

A MILLION YEARS AHEAD

Ross Sherill's Superman of
Future Eons Knows but
One Master—
Evolution!

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THE little rat-faced man looked fearfully at the mechanism in the corner of the lamp-lit laboratory. It was like a tall cylindrical cage of metal bars, connected electrically to the generators, huge vacuum tubes, and other apparatus in the room.

He turned jerkily toward the other two people in the room. One was a serious, lanky young man, the other a girl whose soft face was pale and whose dark eyes held hooded apprehension. These two were Ross Sherill, brilliant young biologist, and his wife, Gail.

The ratlike little man asked fearfully, "Is that the machine? The thing you're going to use to—to change me?"

"That's it, Fraham," said Ross Sherill steadily. "The projector that is going to throw you a million years ahead of the rest of the human race, in evolutionary development."

His serious eyes kindled with scientific enthusiasm as he addressed the wizened little Fraham.

"Evolution is ordinarily a very slow process," he went on, "a physical and mental change which I recently dis-



"Do you think I want to be a half-ape?"

covered is caused by certain kinds of cosmic radiation that effect slight changes in our bodies, forcing our race ever higher on the road of progress. I've found out how to produce those forces artificially, many times stronger. So when I turn those vastly intensified forces on your body, you will in a few minutes pass through evolutionary changes that will take a million years for the rest of the race to pass through naturally."

"Yes, but what'll I change into?" cried Fraham. "Suppose I change into something awful, what then?"

"Once I've thrown you ahead in development and observed what the human race will evolve into, I can bring you back to your present status," Sherill told him calmly. "I found a certain cosmic radiation that reverses evolutionary change, and I'll use that on you."

The lanky young scientist took a packet of bills from his pocket.

"Here's the thousand dollars I agreed to give you for submitting to the experiment. You'll get it when we're done."

FRAHAM stiffened at sight of the money, and an ugly gleam came into his slitted eyes.

"I might add that you'll get the money *only* by undergoing the experiment," Sherill added pleasantly. "I have a pistol in my pocket and if you try anything, I'll shoot. Well, what about it—are you willing to undergo the experiment?"

Fraham's face was beaded with perspiration, and his eyes rolled from the money to the bulky, enigmatic mechanism.

He finally spoke, hoarsely. "I've got to do it, and you know it—you know the police are hot after me and that I need that grand to get out of the country. But remember," he added desperately, "you promised to bring me back so I'll be just like I am now!"

"I will—you'll be out of here in an hour," Ross Sherill told him eagerly. "Step inside the projector."

As Fraham slowly obeyed, entering the cylindrical cage with steps weighted by dread, Gail Sherill laid a

trembling hand on her husband's arm. Her dark eyes held fear. "Ross," she said, "I'm afraid of this experiment. I wish you'd give it up."

"Don't bother me now, dear, please," the tense young scientist begged.

He was turning switches, shifting controls. The generators around the room broke into humming life, the great tubes silently lit to a violet glow, transformers sprayed a crackling brush.

Sherill, his hand on the final switch, regarded the terrified little man inside the projector.

"Just stand steady, Fraham," he said. "It will take only fifteen minutes of exposure to the force."

He flung the switch. Brilliant white light broke from the vertical bars of the projector, a blinding cascade of radiation that hid from sight the trembling man inside. The evolution accelerating force was playing upon that man's body, millions of times more powerful than such forces had ever played upon a human being before.

Ross Sherill watched tensely, his hand on the switch. Behind him, Gail watched too, her slim figure rigid with fear of the unknown. What was going on inside that glowing halo? What tremendous changes were taking place in Fraham as the awful cosmic forces flung him through thousands of years of future development each minute?

It was ghastly, unholy, the fear-ridden girl told herself, this artificial short-cut on the road of slow evolution! Her husband was violating the basic laws of the universe itself in thus hurling a human being a million years past his fellows in development. Why had she ever let him do it?

Sherill counted the minutes beneath his breath. "Fourteen—fifteen!" He threw the switch open.

The blinding glow of radiation died, and they stared, petrified, at the man inside the cylindrical cage. The wizened, rat-faced little criminal had vanished and in his place stood a man of superhuman, terrible aspect.

His huge form was bursting from Fraham's clothes. For this man was

almost seven feet tall, with colossal shoulders tapering down into a lean, perfect body of tremendous strength. A body that was as much superior to the ordinary human form as man is to the ape.

But the face! It was godlike in terrible beauty, the features perfectly regular, the mouth a straight, merciless line, the eyes enormous glowing ones through which looked a cold, vast mind whose shock was felt tangibly. The head was quite hairless.

