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Do aliens need human genes?

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The chromosomal closeness of apes and humans coupled with advances in test-tube fertilization, embryo transfer and recombinant DNA technology have caused some people to wonder if genes aren't secretly being spliced by scientists trying to create a race of ape-man slaves.

Most speculations are monkey business compared with the alarming premise of Budd Hopkins' book, "Intruders: The Incredible Visitations at Copley Woods," which is being marketed and receiving respectable reviews as a work of popular science, not fiction.

Hopkins presents the story of an Indiana woman he calls Kathie Davis, who says that since adolescence she has, periodically, been floated up to UFOs and forced to submit to a vast, ongoing genetic experiment.

Her testimony, revealed under hypnosis and supported by hundreds of (equally pseudonymous) others — all eerily similar in detail — may suggest a desperate attempt by outer-space aliens to perk up their fading gene pool with fresh human DNA, Hopkins speculates.

Judging by victims' drawings, it couldn't hurt. All the aliens have huge heads, big hypnotic eyes and fragile-looking bodies. Oddly, they're unaware of what a modern molecular lab virtuoso supposedly can cook up with a petri dish and an incubator. Men victims are forced to donate sperm or to mate with female aliens. Women undergo egg retrievals or are impregnated, their embryos removed in a few weeks.