struck by the hurtling body; and, miraculously enough, Barter's pawn was not yet quite dead.

Moans of animal pain came through his bleeding lips. The eyes scarcely noticed Bentley, though there was a slight flicker of fear in them. Then, in the instant of death, even that slight expression passed from them. Bentley saw the scarline about the skull.

And now Bentley knew that Barter was missing no slightest move, that he saw everything... .

For the ghastly hybrid on the steps raised his right hand in meticulous salute ... and died. It was an ironic, grotesque gesture.

Plain-clothes men gathered around.

"Take his fingerprints," said Bentley quickly. "Then telegraph the fingerprint section, U. S. Army, at Washington, for this man's identity."

An ambulance was taking aboard the three mangled policemen as Bentley stepped back into his car for the ride down to Washington Square to see what dread thing had happened to Ellen Estabrook.



# Chapter 6

## High Jeopardy

ELLEN ESTABROOK was almost in hysterics when Bentley reached her. She had been immediately picked up by plain-clothesmen and had thought herself captured by minions of Barter. She had been panic-stricken for a moment, she told Bentley, and it had taken her some little time to be persuaded that she was in the hands of police.

But Bentley's heart was filled to overflowing with gratitude that he had been able to safeguard Ellen against Barter. He never doubted it had been Barter who had telephoned her. And even now he fancied he could hear Barter's chuckle of amusement. Barter was watching, perhaps even listening. Bentley felt that the madman was just biding his time. Barter could have taken Ellen in this attempt, but hadn't tried greatly, knowing himself invincible, knowing that he could take her at any moment if it was necessary. And he might take her even if it were not necessary, since he had warned Bentley she must be removed.

The police car raced back uptown so that Bentley could inform himself of any new developments in the Hervey case. Ellen snuggled against him gratefully. "You'll have to stick close to me," said Bentley, "until something happens, or until the exigencies of service draw me away from you. Then it will be up to Tom Tyler to look after you."

"I can look after myself," she retorted spiritedly. "I'm over age and not without brains... "

"Yet you went to Washington Square," said Bentley gently. "Didn't it even seem strange to you that I would have selected such a place as a rendezvous?"

ELLEN turned away from him and her lips trembled. His gentle thrust had hurt her.

"But I would have sworn it was your voice, Lee," she said. "And—I still think it was!"

"I tell you I didn't phone you to meet me in Washington Square!"

"But you told me you had talked with Barter for a long time on the headquarters phone, didn't you? Remember that you are dealing with the cleverest and maddest brain we know of to-day. What if he had merely talked with you to get a record of your voice? Suppose a voice were composed of certain ingredients, certain sounds. Suppose those ingredients could somehow be captured on a sensitized plate of some kind! Edison would have been burned as a sorcerer a few centuries before he invented the wax record. Twenty years ago who would have thought of talking pictures ... voices permanently recorded on celluloid?"

"But the talkie films merely parrot, over and over again, the words of actual people. When I talked with Barter this morning I certainly said nothing about meeting you at Washington Square."

"But the tone, the timber, the frequency of your voice! Lee, suppose he had gone a step further than the talkies and had found a way to break the voice apart and put it back together to suit himself...?"

"Good Lord, Ellen! It sounds crazy ... but if you would have sworn that voice was mine, then mine it may have been, speaking words with my voice that I never spoke personally. But wait until we find out for sure. We're just guessing."

But the idea stuck in his mind and he believed in it enough to tell Tyler, upon arriving at the Hervey residence, to warn every man named on the list of the Mind Master to make no appointments over the telephone, no matter how sure they were of the voices at the other end of the wire.

It sounded wild, but was it?

THAT night Ellen and Bentley occupied rooms which faced each other across the hall in a midtown hotel, and plain-clothes men were on duty to right and left in the hall. There were men on the roof and in the lobby, in the garage, everywhere skulkers might be expected to look for coigns of vantage from which to proceed against Ellen Estabrook. Bentley knew quite well that Barter would not drop his intention against Ellen, especially since he had failed once already.

Tyler and Bentley sat in Bentley's room drinking black coffee and discussing their plans for the next day. The latest paper had contained another manifesto of the Mind Master! the second man on his list was to be

taken at ten o'clock the next day. The man was president of a great construction company. His name was Saret Balisle; he was under thirty, slim as a professional dancer, and dark as a gypsy.

"But what does Barter want with all these big shots?" asked Thomas Tyler. "Just what is the point of his stealing their brains and putting them into the skull-pans of apes, if that's what you think he has in mind?"

"The Barter touch," said Bentley grimly. "At first he probably intended to kill just any men and make the transfer, and then use his manapes to send against the men he wished to capture, and through whom he intended to gain control of Manhattan. Then he decided, since he had learned to control his manapes, by radio I suppose, that it would be an ironic touch to make virtual slaves of the "key" men he had chosen for his crusade."

"But why the transplantation at all, even if the man is mad? He reasons logically. Only his premises are unthinkable ... and he builds successful ghastly experiments on top of them... ."

"HE claims he wishes to build a race of supermen," Bentley answered. "His reason for the brain transference is therefore plain. An anthropoid ape has a body which is several times as hardy, durable and mighty as that of even the strongest man, but the ape has not the brain of a civilized man. A specialized man, one with a highly developed brain, generally has a very weak body. He's constantly put to the necessity of taking exercise to keep from growing sick. Therefore the ape's body and the man's brain would seem, to Barter, an ideal combination. That nature didn't plan it so troubles him not at all. He will make a fool of nature!"

"I wonder if we'll get him. Nobody knows how many lives have been lost already."

"We'll get him, Tyler. I'll bet anything you want to name that your men have walked back and forth across his hideout. I'll bet that decent, respectable people live within mere yards of him and do not know it. We'll get to him the second he makes a mistake of any kind. Maybe he'll make his first one when he tries to get Saret Balisle—Good Lord, I forgot something. Tyler, phone again and ask Headquarters if the coroner found anything strange about the head of the man I chased down Fifth Avenue."

Tyler phoned.

“Yes,” he said, clicking up the receiver, “he had bits of metal which looked like aluminum in his scalp; but the autopsy shows that it came from outside somewhere.”

“It’s part of Barter’s radio control,” muttered Bentley, “it *must* be! It has to be ... and I didn’t think of looking for it at the time.”

LONG before sunrise Bentley and Tyler repaired to the office of Saret Balisle, letting themselves in with keys which had been furnished them last night. It had been decided that Balisle would not try to run away from the threat of the Mind Master, but would be in his office as usual. If he ran, and got out of touch with the police, Barter would get him anyway and nobody would be the wiser.

Balisle had grinned and shrugged his shoulders, but the wanness in his cheeks showed that he didn’t take the threats lightly, considering what it was thought had happened to Harold Hervey.

“I wonder,” said Tyler as they walked through the cool of the morning to the Clinton Building on lower Fifth Avenue, where Balisle had his offices, “how Barter keeps his apes with men’s brains from trying to break away from him when he has to divert his mental control to other channels?”

Bentley hesitated, seeking a logical answer. It seemed simple enough when the answer came to his mind.

“Suppose, Tyler,” he said, “that you wakened from a nightmare and looked into a mirror to discover that you were an anthropoid ape? That you were incapable of speaking, of using your hands save in the clumsiest fashion? When it came home to you what had happened to you, would you rush right out into the street, hoping that the people on the sidewalks would understand that you were a man in ape’s clothing?”

“Good Lord! I never thought of that!”

“You would if you’d ever been an ape. I know the feeling.”

“Then Barter’s manapes are more surely prisoners than if they were sentenced to serve their entire lives in the deepest solitary cells in Sing Sing! How horrible—but still, they yet would have a way of escape.”

“Yes, simply break out and start running, knowing that the crowd would soon take and destroy them. Right enough—but even when one knows oneself an ape it isn’t easy to destroy oneself.”

THEY entered the offices of Saret Balisle and looked about them. It was just an ordinary office. They looked in clothes closets and in shadowy corners. They took every possible precaution in their survey of the situation. They looked for hidden instruments of destruction. They looked for hidden dictaphones. They were extremely thorough in their preliminary preparations for the defense of Saret Balisle.

At five minutes of ten o'clock Balisle was at his desk, pale of face, but grinning confidently.

There were men in uniform in the hallways, on the roof, in the windows of rooms across the avenue. Bentley and Tyler should have felt sure that not even a mouse could have broken through the cordon to reach Saret Balisle. But Bentley was doubtful.

He went to the window nearest Balisle and looked out. Sixteen stories down was Fifth Avenue, patrolled in this block by a dozen blue-coats and as many more plain-clothes men. Saret Balisle seemed to be impregnable.

But at ten o'clock exactly, a blood-curdling scream came from the room adjoining Balisle's, where some insurance company had offices. The scream was followed by other screams—all the screams of women...

For just a moment Bentley and Tyler whirled to stare at the door giving onto the hall, their hands tightly gripping their automatics.

"God Almighty!" It came in a choked scream from the lips of Saret Balisle, simultaneous with the falling of a shower of glass in the room.

TYLER and Bentley whirled back.

A giant anthropoid ape stood on the window sill, and the brute's left hand held tightly clasped the ankle of Balisle, holding him as a child holds a rag doll.

The ape swung Balisle out over the abyss.

Tyler flung up his automatic.

"Don't!" shouted Bentley. "If you shoot he'll drop Balisle!"

Bentley felt sick and the bottom seemed to drop out of his stomach as the anthropoid, still holding Balisle as lightly as though he didn't know he held extra weight at all, dropped from sight.

Tyler and Bentley leaped to the window, looked down. The ape had dropped safely to the ledge of the window just below. He held on easily

with his right hand while Bentley and Tyler swayed dizzily. The anthropoid still held Balisle by the ankle.

A head looked out of the window to the right. A frightened woman.

“God!” she choked. “That beast came out of the clothes closet. We’ve been wondering why we couldn’t open it. He must have been inside, holding it.”

A hundred men, all crack shots, stood helpless on roofs, in windows across the street, in the street below, while the anthropoid ape dropped slowly down the face of the Clinton Building toward the street.

How would Barter lead his minion free of this tangle when, as was inevitable, the brute reached ground level?

## Strange Interview

BENTLEY and Tyler were to learn in the next few minutes how great was the executive ability of Caleb Barter. He had created a mighty puzzle, each and every bit of which must fit together exactly. Time was important in making the puzzle complete—and the puzzle changed with each passing second. As the anthropoid went slowly down the face of the Clinton Building, Bentley was sure that Barter controlled every move and saw every slightest thing that transpired. He knew very well that of all the great organization which had been set to prevent the taking of Saret Balisle, not a man would now shoot at the ape for fear of jeopardizing the life of Balisle.