"My God!" cried Ross Sherill, staring in amazement at this superhuman figure. "Fraham, changed—"

"Ross, change him back!" cried Gail, clutching her husband's arm in terror. "I'm afraid!"

Too late for that! Fraham, or the godlike man who had been Fraham, was stepping out of the projector. His glowing eyes fastened on Sherill and the dazed young scientist felt those eyes reading the depths of his mind like an open book. That inhuman gaze swung to Gail's pale face, and she flinched in horror from it.

THEN the transformed Fraham's coldly beautiful face turned back to Sherill. He spoke in an icy, level voice.

"To think it was you, a savage semi-animal, who developed me!"

"Fraham!" said Ross Sherill hoarsely. "You did change—into the kind of man all men will be in a million years."

He went on with desperate hope.

"All right, now that I've seen what the course of future evolution will bring forth, I'll bring you back to your former state. Step back into the projector."

The creature before them laughed! A cold, terrifying and mirthless laughter.

"You amuse me," he told Sherill. "Do you think that I would let you change me back now into what I was, into a dim-minded, shriveled half-ape like yourself? No, I stay as I am, and with my brain I can bring all your witless race under my rule, easily."

"Ross," Gail cried desperately to her husband, "he'll do it if you let him

stay like this. You *must* change him back!"

Ross Sherill suddenly produced the pistol in his pocket and levelled it at the godlike Fraham's heart.

"Back into the projector, Fraham, or I'll shoot!" he cried. "I don't intend to let my experiment release a super-minded monster on the world."

The superman before him laughed again.

"You think to match wills with me? Throw that weapon out of the window."

His glowing eyes were riveted on Ross Sherill's as he uttered the command. As those supernal eyes bored into his soul, the young biologist felt himself losing control of his own body.

He tried to pull the trigger and couldn't. His muscles were obeying, not his own mind, but the hypnotic command of the creature before him. Resistless, his hand went up, and flung the pistol out of the open window.

Fraham went on contemptuously in that eerie, cold voice.

"You begin to see how helpless you are to resist me. Just as helpless will all men be, when I appear in their cities and order them to submit to my rule."

His glowing eyes flashed. "I may have to destroy many of them before they learn my power. But it will be easy. My mind can devise weapons against which your race will be powerless to resist. I will build the first of those weapons now!"

As Sherill and his wife watched, the superman moved swiftly about the laboratory, picking up some ebonite rods, two copper discs, a small piece of bismuth and other odd objects.

They saw the transformed Fraham deftly, quickly, join these things together into a tripodlike instrument, crowned by the two discs. Ross Sherill realized in horror that it was some awful weapon of the future designed to be used upon present day humanity. The lanky young scientist crouched, leaped for Fraham's throat!

Fraham whirled, and the hypnotic

command of those terrible eyes froze Sherill halfway across the room.

"You will remain in this room, you two," commanded the superman, "while I test my new weapon outside. I can use you—as subjects to test other weapons upon."

Without another look at them he strode out of the room with his curious weapon. Looking numbly out through the window into the moonlight, they could see his huge figure striding up the slope of the hill behind the old country house.

They saw him stop up there on the crest, where he seemed to be setting up and adjusting the tripodlike thing.

Ross Sherill threw himself toward the door.

"I'll get the pistol I threw outside!" he cried to his wife. "That monster's got to be killed at once or he'll destroy the world."

He reached the door—and stopped. He could go no further; his muscles were obeying the hypnotic command of the superhuman Fraham, and not his own will. Sherill concentrated strongly, but could not get through that door. Neither could Gail, when she tried.

"Ross, we can't get out!" she sobbed. "We—"

"We've got to!" cried the young scientist wildly. "If we don't, I'll be responsible for the havoc that creature will wreak on Earth." Then he pointed through the window and cried, "Look, he's trying that devilish weapon now!"

Up there on the crest of the moonlit hill they could see the huge figure of the superhuman Fraham bending over his tripod instrument. They glimpsed a swift, terrific flash of white fire or force that drove out into the moonlight from the thing.

They saw the monstrous superman straighten and peer into the silver night as though to see the effect of that tremendous bolt as it struck somewhere far away.

"**WE** can't stop him!" Gail was exclaiming, her eyes wide with dazing horror. "We're like children against a brain like that, un-

able to oppose our minds for a minute against his."

Like a bomb exploding in his brain, an idea burst blindingly upon Ross Sherill.

"We can't oppose his mind now, no," he cried, "but what if I throw *myself* forward a million years in development with the projector, also? Then I'd have a mind as vast and powerful as his—I could fight him!"