And yet Balisle was being spirited away to pass through an experience which would be far worse than a merciful bullet through the brain or the heart. Bentley knew he would be justified in the eyes of humanity if he ordered his men to fire upon the anthropoid, even if he were sure that Balisle would die. But as long as there was life there was hope, too, and he couldn't bring himself to give the order.

The ape dropped down the face of the building as easily as he would have dropped from limb to limb of a jungle tree. The sixteen stories under him did not disconcert him at all. Bentley had a suspicion about this particular ape, but he wouldn't know for a time yet whether his suspicion had a basis in fact. He couldn't think of a man—especially an old man like Harold Hervey—making that hair-raising descent. Yet ... if he were controlled, mind and soul, by Caleb Barter the Mind Master... ?

"Tyler," said Bentley tersely. "The instant the ape reaches the street I'm going to order your men to fire. You will shout out to them now, designating which ones shall fire. Be sure they are crack marksmen who will drill the ape without hitting Balisle—and, by all means, have them wait so that the ape's fall won't send Balisle crashing to death."

"Maybe I'd better tell them to rush him?"

"Maybe that's better, but remember they're dealing with a giant anthropoid, in strength at least, and that somebody is likely to be fatally injured. In addition the ape may tear Balisle apart as soon as men start to close in on him. Barter will have thought of that, and all he'll have to do to make his puppet perform is to will him to do it. No, they'll have to shoot—and tell them to aim at his head and heart."

TYLER leaned out of the window and shouted to the men across the street.

"Shoot as soon as the ape reaches the sidewalk!" he cried. "Be careful you don't hit Balisle."

And from Balisle himself, muffled and frightened, came a sudden cry.

"Shoot now! I'd rather fall and have it over with!"

There was a moment of silence. Bentley almost gave the order to fire when the ape was at the twelfth story, but he held his tongue by a supreme effort of will.

Balisle looked down. It must have been a terrifying experience to swing above such a horrible abyss by one leg, and for a moment Balisle lost his head. He screamed and started to grapple with his grim captor.

"Don't, Balisle!" shouted Tyler. "You'll make him lose his balance. Hang on as you are and we'll get him when he reaches the street."

"What good will it do?" screamed Balisle, his voice taking on a high keening note as the ape dropped again, this time from the twelfth to the eleventh floor. "He slipped it over a hundred men to get me this far. He'll find a way to beat you when he reaches the street, too."

Bentley had a sinking feeling that Balisle spoke the truth; but even so, he could not see how anybody, even Barter, could walk through the trap which was being tightened around the descending anthropoid.

It made Bentley dizzy to watch the slow methodical descent of the anthropoid. He could fancy himself in Balisle's position and it made him sick and faint. He understood the desperation which caused Balisle to make yet another attempt to battle with the ape.

Then the ape did a grim thing.

He paused on the eleventh floor, and crouching on a window sill, deliberately snapped Balisle's head against the wall of the Clinton Building! In his time Bentley had slain rabbits exactly like that. Balisle hung now as limp as a rag and blood dripped from his mouth and nose. But



Bentley knew, as his face went white at the sound of that sharp, thudding blow that Balisle had not been killed by it.

SAVAGE oaths burst from the lips of policemen who saw the action of the ape.

“He acts like a human being! An ape wouldn’t have thought of that!”

The words came hysterically from the lips of a woman who, frightened though she was, could not tear herself from the window to the right of where Bentley and Tyler leaned out to stare down.

Bentley smiled grimly. What would she think if he told her gravely that the creature crawling down the face of the building was not quite an ape?

So far the public didn’t know what the Mind Master schemed. He’d spoken of stealing brains, but that had meant nothing to the general public. Just the maunderings of a madman, perhaps.

At the third floor the anthropoid hesitated. He seemed to be gazing all around, noting the preparations which were being made to trap him at the street level.

“An ape wouldn’t do that,” muttered Bentley. “A man would. The man in that manape is showing through—but he won’t be able to force himself free of Barter’s domination. If he could he’d probably throw Balisle down now to keep him from being ... well, treated as Barter intends to treat him.”

The ape dropped to the second floor. Silence seemed to hang over Fifth Avenue. Ugly gun muzzles protruded from every window across the street. Scores of rifles were aimed down from windows in the Clinton Building, to drill the ape through from above.

At that instant a limousine whirled into Fifth Avenue, traveling fast, and ground to a stop under the ape.

“What’s this?” cried Bentley.

“That’s Saret Balisle’s car,” said Tyler. “There’s nobody in it but his chauffeur. The fool! Does he think he can take his master away from the ape singlehanded?”

“That looks like foolhardy loyalty, but I’m not so sure that it’s Balisle’s chauffeur at the wheel. Tyler, send somebody down to wherever it is that Balisle parks his car.”

BUT before Tyler could move to obey, the anthropoid ape made his surprise move, and did a thing which no ape would have thought of doing. He hurled Balisle toward the limousine. The somersaulting body struck the roof of the car, crashed through the fabric, and dropped into the tonneau.

At the same instant the limousine leaped to full speed ahead.

A shower of bullets smashed windows and scored deeply and menacingly the brick walls all around the giant anthropoid which for a second still crouched on the second-story ledge. The ape whirled and crashed through the window at his back.

"Tyler, send half a dozen cars after that limousine. They simply have to catch it. But they mustn't fire for fear of killing Balisle. Have the car followed right to Barter's hideout. The men in this building will scatter at once through the building. We must trap that ape!"

The whole police organization was in a turmoil.

Sirens screamed as police cars flashed after the fleeing limousine which carried Saret Balisle away. Doors slammed and windows crashed as two score policemen scattered through the building, armed with riot guns and pistols, seeking the ape.

Tyler, after barking the staccato orders which set his men in motion, turned to Balisle's secretary.

"Quickly, the number Balisle calls when he wants his automobile sent around."

The girl gave it, and Tyler called the number.

"Are Mr. Balisle's car and chauffeur there?" he asked.

He swore explosively and hung up the receiver.

"Another killing," he said. "Balisle's car is gone and the garage people have just found his chauffeur, almost ripped to pieces, in another car left at the garage for storage.

"That means this ape is armed with metal fingernails, just like the one that killed the insurance man in the Flatiron Building. That means he'll be doubly dangerous when caught. The murdered chauffeur will have to wait for a few moments while we capture the ape."

SHOUTS and shots rang through the Clinton Building. The ape was going wild, crashing through doors and windows as if they weren't

there. His mad bellowing sounded terrifying in the extreme, so deep and rumbling that the air seemed to tremble with its menace.

But in the end there came a chorus of triumphant shouts which told that the giant ape had been surrounded.

Bentley and Tyler raced in the direction of the sounds. From all directions came the sounds of footfalls as other plain-clothes men raced to be in at the death. Bentley held his automatic tightly gripped in his right hand. He knew exactly where he was going to aim if the ape were not dead when he reached him.

The creature had been cornered in the areaway between two banks of elevators and had climbed up the cage as high as he could go. He was just out of reach of human hands, even had there been any men there with the courage to try to take him alive. A white foam dripped from the chattering lips of the anthropoid. His red-rimmed eyes flashed fire. Bentley noted the little metal ball on top of the creature's head.

Deliberately he stopped, raised his automatic, and held it steady while he pressed the trigger with the extreme care which a sharp-shooter knows to be necessary ... and a bullet ploughed through the top of the ape's head.

The little ball vanished, and the ape released his grip suddenly. His chattering died away to an uncertain murmur, the fire went out of his eyes, and he fell to the floor. No bullet had yet actually struck him, for he had whirled into the window from the second-story ledge simultaneously with the barking of the policemen's rifles and pistols. He had escaped there—but here he was not to escape.

Bentley and Tyler both lifted their voices to shout warnings to the policemen, but their voices were drowned in the savage explosions of a dozen weapons, in the hands of men who probably thought the creature was in the act of charging ... and the ape sprawled on the floor, his legs and arms quivering.

HALF a dozen men rushed forward, weapons extended.

"Keep back!" yelled Bentley, rushing in.

He stood over the ape, staring intently at his glazing eyes.

"Tyler," snapped Bentley, "have everybody fall back beyond earshot."

Tyler issued the orders. Bentley shouted, "Quickly, quickly!" knowing he had little time.

Then, with Tyler beside him, he knelt beside the ape.

"I know you can't talk, but you can answer me by nodding or shaking your head. You are Harold Hervey, aren't you?"

The eyes of the ape were hopeless. Tyler gasped, staring at Bentley as though for a moment he thought him crazy. But in the next instant he doubted his own sanity, for the ape, slowly and ponderously, nodded his head.

"I'm going to name a number of places where I think you might have been taken," went on Bentley. "In each case nod or shake your head. Is it near Sixth Avenue?"

Slowly the great head moved, more slowly even than before; but it nodded.

"Where? Below Twenty-third Street?"

Again the ponderous, agonizing nod.

Bentley went on.

"Below Fourteenth Street?"

Again the nod, barely perceptible this time.

"Below Christopher Street?" asked Bentley.

This time the head shook from side to side, ever so slightly.

"Two blocks above Christopher?"

But this question was never destined to be answered. The giant anthropoid in whose skull-pan was the brain of Harold Hervey, entirely controlled by Caleb Barter, until Bentley had shot the little metal ball from his head, had died.

Bentley rose and looked down at the anthropoid for several seconds.

"Barter will hate to lose this creature," he said. "He probably has just the number of apes he needs—and Tyler, here's a hunch: he'll need an ape to take the place of this one! Get me the best surgeon to be found in Manhattan, and get him as fast as you can!"

"Good God!" ejaculated Tyler. "What do you want a surgeon for? What are you going to do?"

"Barter needs an ape to take the place of this one. I shall be that ape!"

## The Mute Plungers

IT would be difficult to comprehend the nervous strain under which Manhattan had been laboring during the past thirty-six hours. The story of the kidnaping of Harold Hervey had not been given to the newspapers, for an excellent reason. If Hervey's financial enemies knew of his kidnaping and death they would hammer away at his stocks until they fell to nothing and his family, accustomed to fabulous wealth, would have been reduced to beggary.

The Mind Master himself, up to a late hour, had given no word to the newspapers in his "manifestoes." The Hervey family held its breath fearing that he would—for the newspapers would have played the story for all the sensationalism it would carry. Bentley, when this matter was called to his attention, wondered. Barter had kept his own counsel for a purpose, but what was it? There was no way of asking him.

The story of the mad race down Broadway in pursuit of the limousine which had returned the lifeless body of Hervey to his residence had been a sensational one, and the tabloids had given it their best treatment. The chauffeur who had crawled out like a monkey atop his careening car, to lose his life when catapulted into the entrance to the Twenty-third Street subway station: the three policemen whose lives had been lost because the chauffeur hadn't stopped as they had expected him to, the kidnaping of Saret Balisle by a great ape hadn't yet broken as a story, nor the murder of Balisle's chauffeur.

But everybody knew something of the story of the naked man of the day before. Many were the speculations as to what had ripped and torn his flesh from his body, along with his clothes. What manner of claws had it been which had sliced him in scores of places as though with many razors?

Men and women walked the streets apprehensively, and many of them turned at intervals to look behind them. No telling what they

would do when the story of Balisle's kidnaping by an anthropoid ape and a queer mute chauffeur got abroad. To top it all the police pursuers lost the Balisle limousine and Saret Balisle had taken his place among the lost.

BENTLEY knew as soon as the disgruntled and rather frightened police officers returned to the Clinton Building with the news that Balisle had got away from them in the stolen Balisle car, that already the ill-fated young man was probably under the anesthetic which Caleb Barter used on his victims.

"Tyler, do you know a surgeon who can do any surgical job short of brain transplantation?"

"Yeah. There's a chap has offices in the Fifth Avenue Building. He's probably the very best in the racket. Maybe it's because of his name. It's Tyler."

"Some relative of yours?"

"Not much. He's just my dad—and one of the world's finest and cleverest."

"Will he listen to reason? Can he perform delicate operations?"

"He's my dad, Bentley, and he'd do almost anything I asked him so long as it was honest ... and he could switch the noses of a mosquito and a humming bird so skillfully that the humming bird would go looking for a sleeping cop and the mosquito would start building a nest in a tree."

"Get him here. No—has he an operating room where all sound can be shut out? I've got a hunch I'd like somehow to try and drop a screen around us as we work. Maybe your dad would know what to do. You see, I'm positive that Barter sees everything we do and if he sees me turning into an ape he would just chuckle and pass up the trap."

"He's got a lead armored room where he keeps a bit of radium."

"That's it. Talk to him. No, not on the phone. You'll have to figure out some way to do it so that you can be sure Barter isn't listening."

"I'll manage. I'll send him a note."

"Your messenger will be killed on the way to him."

"Then I'll go myself."

“And Barter will watch everybody that goes into his office or comes out, and mark down each person as possibly being connected with the police. However, you figure it out.”

WHEN Tyler had gone and the dead “ape” had been stretched out in one corner of Balisle’s office, and covered with something to cloak its hideousness, Bentley telephoned Ellen Estabrook.

“Have I been making any appointments with you this morning?” he asked her cheerily.

“Please don’t jest when things are so terrible. Have you seen the latest papers?”

“No. What do they say?”

“There’s a lot of the story I’m thinking about. You’d better read it right away. It’s an extra, anyhow. The newsies ought to be calling it around you somewhere—and where are you, anyway?”

Bentley informed her, and told her, too, that he would be with her as soon as he possibly could. Taking the usual masculine advantage he decided to tell her now what he wouldn’t have had the heart to tell her to her face, that he was planning a rather desperate stunt to reach Barter, and would consequently be away from her for an indefinite period.

“But I’ll see you first?” she said after a long hesitation. Bentley could hear her voice tremble, though he knew she was fighting desperately to keep him from noting the catch in her voice.

“Yes, nothing will happen until—well, not until I’ve seen you again.”

Just as Bentley hung up the receiver the extra was being cried. Some two hours had now elapsed since Balisle had been taken away, and now the newsboys were shouting the headlines.

“Extra! Extra! All about the big Wall Street crash! Hervey fortune entirely swept away!”

BENTLEY sent an office boy out for the paper and spread it out on the desk to digest it as quickly as possible.

“One million shares of Hervey Incorporated,” read the black words in a box on the first page—a story in mourning, “were dumped on the market at eleven o’clock this morning. Four men seem to have been behind the queer coup. One of them had a power of attorney from Harold Hervey himself, and he had the shares to sell. So many shares were dumped

that the bottom fell out of the stock. Others holding the Hervey shares, fearful that they would get nothing at all, also began to dump, and every share thus dumped was bought up quickly by three other men about whom nobody knew anything, except that they paid with cash. The strangest thing about it all was that the three men who bought Hervey Incorporated, seemed to be dumb-mutes, for they didn't say anything. They acted through a broker, and indicated their purchases with their fingers in the conventional manner and tendered cards as identification! They were Harry Stanley, Clarence Morton, and Willard Cleve—addresses unknown, history unknown.

“Nothing, in fact, is known about any of the three or the little white-haired, apple-cheeked man who sold so heavily in Hervey Incorporated. That the three mutes did not buy the shares sold by the little white-haired man would seem to indicate that all four of them worked together ... but it is only a supposition as they were not seen together and apparently did not know one another. But the three mutes constantly ate walnuts. All four men, who among them knocked the bottom out of Wall Street, and wiped away the Hervey fortune, slipped out in the excitement inspired by their rapid buying and selling, and seemed to vanish into thin air.”

Bentley didn't know much about the stock market, but it seemed to him that Barter had managed a theft of mighty proportions. With a power of attorney, which he had wrung from Hervey after his capture, he had managed to possess himself of Hervey's shares. In themselves they were worth millions. Even at a fraction of their price Barter would realize heavily on them. Selling quickly he would force the price far down. Then his puppets—and Bentley had no doubt that Stanley, Morton and Cleve were his puppets—bought all other shares offered by panicky investors in Hervey Incorporated at a tiny fraction of their value. Far less, naturally, than Barter had made by selling his loot.

The purchased shares Barter could hold for an increase. Hervey Incorporated was good and its price would go up again, and Barter would sell and gain millions.

THAT is how Bentley saw it, and his lips drew into a firmer, straighter line as, half an hour later, he explained it all to Ellen.

“It's desperate, dear,” he whispered in her ear. “Manhattan's financial structure has been shaken to its foundations. But that isn't all by any means. Barter has performed his horrible operation on two of New



York's most brilliant men. It was a Barter gesture to send 'Harold Hervey' to capture Balisle, and the horror of it staggered me."

"Lee," said Ellen, "understand this: that if I have no word from you within seventy-two, no, forty-eight hours after you get started on this scheme you have in mind, I'm going to get through to Barter somehow. If I put an ad in the paper and tell him where I'm to be found he'll surely make another attempt to take me in. If he's captured you, or uncovered the trap you're laying, then I'll at least be with you. If he kills you he kills me. If we can't live together we can die together."

Bentley kissed her fervently, trying not to think what it would mean to him now if she were in the hands of Caleb Barter. Secretly he intended having Tyler keep her so closely guarded that she couldn't possibly do anything as foolish as she had suggested.

The late evening papers carried another manifesto of the Mind Master to the effect that the remaining eighteen men named on the original list were to be taken before noon of the next day.

Oddly enough eighteen kidnapings were reported from various places in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens.

"So," thought Bentley, "he's afraid to send out normal apes to capture his eighteen key men. Maybe his control over them is not perfect. That's it. I suppose—he needs human brains before he can exercise perfect control. I suppose Stanley, Morton and Cleve did the kidnapings."

LATE that night Bentley kissed Ellen good-by, told her to keep up her courage, and repaired to the rendezvous arranged for by Thomas Tyler and his surgeon father. In the operating room was the cold body of the anthropoid that had successfully abducted Saret Balisle.

"Young man," said Dr. Tyler, "just what is it you want me to do? I'm not asking for your reasons. Tommy tells me you know what you're doing. I must say though, I don't believe that story of brain transplantation. No doctor would believe it for a minute."

Bentley looked at the dead ape.

"You'll take Tommy's word for it that that ape kidnaped Saret Balisle to-day and took him down the face of a building, sixteen stories to the ground?"

"Of course. Tommy wouldn't string his father."

“Well, part of your surgical work to-night will make it necessary for you to look at that creature’s brain. You’ll recognize a human brain in that ape’s skull. After you’ve made that discovery, here’s what I want you to do: I’ll strip to the skin; then I want you to place the skin of that ape on me, so that from top to toes I am an ape. You’ll have to do the job so perfectly that I’ll *be* an ape—as soon as, under your watchful eye and Tom’s, I have mastered all the ape mannerisms the three of us can remember. Can you do it?”

Tyler senior shrugged.

He motioned his son and Bentley to help him lift the huge ape body to the operating table, and under the glaring light above he set to work with instruments which gleamed like molten silver, then became a sullen red... .

# Chapter 9

## The Furry Mime

"LISTEN, boys," said Dr. Tyler, after he had removed the skin of the ape, and for a few brief seconds had examined the brain, to shake his head in astonishment. "I've an idea that may help you. It would be impossible for you, Bentley, to play the ape well enough to fool this mad Mind Master. But a hitherto unknown type of ape has just been discovered in Colombia. I read the story of it in a scientific journal to-day. The ape is more manlike than any other known to science. You shall be that ape, brought in during the night by a famous returned explorer. There will be great interest in you now that the story of Saret Balisle's kidnaping has broken. With the attention of New York upon you, certainly your presence will interest Caleb Barter."

Tyler senior rummaged in a pile of papers on his desk and brought forth the story he referred to, which also carried a picture of the Colombian ape.

"It would be impossible for me to change your shape and add to your size sufficiently to make you a real giant anthropoid. You'd have to be twice as deep through the chest; you'd have to have bowed legs as big as small tree trunks; you'd have to have a sloping forehead. No, it's impossible, for I'd have to equip you by padding to an impossible degree, and a scientist would only need to touch you to know you as an imitation ape. But if you are made up as the Colombian ape—"

Bentley quickly interrupted.

"The idea is excellent. I was dubious before about my chances of success, but as an ape of a new species I have a far better chance, and my inevitable human behavior won't be so noticeable."

DR. TYLER measured Bentley as carefully as a tailor, proud of his skill, measures a particular, wealthy customer.

"You will almost suffocate," he said, keeping up a running monologue as his inspired hands worked with forceps and scalpels, "but I can make plenty of air vents in the ape skin which will allow the pores of your skin to breathe. If they are hidden under the hair they will scarcely be noticed, unless of course Barter sees what we are doing here and suspects from the beginning."

"I can stand the discomfort for as long as may prove necessary," said Bentley grimly, conquering a feeling of terror as he already saw himself in the role of an ape, a role previously played in which he had suffered the torments of the damned, "and anything is preferable to the wholesale carnage which Barter is doing. In seventy-two hours he has wrecked the morale of Manhattan. I shall try to get it back. Tyler, will you make every effort to guard the other eighteen men named on the Mind Master's original list?"

"Of course," but Tyler said it dubiously. Barter had proved it almost impossible to outwit him. In their hearts both Bentley and Tyler knew that Barter would make good his boast to take the eighteen men he had named. It seemed a grim price Manhattan must pay to be finally rid of Barter's satanic machinations.

When Bentley, stripped naked, quietly announced his readiness to take his place on the operating table, Tyler senior took a deep breath, like a diver preparing to plunge into icy water, and looked questioningly at Bentley.

"I'm ready, sir," said Bentley quietly. "Let's get on with the task."