He leaped instantly toward the cylindrical cage.

"I'm going to do it, Gail! It will only take fifteen minutes for the force to throw me ahead, and I don't think he'll return before then."

Gail clung to his arm, crying. "No, Ross, don't!" she pleaded. "You'll become a monster like him."

"I won't!" Sherill told her desperately. "Fraham was of a predatory, criminal cast of mind, and that is why even after he had developed so tremendously, he still had in mind only the desire to dominate and prey on the world. But I want only to destroy the menace of Fraham, and when I've done so I'll re-enter the projector and you can use the reversing force to bring me back."

Before the terrified girl could protest further, he had entered the mechanism.

"Throw the switch, Gail!" he commanded urgently. "There's little time."

The girl's hand numbly closed the switch. Inside the cage of bars, Ross Sherill was almost blinded by the terrific burst of glowing force from about him. As that awful flood of tingling force saturated every atom in him, he felt hurled through abysses incredible, fathomless and staggering. He felt his mind and body changing, expanding, unfolding, with each passing minute.

Vast new vistas of thought opened out in his mind, things that had before seemed complex and obscure became crystal clear to him. He felt a superhuman enhancement of his powers of reason. He knew he could solve problems in a moment that would take an ordinary man months or years. And as his body changed

and grew, he felt a boundless physical vigor he had never felt before.

His emotions were withering and dwindling, and a cold logic was now dominant in his mind. He was becoming, he knew, the kind of man all men would become in a million years. And it seemed to him now that in changing from his former cramped body and mind, he was stepping from an animal state into one of full humanity.

The glow of force died about him as the switch was opened, and he could look out now into the laboratory. Before him, staring wildly at him, was a girl. He felt a repulsion at sight of her. This savage, semi-ape, female thing, so undeveloped of mind and body, had he really loved *this*? His new mind sickened at the thought.

She was running toward him, crying, "Ross—"

Then she stopped, and he saw horror and fear deepen in her eyes as she met his own gaze.

"You're not Ross at all," she whispered. "You've changed, like Fraham. I'm afraid of you!"

She was shrinking back from him in dread. But he paid no attention to her, as he strode out of the cage. Fraham—the other! The enemy whom he must destroy!

His super-sensitive ears could already hear Fraham coming down the hill, returning to the house. But he did not fear the other now—he knew with cold confidence that he was his match.

The haggard, wild-eyed girl also heard now and cried a warning. "Ross, he's coming! Go out and get the pistol if you can—"

"Be silent!" he ordered her.

As her eyes met his commanding gaze she was mute and stricken. In his new mind, Sherill felt only contempt for her ignorant babbling. As though he needed a primitive toy like that pistol!

Fraham stepped into the door, a huge figure, as tall and superhuman as himself. And Fraham's glowing eyes saw him and realized in an instant what had happened.

"You—you've changed too!" he

cried. "Well, we'll see who's master!"

He swung up the deadly tripod weapon he carried. The woman screamed.

"Drop that weapon," Ross ordered calmly.

HIS eyes were meeting Fraham's, glowing gaze beating against glowing gaze, a contest of two super-minds more deadly than the clash of swords. Fraham was still raising his weapon but more slowly now. Slower and slower his hands moved as upon his brain beat the super-hypnotic command to desist.

Then Fraham's hands stopped, stiffly holding the tripod. He was putting every bit of his own brain's colossal power into the hypnotic gaze with which he was battling the commanding eyes of the transformed Ross Sherill.

The two supermen stood silent, in the room that was utterly still except for the spasmodic sobs of the crouching girl. They were engaged in a terrific battle of minds such as Earth had never held before.

Then almost imperceptibly, the terrible eyes of Fraham wavered the merest trifle. His mind, before it had been projected a million years ahead in development, had been inferior to the scientist's. And now that Sherill's development also had been jumped forward ten thousand centuries, his mind was still inferior, was slowly breaking down before the scientist's will.

Slowly the hands of Fraham lowered. In his eyes was an awful agony of searing hate and fury. Yet he could not keep his mental defenses from crumbling before the other's assault.

"Drop the weapon," repeated Ross Sherill coldly, his godlike face unchanged in calm.

Fraham's fingers relaxed, and the diabolical tripod-weapon rattled to the floor.

"Step into the projector," ordered the transformed scientist, his gaze never flickering.

As he understood the meaning of that command, Fraham's eyes became terrible. Hellfires of furious revolt

flamed in them, a surge of terrific mental resistance.

But Sherill's commanding gaze held steady, beating the other down again with hypnotic command. A hoarse, strangled sound bursting from his lips, the huge figure of Fraham moved stiffly across the laboratory and into the tall cage of the projector.