Dr. Tyler set to work with amazing, uncanny speed. He had never been more skilful in closing sutures of the flesh in any of his myriad of operations. He was a man inspired as he labored on the task of changing Lee Bentley from a normal human being to a Colombian ape.

WHILE the surgeon worked his son telephoned to the Colombian explorer whose return from Latin-America had been mentioned in the day's news. He couldn't explain anything over the telephone, he said, but would Doctor Jackson come at once to the private offices of James Tyler, surgeon?

Doctor Jackson grumbled, but the urgency in the voice of Tyler convinced him that the thing was important. He promised to be on hand within an hour. It then lacked a few minutes of three o'clock in the morning.

Next at Bentley's suggestion—and he talked quickly and eagerly to keep his mind off the ordeal he knew he was facing—Tyler got the curator of the Bronx Zoo out of bed and asked him to wait upon Doctor Tyler immediately.

At four o'clock Doctor Jackson and the curator entered the room where Surgeon Tyler had performed a miracle.

Doctor Jackson stepped back in amazement when he noted the man-like ape which leaned with arms folded against one wall of the operating room. His eyes were big with amazement.

He studied Bentley for several minutes, while no one spoke a word.

It was the curator who broke the strained silence.

"So this is your Colombian ape," he said. "I read the news story, but I understood that the ape you had found had been killed in the attempt to capture it."

Surgeon Tyler spoke easily.

"That news story," he said, "was to prevent Doctor Jackson from being annoyed by visitors eager to see his find. As a matter of sober fact Doctor Jackson captured the Colombian ape alive and is now about to turn it over to the zoo. Understand me, Doctor Jackson?"

STILL the explorer said nothing. For a moment longer he stared at Bentley; then he walked over to him.

"The hair is different," he said as though talking to himself. "The Colombian ape's hair is of a slightly finer texture. But that could be explained away as I allowed only the merest bit of information to the reporters to-day. I can add a supplementary story in the next newspaper which will explain that the coarse fur of the Colombian ape is the only thing about it which makes it resemble a giant anthropoid."

Jackson had walked to Bentley without fear and ran his fingers through the hair as he spoke.

"I know it's a man, and some surgeon has performed a miracle," he said. "Just what is it you wish me to do?"

"You've read the stories relating to the Mind Master, Doctor?" asked Bentley suddenly. How strangely his voice came from the body of an ape!

"I've read some of them," answered Jackson. "Is this a scheme whereby you hope to trap the Mind Master?"

"Yes."

"Then depend upon me for any assistance I can render. As a scientist I understand fully the power for evil of a mad genius of our class. This Mind Master should be ruthlessly destroyed."

"Thank you," said Bentley, stepping forward. "You know, perhaps, how the Colombian ape behaves, enough that you can coach me how to walk, how to gesture?"

"Certainly. It will take perhaps an hour to prepare you to fill your role creditably."

JACKSON'S face flushed with enthusiasm. He was launched on a task which fired his interest. He was an authority on apes and anything relating to them inspired him.

"Seat yourself on a chair," said Jackson. "The Colombian ape sits upright like a man."

Bentley seated himself as Jackson had bidden him.

"Now spread your legs apart awkwardly, with the knees straight. The Colombian ape doesn't exactly sit on a chair or a rock or a tree, he leans against it in a *half* sitting position."

Bentley quickly assumed the awkward strained position suggested by Jackson.

Jackson stepped up to him and placed Bentley's arms, unbent, so that his fists hung down outside his wide-apart knees, and cupped his fingers so that they seemed perpetually in the act of closing on something.

"You can't possibly take the proper position with your toes," went on Jackson, "for it's beyond a man's ability to curve his toes as he does his hands. The Colombian ape's toes are prehensile."

"Can't you say in your next news story, Doctor," suggested Bentley, "that the Colombian ape, the nearest animal relative of man, seems to be in an advanced stage of evolution. Can you not say that the Colombian ape is by way of losing the use of his toes?"

"Many scientists know that to be untrue," said Jackson, "but perhaps we can help you through your scheme before they begin denying details in the newspapers. Too bad we can't send secret suggestions to all anthropologists that they remain discreetly silent until the mantle of horror is lifted from Manhattan. But of course we can't, since we'd betray ourselves. Our only hope, then, is to work at top speed."

"I am as eager as anyone to finish a particularly horrible task," said Bentley.

UNDER Jackson's instructions Bentley walked up and down the room. His shaggy shadow on the several walls as he turned, marched and countermarched at Jackson's commands, filled Bentley with self-loathing. He found himself repulsive. His body perspired freely impregnating the ape skin with a harsh odor that was biting and terrible in his nostrils. It was sickening. He tried to close his mind to the repulsiveness of what he was doing.

He walked with a swaying, side-to-side gait, something like a sailor's rolling walk, while his arms swung free at his sides as though they merely hung from his body. The Colombian ape walked like that, Jackson said.

"How about the intelligence of the Colombian ape?" asked Bentley.

"We shot the only specimen so far seen by man before we could discover any facts bearing on his intelligence," said Jackson.

"Then you can safely say that he possesses intelligence far beyond that of known apes," said Bentley quickly, "somewhere, let us say, between that of the lowest order of mankind and civilized man."

Jackson nodded his head dubiously.

"It seems," he said unsmilingly, "that I arrived in the United States at exactly the right time! You would have failed signally to convince the Mind Master in the role of an African great ape."

Bentley managed a short laugh. How horribly it came from the lips of an ape!

"I'm not overly superstitious," he said, "but I regard this as a good omen. I feel we're sure to succeed in what we are planning. I think Barter will surely wish to experiment with me if he thinks I am in reality a great ape from Colombia. He'll welcome the chance to examine any ape which so nearly resembles man. I'm an important link in his plan to create a race of supermen. At least that's how we must hope that Barter will estimate the situation when my story is told in to-morrow's papers."

AN hour before dawn Doctor Jackson, weary from his arduous instruction of the equally exhausted Bentley, pronounced Lee a satisfactory "ape."

"Now here's where you come in," said Bentley tiredly to the curator. "I'm to be taken now to a cage in the Bronx. During the rest of to-day you will quietly instruct your attendants that their guard to-night at the zoo must not be too strict. I must be in position to be stolen by the minions of the Mind Master."

Now the full significance of the desperate expedition upon which Bentley was embarking came home to them all. Their faces were white. Bentley shuddered under his ape robe. His mind went catapulting back into the past to the time when he had been Manape. This was much like it, save that all of him was now encased in the accouterments of an ape and he did not suffer the mental hazards which had almost driven him insane when he had been Manape, with the perpetual necessity of keeping close watch over his own human body which had held the brain of an ape.

He stiffened. "I'm ready," he said.

Immediately upon arrival the curator had been asked to have a closed car, quickly walled with a mixture of lead and zinc—which Bentley and Tyler hoped would thwart the spying of Caleb Barter—brought to Tyler's door.

Three or four zoo attendants entered with a cage when Bentley pronounced himself ready. They stared agape at Bentley and their faces went white when he strode toward them upright, like a man.

Bentley would have spoken to reassure them, but Tyler signaled him to keep silent. The zoo attendants might talk and entirely spoil their scheme.

TWO hours later, long before the first crowds began to arrive at the Bronx Zoo, Lee Bentley was driven from his small cage in the car, into a huge cage at the zoo. From a dark corner, in which he crouched as though overcome with fear, he gazed affrightedly out across what he could see of Bronx Park.

"When I used to feed the animals here," he said to himself, "I never expected that the time would come when I myself would be caged—and one of them."

The curator had ridden out with the cage. But, save for making sure of the fastening on the big cage, he paid no heed to Bentley. He treated him, of necessity, as though he were actually the Colombian ape he pretended



to be. From now on until he succeeded or failed, Lee Bentley was an ape from the jungles of Latin-America.

Just before the crowds could reasonably be expected to begin arriving, curious to see this strange thing Doctor Jackson had brought from Colombia, an attendant arrived with a freshly painted sign.

“Colombian Great Ape,” it read, “Presented to Bronx Zoo by Doctor Claude Jackson.”

It seemed to close entirely behind Lee Bentley the vast door which separated the apes from civilization. Miserably he crouched in his corner and awaited the coming of the curious.

# Chapter 10

## Grim Anticipation

A NUMBING fear began to grow upon Lee Bentley as the ordeal of waiting began.

Naturally he could not eat the food given usually to apes and of course he could not be seen calmly eating bacon and eggs with knife and fork. And because he couldn't eat he was assailed by a dreadful hunger, which, however, he managed to fight down partially. He smiled inwardly as he looked ahead and understood that despite the warnings not to feed the animals, children of all ages, from four years to sixty, would surreptitiously toss peanuts and walnuts into his cage.

He felt a little hopeful about it. They would at least allay his hunger.

But no, he could not do that, either. Nobody had thought to ask Doctor Jackson how a Colombian ape manipulated his food. Even a certain clumsiness in that respect might start questions which would cause the public to doubt the authenticity of Jackson's find.

Bentley decided to sulk. The ape he was supposed to be could reasonably be expected to resent captivity and would probably go on a hunger strike. He would do likewise and be in character if he starved.

He crouched in a far corner as the first comers began to arrive. They were fathers and mothers with their children, and the older people carried, usually, newspapers under their arms. Bentley wished with all his soul that he could see one of the papers close enough to read the headlines.

However, when the crowd was not too thick, Bentley waddled nearer to the wire mesh which separated him from the curious crowd and through lids which were half closed as though he slept, he managed to glimpse a few excerpts from the paper:

"Police department redoubling their precautions to prevent Mind Master from capturing eighteen intended victims."

“Hideout of Mind Master still undiscovered. When will the public be delivered from the stupidity of the police?”

“Doctor Jackson returns from Colombia, bringing a living specimen of an ape hitherto unknown to civilized man, but more like him than any ape hitherto known. Visitors may see the creature to-day in the Bronx Zoo.”

THAT was the story which had brought out the visitors who were forming, moment by moment, a bigger crowd before Bentley’s cage. Bentley managed a glimpse of a woman’s wrist-watch after what seemed an age of trying to do so without his intention becoming plain to the too bright children who crowded as close to the cage as attendants would permit. It was ten o’clock. It would be at least twelve more hours before Bentley could reasonably expect any action on the part of Barter. Barter would now be concentrating on his plans to kidnap the eighteen men he had first named.

Bentley tried to make the time pass faster by imagining what Barter would be doing. By now his labors must be titanic. He must have separate controls for each of his minions, and there were many times when he must control several at one time, thus making his task akin to that of a man trying to look two ways at once, while he rolled a cigarette with one hand and shined his shoes with the other. Certainly the concentration required was enormous.

Yet, no matter how complicated became his puzzle, Barter was its master because he was its creator, and Bentley hadn’t the slightest doubt that, until someone actually penetrated Barter’s stronghold, he would not be stopped.

Bentley knew that at the very first opportunity he would destroy Caleb Barter as he would have destroyed a mad dog or stamped to death a deadly snake. The life of one man would rest lightly upon his conscience, if that man were Caleb Barter.

Perhaps, though, he could learn many of Barter’s secrets before he destroyed him. Properly used they might prove boons to mankind. It was only the use Barter was putting them to that threatened to fill the world with horror and bloodshed.

“MAMA, why don’t he eat?”

"Hush," said a woman, as though afraid the Colombian ape would hear and become angry; "don't annoy the creature. He looks fully capable of coming right out at us."

But the child who had been admonished began to juggle a bag of peanuts which he managed to throw into the cage. Bentley stooped forward, sniffing suspiciously at the sack, while a wave of hunger made him feel weak and giddy for a moment. He just realized that he hadn't eaten for almost twenty-four hours. His time had been so filled with action and excitement that there hadn't been opportunity.

"I hope," he said to himself, in an effort to drive away thoughts of food, "that Tyler will take every precaution to prevent Ellen from doing something foolish."

Knowing that he could no longer communicate with her, could no longer be absolutely sure that she was still out of Barter's clutches, he suffered agonies of fear for her safety.

"If Barter places a hand on her I'll tear his skin from his carcass, bit by bit!" he said, unconsciously clenching his fists.

"Oh, look, mama, he's shuttin' his fists as though he wanted to fight somebody! I'll bet he could whip Dempsey, couldn't he, mama?"

"Perhaps he could, son. Hush now, and watch him. There's a good boy!"

It brought Bentley sharply back to his surroundings and proved to him that he must not allow his mind to go wool-gathering if he did not wish to give himself away. What if, in an access of anger, he happened to speak his thoughts aloud? He could imagine the amazement of the crowd.

THE day wore on.

At noon a strange horror seemed to travel over the Bronx Zoo, and within a short time every last visitor had precipitately departed. Bentley could now safely approach the wire mesh and look out and around over a wider radius.

Right under the wire mesh was a newspaper someone had thrown away.

By pressing tightly against the mesh Bentley could see the headlines.

"Mind Master successful on all counts!"

So that's what had turned the crowd to stony silence with very fear? They had all fled, wondering who would be next. Bentley had heard the shouting of the extra on the distant streets, but it had been so far away he hadn't heard the words. One solitary newspaper had appeared among the Bronx crowd and the story it carried under startling scareheads had passed from brain to brain as though by magic ... and the crowd had fled.

Bentley stared down at the newspaper in horror, a horror that was in no way mitigated by his having fully expected Barter to succeed. Mutually, with no words having been spoken to express the thought, Tyler and Bentley had conceded to Barter the eighteen victims he had named.

Nothing could be done to stop him. His brains were greater than the combined wisdom of the city of New York.

What else was in that paper?

Bentley stared at it for an hour, and finally a vagrant breeze, for which he had hoped and prayed during that hour, whipped across the park and stirred the paper. He read more headlines.

"Lee Bentley disappears! Believed kidnaped or slain by Mind Master!"

How had that story got out? Surely Tyler would have kept that from the press. Following on the heels of the Colombian ape story, Barter would almost surely put two and two together to arrive at the proper total.

BENTLEY read on:

"Ellen Estabrook, fiancée of Lee Bentley, disappears mysteriously from her hotel room. Guarded by a score of police, not one has yet been found who knows anything of her disappearance or saw her leave. Nobody seems to have seen anyone go to her room or leave it. Our police department must have fallen on evil days indeed when twenty crack plainclothes men cannot keep one woman under surveillance."

Something was radically wrong, but Bentley could not piece the whole story together, simply because he had been out of touch for so many hours that the thread of it had slipped from his fingers.

Suddenly Bentley noticed that a solitary man was watching him curiously, a dawning amazement in his face. Bentley roused himself and saw that he was standing against the mesh, fingers hooked into it above his head, his weight on his left leg, his right foot crossed over his left, his head thoughtfully bowed.

To the amazed man yonder the “Colombian ape” must have looked remarkably like a condemned man clutching the bars of his cell, awaiting the coming of the executioner.

Bentley recovered himself and sat down on the floor of the cage in the loose easy manner an ape would have used.

He forced himself to sit thus until evening, when the last curious one vanished from the park and darkness began to fall.

Then excitement at the approach of a hoped for denouement began to rise in his heart like a rushing tide.

Would Barter fall for the ruse? Or did he already know that the Colombian ape was Lee Bentley?

In either case, Bentley thought, the Mind Master would take action during the first hours of darkness. Bentley was gambling desperately on what he knew to be characteristic of Caleb Barter.

# Chapter 11

## In the Dead of Night

BENTLEY knew that if Ellen were in the hands of Caleb Barter the mad professor would probably do her no harm, but use her as a club against Bentley, and through Bentley, the Manhattan police. He did not believe that the Mind Master would consider performing the brain operation on Ellen. Caleb Barter's scheme seemed to consider only men, and men of substance.

No, Ellen would not be harmed, he felt, but that made him feel no easier, knowing that she might be in the hands of Barter.

How could he know of Naka Machi, and the refined vengeance of the Mind Master?

The last visitors had left the park and comparative quiet settled over the zoo. Save for the sounds of animals feeding and the occasional cursing voices of attendants there were no sounds. Not since Bentley had taken his place in the cage had anyone spoken to him. He had never felt so lonely and uncertain in his life.

Now there was utter darkness and silence.

And then before his cage appeared a tiny spot of light. If Barter's minions expected to deal with a powerful ape they would come prepared to subdue him by whatever means seemed necessary. Bentley had no wish to be injured, and yet he must make some show of resistance in order to allay any possible suspicion that he *wished* to be stolen.

There was a faint gnawing sound at the wire outside the cage. Mice might have made that sound, sharpening their teeth on the wire. Bentley decided to feign sleep. Had Barter come personally to supervise his capture? That didn't seem reasonable as Barter must realize that all his effectiveness depended upon his ability to retain control of whatever organization he might have built up—and his central control must be his hideout.

Then he would be sending some of his puppets to get Bentley.

Would they be apes with man's brains? Impossible. Apes could not travel from place to place without attracting attention, especially if they traveled unguarded and went casually to a given destination as men would go. So, if his puppets were not men in the normal meaning, then they were "apemen."

THE wire came softly down. Bentley hoped that no attendant might come blundering around now to spoil everything. His heart pounded with excitement.

At last he was going to see Caleb Barter again at close quarters.

"I shall destroy him," he told himself.

The shadowy outlines of two men came through the severed wires. Bentley still pretended to be asleep. He wondered if Barter's televisual equipment included any arrangements permitting him to see in the dark, and knew instantly that it did. How else could these two puppets have come so unerringly to the proper cage in Bronx Park?

No, Bentley did not dare allow himself to be taken easily in the hope that his actions would pass unnoticed.

But he waited until the ropes began to fall about him, testing the strength of his adversaries by mental measurement. By their uncertain, hesitating actions he knew that he dealt only with the *forms* of men—forms which were ruled by brains which had not in themselves intelligence enough to perform the acts they were now performing. Ape brains in the skull-pans of men. The brains in themselves were only important because they were living matter which was being used as a sensory sounding board by which Caleb Barter, the Mind Master, transmitted his commands to the arms and legs and bodies of his puppets.

Bentley sprang into action. He growled and snarled at the two men who were trying to take him. Only two men? Surely Barter would have sent more than two men to take a great ape! He knows I'm not a true ape, thought Bentley. He's giving me a challenge. He knows I wish to get to his hideout and he is making sure that I get there.

But Bentley was only guessing. Calmness descended upon him as he realized that he was soon to face a crucial test.

JUST now, however, he struck out at the two men who were striving to bind him. They were husky chaps, and one of them packed the wallop of a real fighter. Neither man said a word to him, and when his own



hands clawed at them—how would he dare strike out with his fists?—the men made queer animal sounds in their throats. Bentley could well remember how helpless, hopeless and lost he had felt when his brain had been in the skull-pan of Manape.

The brain of an ape could not be a terribly intelligent instrument in the first place. What thoughts, if apes had thoughts at all, coursed through an ape brain which found itself inside a human skull?

The answer to that was simple: only such thoughts as Barter originated and transmitted through the mental sounding board. After all, the material of the human brain and the ape brain were perhaps very much alike, and Barter was working on a sound scientific principle in making a sounding board of an ape's brain.

Bentley shuddered through the fur that covered him. Knowing the sort of creatures with which he had to deal—men in all things save their intelligence—made him tremble with nausea. Such grim, ghastly hybrids. But he stopped shuddering when he recalled that he still dealt with men after all—at least with one man, Caleb Barter. When he thought of these two “apemen” as separate entities of a human being of many personalities—Caleb Barter—he was able to plan some method by which to deal with them.

So now he fought, seemingly with the utmost savagery, to keep them from binding him with ropes. Even as he fought, however, he fancied he could hear the grim chuckling of Caleb Barter. What did Barter know?

Bentley knew that eventually he would discover the truth.

IN struggling against the two “men” his hands encountered the knobs on their heads—the tiny metal balls protruding from the top of the skull at the point where, in babies, the head remains soft during babyhood. He could have broken connection with Barter for these two by jerking the controls free. And then what? He would never get through to Barter and would release in Bronx Park two men whose strange type of madness, when they were discovered, would startle the countryside. Two men with the savagery of anthropoid apes! He shuddered as he carefully refrained from disturbing those balls.

At last Bentley was quite securely bound, only his lower limbs remaining free so that he could walk, though the length of his steps was strictly limited. His hands were entirely and securely bound, and the significance of this fact did not escape him. Barter knew that he did not need his

hands to aid him in walking! Of course the newspaper story released by Doctor Jackson had reported the Colombian ape as being able to walk exactly like a man.

But that didn't prevent Bentley from nursing the suspicion that Barter already *knew*. Even if he did, it could in no wise alter the determination of Bentley. His task was to penetrate the hideout of Barter—and he was on the way there now.

WITH little attempt at concealment the two men led Bentley to a long black closed car outside the park. They met no one. The two men avoided discovery with uncanny ease. Bentley thrilled with excitement. He felt he knew approximately where Barter's hideout was.

It was useless, to speculate, however; time would show it to him.

Bentley was tossed into the tonneau of the car. His two captors, moving with the precision of men in a trance, took their places in the front seat. Bentley struggled for a time against his bonds. He wanted to sit up and peer out, to see what way they took so that he would know where he was when he reached Barter's hideout. But of course, even if he shook his bonds free he did not dare rise to a sitting position, for to control the intricate handling of his two puppets, Barter's attention must have been pretty carefully fixed upon this car.

So Bentley contented himself with waiting.