Sherill, still holding the other with his eyes, followed. His hand found the switch of the evolution reversing force and snapped it shut. Blue radiation burgeoned from the bars, wrapping Fraham's great form in a shroud of azure light.

Ross Sherill watched, immobile, as the projector hummed for minute after minute. The crouching girl was staring, stunned, at the cold awesome beauty of his inhuman face.

Then Sherill flung open the switch. The blue force ceased. And there in the projector stood Fraham—not the transformed, mighty superman, but the wizened, rat-faced little criminal.

He staggered out, dazedly, wildly. "I— I—" he faltered, and sank into a dead faint on the floor.

Sherill felt a touch on his sleeve. It was the girl, that savage, atavistic female thing, looking up into his face.

"Ross, you conquered him—you brought him back and kept him from destroying the world!" she cried. "Now enter the projector yourself. Let me bring you back to the man you were, my husband."

Bring him back? Drag him back across a million years of development to become a semi-ape like herself, to become again cramped of mind and body, an unclean primitive animal?

No, every thought in Sherill's brain revolted at the idea. He wouldn't give up this tremendous power of brain and body, this super-manhood he'd attained. He couldn't!

The girl seemed to read his thoughts.

"You promised, Ross," she pleaded.

He shook her off coldly. What had he to do with this savage creature? Outside lay a world that only his great brain could put in order, a world waiting for him to be its master.

THERE was much for him to do in that world, a race to be forced into new, cleaner ways of living, war and greed and trickery to be stamped out. He could do all that—

"Ross!"

Somehow that cry of heartbreak made him stop at the door. Something in his inmost fibers, something still strangely bound to this savage creature, was stopped and held by it.

"Ross, it's Gail—Gail!" she was crying to him. "You must enter the projector—for me."

His relentlessly clear mind told him that this woman was seeking to drag him back into a state of savagery like her own, to take away forever his wonderful mind and body.

Yet something deep within him, something not to be controlled even by all his tremendous mental power, made him move, slow step by step, toward the cylindrical cage. At its very edge he hesitated, feeling stronger than ever that sick repulsion at the thought of returning to a half-animal state.

"Please, Ross!"

He stepped, very slowly, inside the cage of bars. With a choking sob, the girl threw shut the switch.

When the blue reversing force stopped, it was Ross Sherill—not the transformed, godlike figure of before but again the lanky young scientist—who stepped out of the projector.

He looked bewilderedly from the unconscious figure of Fraham, on the floor, to the girl who was running madly toward him.

"Ross, you've come back!" she cried.

Sherill's face was aghast.

"Why, I remember now—I didn't want to come back to you, Gail!" he said. "You looked like an animal to me, looked repulsive, apelike—"

He held her tight.

"God, what an awful thing that projector almost released on the world," he whispered. "I'm going to destroy it, and never build another. Whatever power has decreed the slow rate of human evolution knows better than we men—knows that if we tried to go too fast upon that evolutionary road, we would only destroy ourselves."

ELIXIR of DOOM

An Exciting, Sensational
Drama of the Little Worlds
That No Man Can See!

A Complete Novelette

By
RAY CUMMINGS

*Author of "Around the Universe,"
"Trapped in Eternity," etc.*



CHAPTER I.

The Flower Box

IN the fourth sector of the North Atlantic Airway, the westbound night plane with mail and fifty passengers was in trouble. A fuel leak had been discovered.

"We'll drop down on Pontoon Four," the chief pilot said. "Won't delay us much."

"Queer," the radio man said, "I can't get a word out of Somers and Alden."

Pontoon 4 lay glistening in the moonlight. A little emergency landing field, fifty by a hundred and fifty feet. A metal raft, raised on its pontoons, alone here in the Atlantic. The moonlight gleamed on its flat metal expanse.

At one end was a small metal shed—the supply house. At the other,

close against the low-railed side of the raft, stood the little cottage where the pontoon-keepers lived. There were two of them—two young Americans: Roy Somers and George Alden.

The cottage was a single-story structure entirely of metal—silver-glistening alumite. This night of June 20th, 1945, was calm. The sea was placid. The officers and passengers of the distressed air-liner gazed down at the somnolent empty pontoon. Its beacon lights were burning. The windows of the little cottage glowed with yellow illumination from within.

But where were Roy Somers and George Alden? They should have answered the radio call.

"Very queer," the radio man said, "There ought to be more than Somers and Alden here. Only an hour ago I had a message from the eastbound

Inside a Tiny Flower Box, Somers and