Lying on his back on the floor of the car he tried to see what he could through the car windows. He knew when he was carried under an elevated system by the crashing roar of trains over his head. He knew he was being carried downtown, but he wasn't sure that this was the Sixth Avenue elevated.

How could he find out the road they were traveling without sitting up and looking at street signs?

HE felt he didn't dare do that. He'd be as careful as possible on the off-chance that Barter really believed him a Colombian ape, when the benefit of surprise would be with Bentley.

The car progressed downtown at a normal speed. It stopped for red lights and obeyed all other traffic regulations. Barter was taking no chance on losing more of his puppets.

Bentley suddenly gasped with horror as he remembered something. Eighteen important men of Manhattan had been kidnaped that day by Caleb Barter. Would Bentley be forced to watch the mad professor perform the eighteen inevitable operations?

Perspiration poured from every pore as he visualized the horror he might be compelled to witness when he was finally taken into Barter's hideout. The ape skin clung to him as though it were actually his own. There were even moments when Bentley feared that it might grow to him.

But he put the feeling of horror from him with the thought that if Ellen were in Barter's power, Barter might even be forcing her to anesthetize for him while he performed his grisly slaughter.

Bentley's courage returned and now it seemed to him that the journey would never end, so eager was he to discover whether or not Ellen had eluded the hands of the Mind Master.

# Chapter 12

## A Woman of Courage

CALEB BARTER smiled warmly at the woman who had come to him almost as though in answer to a prayer. He admired her flashing eyes and the lifted chin which spoke of pride and courage.

"I had thought of improving the feminine strain of the race also," he told her, but almost as though he spoke to himself, "but I realized that it mattered little the stature of the mothers of the race as long as the fathers were made virile. But if all women were like yourself, Miss Estabrook, the race would not require the improvement it is now my duty to bestow upon it."

Ellen stared directly into the eyes of the white-haired old man. As she looked at him she found it hard to believe that one so gentle from outward appearances had such a vast, grim power for evil. In repose his face was kindly, though there was something out of character in the fact that it was so apple rosy. And his lips were far too red.

"Where," she said quietly, fearlessly, "is Lee Bentley?"

Barter raised his eyebrows as he stared back at her. So far she had not looked around at this great room into which he had had her conducted; she had seemed interested only in her mission, whatever that might be.

"You mean that delightfully rude young man?" he asked sardonically.

"You know well enough whom I mean! Where is he?"

"Then he is not to be found in his usual haunts?"

"He has disappeared."

"And you come out seeking Professor Barter because Bentley has disappeared! It is almost as though you had previously arranged with him to come seeking me if, at a certain time he failed to return from some mysterious rendezvous... ."

BARTER'S face was now a mask of uncanny shrewdness. In a few words he had pierced through Ellen's secret of why she had deliberately placed herself in the way of Barter's minions in order to be taken, and now he had used the words of her own questions to form a weapon against her. Ellen gasped in terror.

Had she made a hideous mistake? Had she, by failing to wait for word from Bentley, ruined all his well laid plans?

Barter now stood before her, his eyes almost shooting fire.

"Tell me quickly," he began, and for a second she thought he would put his hands on her, "what sort of plan is he making to betray me into the hands of my enemies, who are the enemies of super-civilization because they are my enemies?"

"I know of nothing," said Ellen stoutly, hoping that she had not, after all, betrayed the fact that she knew Bentley had started to work out an unusual scheme. The details she didn't know, for Lee hadn't told her. "But I do know, what all the world knows, that he was helping the police against you. Naturally, then, when he vanished I thought of you. Besides you had already warned him that you would remove him in your own good time. He caused you the loss of two of your puppets and I thought, naturally enough, that you would try to remove him to some place where he could not operate so successfully against you."

"That's all?" queried Barter eagerly. "You don't know of some special scheme that has been worked out to trap me?"

"I know of no scheme. Now that I am in your hands, Professor, what do you intend doing with me?"

Barter stared at Ellen for several minutes.

"I haven't captured Bentley ... yet," he said at last, slowly, "but I shall—no doubt about that. It is inevitable—as inevitable as Caleb Barter. I can use him in my labors for humanity. How I treat him after he is taken depends somewhat on you. You may therefore consider yourself a sort of hostage. I have much medical work to perform. Have you ever been a nurse?"

ELLEN recoiled in horror. "You don't mean you would ask me to help you perform those horrible—" She stopped abruptly before her sudden tendency to hysterics should make her say things to anger Barter too far.

"So," he said quickly, "you think my brain operations are horrible, eh? Well, you shall see that they are not horrible; that Professor Barter, the

greatest scientist the world has ever produced, is really preparing to prevent civilization from utterly decaying."

"And afterward?" asked Ellen. "I know that eventually you will be taken and that the people will destroy you, tear you limb from limb. But you will never believe that. Tell me, then, what you plan to do with me."

For a brief time he considered the matter.

"I am an old man," he said at last, musingly, "but I am young in spirit and in body. It would be amusing to have a mate—but no, no, that would not do! The destiny of Caleb Barter is not linked with a woman. You would simply hold me back. However, I have often been interested in miscegenation and its effect on the race if properly guided. My assistant Naka Machi, is one of the finest specimens of his race. Perhaps I shall arrange for you to mate with him, under conditions which I shall dictate, in order to experiment with your offspring... ."

Ellen swayed, her face going dead white. She hadn't yet met Naka Machi, but his name told her enough. The thought of a Japanese, however, was far less repellent than the cold, calm way in which Barter spoke of using the offspring of such a union.

"I'll kill myself at the first opportunity," said Ellen suddenly.

BARTER put his forefinger under Ellen's chin in a paternal fashion. His eyes looked deeply into hers. She thought of what his fingers had done in the past ... those long slender fingers. His touch made her shudder.

But his eyes held her. They seemed like deep wells. Then they were like black coals advancing upon her out of the darkness, growing bigger and bigger as they came, with little flames in their centers also growing as they approached.

"You will submit your will to mine," said the soft voice of Caleb Barter.

His right hand was making swift snakelike movements back of Ellen's head. His voice droned on, but already it seemed to Ellen to come from a vast distance.

"Your mind will be concerned only with the welfare of Caleb Barter," droned on the voice. "You will think only of Caleb Barter; your greatest desire will be to serve him. There is nothing you would not do for him. Let your objective mind sleep until Caleb Barter wakens it; give your subjective mind into my keeping."

Beads of perspiration broke out on the cheeks of Caleb Barter as he worked quickly to place the girl entirely under his skilled hypnosis. At last she stood like a statue, her wide-open eyes staring into space, straight ahead. She did not move. She scarcely seemed to breathe.

“You will know that my home is your home, Ellen,” said Barter softly. “You will feel that you are welcome here and that you love this place. It needs the attention of a loving woman; you will give it that attention. But you will be subservient always to my will. You will enter upon your duties.”

Ellen Estabrook sighed softly as though with relief. Her hands went up to remove her hat, which she placed on a chair in a corner of the hellish laboratory. She removed her light coat and arranged her hair with skilled fingers. But even as she moved around the room of the long table her eyes stared vacantly into space. She was as much a puppet of Caleb Barter as were Stanley, Morton and Cleve. But, mercifully, she did not know it.

BARTER studied her for several moments; his eyes squinted. He was making sure that she was not duping him with pretense. Satisfied at last he turned his eyes away from her. He stepped to the porcelain slab set in the bronze wall of his laboratory and looked at the push-buttons marked “C-3” and “E-5”. The red lights were on, indicating that the two puppets controlled by these two keys were returning toward their master. The lights had been green when Barter had begun his conversation with Ellen Estabrook, indicating that the two puppets were still going away. With a tremendous effort of will he had given them sufficient mental stimulus to keep them traveling without his direct will for the few minutes he would require for Ellen.

Now, however, he quickly donned the metal cap and the little ball, and inserted into the orifice in his cap the swinging key which connected by chain with the key which fitted into the slot under the button marked “C-3”.

He had returned to his puppets just in time. “C-3” was Cleve, who was driving the car sent out to bring in the Colombian ape. As Barter got in touch with the car it narrowly averted a crash with a police car ... and the perspiration broke forth afresh on the body of Barter as he resumed control of his puppets.

The second creature, in the front seat of the car, was Morton, and it didn't matter particularly about him as he was not driving. But Morton

was now becoming all ape. Barter did not wish to use any more of his mental energy than was necessary. He contented himself by sending his will into Cleve, who began at once to drive like a master. Whenever Morton, beside him, showed an inclination to jump out of the car or otherwise interfere with Cleve in his work, Barter had but to express the thought, and Cleve either pulled him back to his place beside him, or gave him a walnut from his pocket.

BARTER could as easily have had them change places, since he assumed control of either at will, or could have controlled a score simultaneously. But that would have required additional thought stimulus, and he wished to conserve his mental energies for the work which yet faced him.

Once he switched his attention from the heliotube which controlled Cleve—and through which, concurrently, he saw everything that transpired near Cleve, because his televisory apparatus and his radio control were co-workers on almost identical vibratory waves—to the area of Manhattan immediately surrounding his own neighborhood.

“Hmm,” he said to himself, “the police are getting too close. As soon as I have completed my labors to-night I shall destroy some of them as a warning to others to keep their distance.”

Morton and Cleve drew up to the curb while Barter watched carefully on all sides, through the heliotube, to make sure that their arrival was unmarked by the police.

They climbed out quickly and raced across the sidewalk to the green gate which gave on a gloomy old court, inside which they were swallowed by the shadows from all eyes save those of Caleb Barter.

Five minutes after the strange trio had entered the “place,” the great chrome-steel door of Barter’s laboratory swung open.

“Morton and Cleve, my master,” announced Naka Machi, bowing low and sucking in his breath with a hissing sound.

Barter’s own puppets entered with the ape between them.

Barter walked fearlessly forward. He had slipped the key from the orifice atop his head. Morton and Cleve now stood listlessly, dumbly, looking with dead eyes at their master. Barter tossed them several walnuts each.

Then he turned his attention to the ape, rubbing his hands together with pleasure.



But the ape was behaving strangely. His eyes were staring past Barter. His hands sought to lift as though he would hold them out to someone; but the ropes prevented him. Barter turned to look. Ellen Estabrook stood beyond him, white of face, motionless as a statue. The ape was straining toward her.

Caleb Barter chuckled with understanding.

“Good evening, Lee,” he said gently. “I’ve been expecting you!”

# Chapter 13

## Where the Bodies Went

BENTLEY had been bound carelessly. Who could expect ape brains to devise clever bonds, even when controlled by Caleb Barter? And now it seemed that Caleb Barter had known all along; he said he had been expecting Bentley. No, that wasn't it. Barter had seen him yearning toward Ellen Estabrook, statuesque and wide-eyed on the other side of the room. If it hadn't been for the presence of Ellen he might have been accepted as an ape. Now it made little difference.

But his bonds were not tightly drawn. He found himself fighting them fiercely, trying to get his hands on Caleb Barter. He could see the scrawny Adam's apple of the mad scientist, and his fingers itched to press themselves into the flesh.

Caleb Barter stood his ground calmly. "Naka Machi," he said softly.

Suddenly Bentley felt a dull, paralyzing blow on his skull. He knew it had been intended to render him utterly unconscious. But Naka Machi hadn't taken into consideration that his skull was protected by the hide of an ape. He remembered, as he stumbled and fell forward, that the Japanese were wizards with their hands. That's why Naka Machi could knock him down, render him helpless, yet leave his brain as clearly active as before. Perhaps clearer, even, for now his brain did not act on his legs and arms, which were helpless.

Bentley felt as he imagined a patient on the operating table might feel when not given sufficient anesthetic, yet given enough to make him incapable of speech or movement. Such a patient would hear the soft discussions of the surgeons, see them prepare their instruments, yet be unable to tell them that he wasn't entirely unconscious.

BARTER stooped over Bentley and rolled back the lids of his eyes.

"Good. Naka Machi!" he said. "He won't be in any position to do us an injury. Remain powerless, Lee Bentley, but retain your knowledge."

Barter, then, was familiar with the strange hypnosis which the blow of Naka Machi's hand had put upon Bentley. Barter had taken advantage of it to add to it a sort of mental paralysis, so that the condition would continue.

"You are in my hands, Lee," he said in paternal fashion, "but you can do me no harm. Since you were associated with me in the first of my great experiments you know much about me. I have never ceased to hope that you would one day understand and appreciate what I am doing for humanity and be brought to aid me. Perhaps if I force you to watch my efforts you will understand them and sympathize with my ambitions."

Bentley could say nothing. Barter's eyes seemed to leap at him growing large and glaring, just as the eyes of caricatured animals leap at the camera in trick motion pictures. Physically he was powerless. Only his brain was active.

"Remove this covering from him, Naka Machi," went on Barter. "Remove his bonds. You are about his size. Garb him in some of your own clothing."

Bentley had the odd feeling that he didn't need to turn his head to see things around him. His head felt huge, almost to bursting, and his eyes felt huge, too, so that he could see in all directions, as though his eyeballs had been fish-eye lenses.

HE studied Naka Machi. A nasty opponent in a fight, he decided. He hadn't figured on any opponent other than Barter. This man was almost as great. The skill of his fingers as he quickly removed the ape skin from Bentley, using scalpels taken from Barter's table, amazed Bentley with their miraculous dexterity. He cleaned Bentley's body with some solution in a sponge and clothed him in some of his own clothing which fitted fairly well.

Then he lifted Bentley from the floor and stood him against the wall.

Bentley was unbound. He tried to lift his hands but they refused to move. His feet, too, seemed anchored to the floor. His knees were stiff and straight. He might as well have been a wooden image for all his ability to get about.

Now Barter spoke.

"Come here, Lee," he said.

Bentley was amazed at the kindness in Barter's attitude. He dealt with Bentley as though he had been his son. He felt that Barter genuinely liked him. It was rather amazing. Barter liked him but would remove him without compunction if he thought it necessary.

Bentley found he could move his feet, or rather they seemed to move of their own volition, as he crossed the room to stand before Barter.

"I'm rather proud of what I have been able to do, Lee," went on Barter, "and I am now entirely safe from the police. I've issued another manifesto telling the public that for each attempt made against me, one of the eighteen men captured by me to-day will die. Manhattan is the abode of terror. Here, see for yourself."

He extended to Bentley what seemed to be a pair of binoculars, but with the ear-hooks common to ordinary spectacles. He set them over Bentley's eyes and set them in place.

"Now you can survey New York as you wish."

BENTLEY looked for a moment or two. Sixth Avenue was a deserted highway, on which red and green lights blinked off and on in the usual routine, signaling to drivers who were non-existent. There were vistas of deserted streets and avenues. There were some few living things—policemen in uniform, standing in pairs and larger groups, all concentrated in an area covering no more than twenty acres, which twenty acres included the hideout of Caleb Barter. Bentley knew that the hideout was under Millegan Place. He had recognized it coming in. A secret panel in a brick wall had opened to show a door where none was apparent. Then a circular stairway leading down into darkness to the room which Barter had gouged out of the earth and turned into a laboratory of hell.

"See the police?" asked Barter. "They know now where I am, but they are helpless because of my hostages. I shall now begin the operations I believe to be necessary. Then I shall issue another manifesto, telling the public that I am safeguarded by great apes whose ability will prove the correctness of my theory about the possibility of creating a race of supermen. My manifesto shall say that my apes must not be slain. It shall say that for every ape slain by the police one of my eighteen hostages will die."

Bentley would have gasped with horror, but he could not. Now he saw Thomas Tyler, his face a white mask of despair, in the midst of his helpless men.

"I'll give you a hand, somehow, Tommy," Bentley whispered deep down inside him.

"Now you shall see what I do, Lee," said Caleb Barter. "Naka Machi, bring the ape skin you took from my friend. Bentley, you will follow us."

BARTER removed the strange glasses from Bentley's eyes, blotting out the deserted streets and avenues of Manhattan. Naka Machi followed behind Bentley, carrying the ape skin in which Bentley had penetrated the stronghold of Caleb Barter.

The chrome-steel door swung silently back and the three entered another room filled with blaring light. Without being able to look back Bentley knew that Ellen, white of face and staring, followed at their heels.

There was a long white operating table in this room, and a smaller chrome-steel door set some four feet above the floor in one wall.

"Naka Machi, the incineration tube," said Barter brusquely.

Naka Machi stepped to the operating table and dug into one of the drawers. He brought out a white tube, closed at one end, about an inch in diameter, eight inches in length, and snowy white.

"Concentrated fire, Bentley," said Barter. "Watch!"

Barter had Naka Machi cast the ape skin through the small steel door, beyond which Bentley could see a boxlike space large enough to accommodate two or three grown men, lying side by side at full length. It seemed to be indirectly lighted. The ape skin dropped on the floor of this compartment. Barter took the "incineration tube" and directed it on the skin. Bentley heard the clicking of a button.

The ape skin charred quickly, folded up, drew into itself, disappeared—and a fine gray ash settled on the floor of the compartment, like rain from the roof of the ghastly little space.

"Now you understand that I have solved the problem of disposing of the cumbersome useless bodies of my hostages, Lee," said Baxter, rubbing his hands together as though he washed them.

Bentley's heart leaped as Naka Machi placed the incineration tube on the operating table. It was close enough that Bentley could have reached it, had he not been utterly powerless to move.

"Naka Machi," said Barter. "Bring me ape D-4 and Frank Keller, the diplomat. Ellen, clear the operating table. Quickly, now! Bentley, stand against the wall and do not move—but miss nothing I do."

# Chapter 14

## The Straining Prison

THEN began a grim series of activities which combined to form a nightmare Bentley was never to forget, even as he prayed within him that no slightest memory of it would remain in the brain of Ellen Estabrook.

Naka Machi went back to the room which Bentley had first entered and returned almost at once with a tall thin man, immaculately garbed in gray, wearing a spade beard. His eyes were flashing fires of anger and of pride.

He stared at Barter.

"What is all this quackery?" he demanded. "Who is responsible for this unspeakable rigmarole?"

"Your words are harsh, Mr. Keller," said Barter suavely, "and you shall learn in good time what I intend. Had you followed my manifestoes in the news columns you would have known what I intend. I shall create a race of super—"

"You will at once release myself and the others with me," interrupted Keller.

But at that moment Naka Machi returned, leading a great ape which seemed as docile as though it had been drugged. Naka Machi raised his right hand quickly, so quickly Bentley could scarce follow the movement, and with the edge of his palm struck the tall gray man in back of the head. Keller's knees buckled. As he started to fall Naka Machi stepped close to him, gathered him in his arms and bore him to the table.

At Barter's swift instructions Ellen Estabrook, all unknowing, placed a cone indicated by Barter over the mouth and nose of Keller. Naka Machi struck the ape as he had struck the man, but he waited until he had persuaded the brute to take his place on the table near Keller's head.

THE ape sprawled. Naka Machi quickly twisted both Keller and the ape around so that their heads were toward each other, their feet pointing in opposite directions.

"Is that close enough my master?" came the soft voice of Naka Machi.

"Quite," said Barter, whose face was now a mask of concentration. "Cleve and Stanley and Morton?"

"They have been locked in their cages, my master," said Naka Machi. "Are you sure this man who came in the guise of an ape is safe?"

"I shall make sure. But do you remain close where you can render him harmless in case I have misjudged him."

Naka Machi turned baleful eyes on Bentley. The latter could see the hatred in them and for a moment was at a loss to understand it.

"I shall destroy him before he can put his hands upon you, my master," said Naka Machi.

"I do not wish him destroyed, Naka Machi," replied Barter. "That is enough of the anesthetic, Miss Estabrook. Naka Machi, my instruments, quickly."

Before he proceeded with his labors Barter stood in front of Bentley and stared at him for a moment. Bentley felt the strength flow out of him under the gaze of this man—a gaze he could not avoid. Barter smiled slightly.

"You will eventually join me of your own free will, Lee," he said softly.

"I would rather die a thousand deaths!" screamed Bentley, but the sound of his scream echoed and reechoed through his soul without coming out so that Barter could hear it.

BARTER'S confidence in his ability to convert Bentley was assuredly a mark of his twisted mind, for he must surely have realized that Bentley would be the most injured by his schemes. But he seemed to associate him with the days of Manape, when Barter had proved to himself, to Bentley and Ellen Estabrook, that the operation he now planned in wholesale proportions was possible. Bentley could understand why Barter regarded him as a friend and colleague, and his animosity temporary—because as a subject of his first great experiment Bentley was a symbol of Barter's success.



Strange how easy it was to find logic in the reasoning of madmen, and to understand that logic!

Barter sprang back to his task.

“Naka Machi,” he said, “take heed that you serve me well. Do you like this woman?”

“Yes, my master.”

“If you continue in your loyalty to me, I shall give her to you.”

Bentley’s mind recoiled with horror. The shock of this cold statement was like another blow on the head. He wanted to leap forward and set strangling fingers about the neck of Naka Machi. Ordinarily Naka Machi could handle him with ease, but now that Bentley had heard the plan of Barter, he could have handled the Japanese with superhuman strength. But he could not move. He strained against the bodily lethargy which held him prisoner. If only he could move forward and grasp the incineration tube, he would turn it on Naka Machi and Barter... .

But he could not move, could not fight off the lethargy which was like invincible prison walls around him.

He could move the tips of his fingers, he discovered ... but no more than that. The shock of Barter’s calm statement had cast off that much of his semi-hypnotic lethargy. A minute before he hadn’t been able even to move his fingers.

GIVE him time, he told himself, while inwardly he bled as he struggled desperately to throw off the grim hypnosis, and he would yet manage to save the lives of at least some of the eighteen, see that Ellen won free, and destroy this hell-hole under Millegan Place.

Now incredibly slender instruments were busy near the heads of the two on the operating table—the ape and Keller, the doomed man. As the knives and scalpels leaped to their work with startling dexterity and amazing speed, Bentley strained again against his horrid invisible prison. If only he could save this man Keller from this horror ... but it was useless.

The fingers of Barter worked swiftly over the skull of the ape, first. Naka Machi stood on one side of the long table, Ellen on the other, near Barter. Bentley studied her face as the skull of the ape fell open under the hands of Barter, and he knew she was unaware of what she was doing. Bentley had expected a crimson horror, but nothing of the kind developed. Could Barter read his thoughts?

"I am an adept at bloodless surgery, Bentley," he said, while his fingers never ceased their swift manipulations.

Now Naka Machi held the skull-pan of the ape, from which he had removed the reddish substance which was the ape's brain. This Naka Machi had tossed into the aperture where the ape skin had been destroyed.

The empty skull-pan of the ape awaited the brain of Keller.

Bentley could feel the sweat burst forth on him in every pore as he tried to throw off his awful inertia, to go to the aid of Keller. If Barter should see the perspiration on his cheeks... .

Bentley thought of Samson in the midst of his enemies, blind and beaten, of how he had prayed to be given strength to pull down the pillars of the temple... .

"Oh God," said Bentley to himself, "only this once give me strength to throw off these chains. Grant that I do something to save the man from this horror."

BUT he could still move only the tips of his fingers when Barter had finally closed the sutures in the skull-pan of the ape, renewing again the ape's skull, with the brain of Keller inside. Keller was finished. He had not moved on the table. Even his chest stood still, stark and lifeless. Barter had not troubled to restore Keller's skull-pan. What was the need?

Naka Machi gathered up the carcass of Keller and bore it swiftly to the boxlike hole in the wall of the ghastly room... .

He thrust it in. He stepped back and caught up the incineration tube of concentrated fire ... and Bentley saw the body of the murdered man shrivel up so quickly it seemed as though it had dissolved before his eyes. Down from the ceiling of the hell-hole dropped the fine gray ash, all that remained—save the imprisoned brain—of Frank Keller, the diplomat.

Now Bentley was cognizant of something else. With Barter's concentrated work on Keller, something of the power went out of him. Ever so slightly Bentley could feel that Barter was lacking in strength. Some of his will, some of the essential essence of his brain, of his soul, had been expended in the operation—and by so much was Bentley enabled to move. For now he could move two full fingers on each hand. But how carefully he kept watch to see that neither Naka Machi nor Barter noticed that he was bursting from his invisible prison.

If he could get that incineration tube. He'd do the necessary things first ... then direct the ray of it against the softer portions of the hideout of Barter. The flame would eat through. Somewhere it would finally reach wood; that was inflammable.

There would be smoke, and fire ... and in the end people would come. Tyler would be watching for a sign, anyway. Barter had said that the police knew approximately where he, Barter, was located.

"NOW, Bentley," said Barter, "I'll explain what I intend doing while I rest a moment before the next ordeal. The whole world is against me now because it regards my experiments as horrible, but if I prove to the world that I am right, and that the men of my creation are supermen, in the end the world will be on my side. I can force it to obey me, in time, but I prefer the world to serve me willingly, because it realizes that what I do for civilization should really be done."

Bentley said nothing, because he could not speak.

"I'll send Keller to his office under my instructions," said Barter. "Of course I'll issue a manifesto, first, so that the city will know that it is not a wild ape that has escaped. When the new Keller, with the strong brain of Keller and the mighty body of an ape, appears at his office and proves to his people that he has been vastly improved by my experiment... ."

Bentley tried to shut his mind to the horrible picture Barter's words drew before his eyes. Barter broke off short, while Bentley's mind seemed to rock with the shock of Barter's last statement. He saw a picture ... a great office filled with many desks occupied by white-faced men and women ... an ornate desk where a "manape" sat... . It was ghastly beyond comprehension. It must never come to pass.

Barter spoke again to Naka Machi.

"Bring me David Fator and ape S-19."

"Yes, my master," replied Naka Machi.

AGAIN Bentley went through the horror from beginning to end. He could now move his toes. If only he could fall forward, grasp that incineration tube, turn it on Barter! With Barter unable to control him he would regain his senses in time, he hoped, to stave off the certain charge of Naka Machi, whose hatred for himself he now understood too well.

He hoped, if he were able to accomplish what he planned, that horror upon awakening would cause Ellen to faint. While she was out he could destroy the horror with the cleansing flame ... and tell her she hadn't seen it, after all.

Bentley could feel the strength pour back into him. Barter was becoming moment by moment more intent on his labors. He was becoming careless with Bentley, not because he underestimated him but because he was intensely absorbed in his work.

By the time two more men had gone bodily into the incinerator and mentally into a pair of apes, the first ape, carelessly dumped on the floor, came out from under the effects of the drug.

"Stand over there in the corner, Keller," Barter said to the hybrid carelessly, "and remember that no matter how you may wish to escape you can only do so if I will. Remain quiet there and consider whether you will oppose me or obey me. Oppose me and your only escape is self-destruction. Obey me and possess the world!"

Bentley could imagine the horror and despair of "Keller," for he himself had known that horror and despair.

Now he could swing his wrists slightly. Naka Machi turned once with a sudden movement and almost caught him at it, and perspiration broke out on Bentley's face again. Thank God, Ellen realized none of what she was experiencing.

TWO other men gave their lives at Barter's hands ... yet Bentley had only regained sufficient possession of himself to fall forward on his face if he tried to walk, but even that was something.

Five men were gone now. Could he possibly regain muscular control in time to save the lives of some of the eighteen? As he watched the five go into the furnace, one by one, he began to despair of saving any of the eighteen, but with each operation Barter lost mental strength. If he lost in arithmetical progression as he had during the last five, Bentley estimated that he, Bentley, would be able to move his arms enough to grasp the incineration tube by the time Barter had finished his eighth transplantation.

So, the horror growing until nausea ate at Bentley's stomach like voracious maggots, he watched Barter destroy three more men and create godless monsters in their places. As each manape regained

consciousness Barter told him what he had told Keller—and Naka Machi took them out, one by one, and placed them in their allotted cages.

Naka Machi placed the eighth man in the furnace, returned the incineration tube to the table.

“Now, oh God the Father!” moaned Bentley.

He leaned forward, striving with all his will to force his hands to go truly to their target as he fell. He had little or no control of his legs or knees. But let him once hold that tube in his hands... .

He fell soundlessly, his hands clutching for the tube. His fingers touched it as he crashed to the floor, and it fell near him. His fingers fumbled for the tube and now gripped it tightly.

From under the table, writhing and twisting, striving to break his mental bondage, Bentley saw the legs of Caleb Barter. He snapped the button on the tube and turned its open end toward those legs.

“I must not look into his eyes as he falls,” thought Bentley, “or all is lost.”

A TERRIBLE scream rang through the operating room. Barter was falling, crumpling as he fell, and as his body slid downward past the table edge, Bentley held the end of the tube toward it. As the bodies of the eight had shriveled, so shriveled the body of Caleb Barter.

Ellen Estabrook screamed horribly, and sprawled on the floor within a foot or two of Bentley. Nature had mercifully sent her into momentary oblivion when the will of Barter, holding her in thrall, had snapped to show her the horror of what she did.

Naka Machi was screaming. Bentley was Bentley again, crawling forth from under the table. Naka Machi met him in a rush and dissolved before the deadly ray as though he had never existed. Its effect must have been a silent explosion, for a fine gray ash came down from the ceiling as the residue which falls when a soaring rocket has exploded and expended its power. The gray ash was Naka Machi, forever rendered harmless to Ellen.

Bentley walked over and stood looking at the manapes in their cages. What could be done with them? There was no hope, no possible way by which they could resume their normal lives, for of their human bodies there remained but heaps of fine powdery ashes.

Suddenly the manape Keller swept his great hairy arm out between the bars and snatched the tube from Bentley's hand. With a cry of mortal anguish Bentley recoiled from the cage. God! Now all was lost if the manape clicked on the deadly ray and swept it over the room.

Before he could formulate a plan of action, the manape pressed the fatal button. With a cry Bentley threw himself across the room to where Ellen lay unconscious, his only thought to somehow protect her from the tube.

BUT the manape, Keller, swung the ray upon the other apes with the human minds, and they dissolved into ashy nothingness with bewildering rapidity. The keen mind of Keller was doing what he knew must be done for the good of everyone concerned.

Numbed with horror, Bentley saw the ray directed on Morton and Stanley. They fell silently and without protest... .

Keller clicked off the button and looked over at Bentley. He alone remained of Barter's frightful experiment. He alone remained and it seemed that he was trying to tell Bentley something ... asking him to now take the tube and turn it full on the body which housed his human brain.

While Bentley hesitated, the manape bent down and placed the tube on the floor of the cage, the muzzle pointing inward. With a clumsy motion of a long hairy arm he reached out and snicked on the button, then placed himself within its deadly range. Keller vanished and the ray bit into the wall back of the cage; began to eat through.

Bentley leaped to his feet and tore across the floor. He plunged his trembling hand through the bars of the cage, switched off the button and lifted the tube.

There were the remaining normal apes. They could have been saved for transportation to the zoo, but horror was on Bentley and he used the tube again, and yet again... .

And there were the keys. He pulled them from their slots in the porcelain slab, in case there should be other "Stanley-Morton-Cleves" abroad of whom he knew nothing... .

He turned the tube against the red lights and the green lights.

Then he turned the tube upward and held it steadily. He watched the charred hole grow bigger and deeper in the high ceiling... .

When at last he heard the approaching clang of the fire engine bells and the screaming triumph of police sirens, he carefully snicked off the button of the tube and returned to lift the form of Ellen in arms that were strong to hold her.

**The End**

## Loved this book ?

### Similar users also downloaded:

- "*Salvage in Space*", Jack Williamson
- "*The Hooper*", Walter M. Miller
- "*Lords of the Stratosphere*", Arthur J. Burks
- "*The Pygmy Planet*", Jack Williamson
- "*Death of a Spaceman*", Walter M. Miller
- "*The Aggravation of Elmer*", Robert Andrew Arthur
- "*Sorry: Wrong Dimension*", Ross Rocklynne
- "*Homesick*", Lyn Venable
- "*See?*", Edward G. Robles
- "*Cost of Living*", Robert Sheckley





**[www.feedbooks.com](http://www.feedbooks.com)**  
Food for the mind