

There were a few inventions that changed the nature of transportation. Stirrups, the internal combustion engine, anti-gravity plating, and Anson Rasmussen's transporter. Previous ideas had not sounded promising. The complete destruction of all the cells in a person's body, to be, in theory, reassembled somewhere else. It was a dead end.

Transporter

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Man was born in the jungle. Even though we've moved on, we carry the jungle with us. Everywhere we go. Even when we became, dare I say it, civilized, we molded our environment to resemble the jungle. Cities, for example, are a model of harshness that would put even the most treacherous and perilous jungle to shame. It is no accident that we refer to these huge clusters of stone and steel as the jungle. Even in our social structures, we recreate our jungle heritage. In the savanna, the lord of the jungle is the lion, but in the cities, it's the bully. They start off in school. Every school has at least ten. Like the lion and his hyena onlookers, the bully has minions. Those who trace his every move. The rest is just the herd. The nameless victims of the bully's aggression.

Then the bullies grow up. The same aggression is now referred to as drive or ambition, but it's still the same heartless hunting of the prey by the predator. Those same bullies grow up to be captains of industry and their minions, god help us, become salesmen. But just to show you men are the real kings of the jungle, we do the lion one better. No big cat has ever convinced a wildebeest to sit on the open plains, drawing his fellow animals to the lion's slaughter pen. But humans, oh, yea, we do that. Those same dweebs which were once the hapless victims of bullies in school are now tech weenies. The same ones who had t-shirts stuffed down their throats are now designing automated calling machines. Not for their friends, or the other nameless victims who followed in their footsteps. No, they design them for the bullies. Evil devices which steal the identities of your friends to get you to pick up the phone. Malevolent, wicked machines the bully's minions use to appear as if they are people you actually want to talk to. Yes, we carry the jungle with us. Technology may have changed, but the lion is still the lion. And the antelope is still a greasy stain upon the endless expanse of the veldt.

Anson Rasmussen had been one of the hapless victims. But he was not one of the fast ones. Of course, the fact that his parents named him Anson meant he never had a chance. No matter what type of sneakers he chose, the bullies always caught him. The result was always the same. It wasn't just the physical abuse, but the endless efforts to try to suppress the shame. The realization you are merely someone else's prey. Anson's nightmares were filled with the terrors of being caught by his pursuers. An event all too often foreshadowing the reality of his life. But his dreams; his dreams were of escape. Not an ordinary escape mind you, but an escape of astounding proportions.

Some tech weenies had tried to establish empires, like the antelope, who makes efforts to run in herds. But once they obtained any status, the bullies moved in like sharks circling an Indianapolis sailor. Instead of escaping the bullies, it was like the tech weenies were posting a menu at their front door. Or, to put a more modern vernacular on it, the rabbit jumping into its own pot. Ideas and technological breakthroughs were just a béarnaise sauce, covering the tasty meal enjoyed so immensely by the world's carnivores.

There were a few inventions that changed the nature of transportation. Stirrups, the internal combustion engine, anti-gravity plating, and Anson Rasmussen's transporter. Previous ideas had not sounded promising. The complete destruction of all the cells in a person's body, to be, in theory, reassembled somewhere else. It was a dead end. Anson's approach was different. He was interested in cells. He discovered that they were the great recorders of events. Cells kept track of everything, even time. Just look at people over time and tell me you can't see the record of time in each and every one of their cells. A little DNA and I could tell you who your mother was, and her mother before her.

One of the other things that cells record, and keep hidden, is location. They act as a giant GPS system recording the exact position each cell had once occupied in space. For hundreds of years, it had gone unnoticed because no one could read it. That is until Anson came along.

He uncovered the hidden language the cells used to store location and then learned to read it. The first computers used to store this language were massive. Even in the modern age, where whole libraries could be stored on the head of a pin. No one, except Anson, understood where his whole research project was going, but they soon learned. One fateful day, the computer disappeared. It wasn't stolen, the video surveillance cameras proved that. Anson sat in his office smiling when the news media announced the appearance of a strange computer, gently resting in the end zone of Cal Tech's football field, his old alma mater. Right where he wanted it to be.

It took him another year to be able to transport living things. But during that time people threw money at him like they were sprinkling water on their lawns. He turned most of it down. The bullies could keep their money. The day of the first transport of a human was a worldwide party. Anson himself went from his private office in his house in Maine to the University of Moscow, where he had given a talk just the week before. From that day on, anyplace you had been before, you could go again ... in the blink of an eye.

It was in this same private office where Anson began to make his improvements. Now when I say private, I mean private. No one, except Anson, had ever been inside. This feature was key. Anson didn't want unwanted visitors dropping in and if no one had been there, they couldn't go again. The parameter was over a mile away and guarded by high tech sensors and both human and dog guards. The air space was a known no-fly zone. It was protected by automated anti-aircraft systems and the US Air Force around the clock. Besides his desire for solitude, it was also a security measure. The inventor of the transporter had more than once been the object of kidnapping by foreign agents, especially China. Anson used the transporter to visit his office in New York from time to time to show his staff the latest developments. He was working on his idea of how to get to places you had yet to visit. He had a great plan, and the entire world knew it. We would go to the Apollo 11 moon landing site and call back home using the lander's struts as an antenna to prove he was there.

The work wasn't going well. Anson poured over diagrams and structures. Experiments where he had tried to program the cells, convince them that they had been to a place where they had never been. Yet every time he inserted his code, the test object just stood there, unmoving.

What followed was a blink and a flash, the kind that accompanied a successful transport. When he turned around there was a man standing there holding a briefcase. He was wearing a freshly pressed Armani suit and a cheap polyester tie. Anson stared at him dumbfounded.

"Mr. Rasmussen," the stranger stepped forward, taking Anson's hand, "it's a pleasure to meet you, sir. A real honor." He shook the scientist's hand way too vigorously. Anson tried to say something, but it mostly came out as a mumble. He wasn't too good at talking to strangers. In fact, he was downright abysmal at it.

"Name's Martin Stock. I'm with Visigoth Memory." He put his briefcase down on top of the scientist's papers and opened it. "I have some memory chips here I'm sure you'll be interested in. We can pack the most information into any physical space. We know how much data you have to store in your line of

work and we've got your answer for you. The data isn't stored on single atoms as has been done in the past. No sir, we store our data on individual sub-atomic particles! You see, we rotate them. Left for zeros and right for ones." Stock noticed that Rasmussen wasn't responding, he was staring straight ahead.

"How did you get in here?" Anson muttered. "How did you transport yourself? On one's ever been here before." Anson patted-down Stock to make sure he was real and not some kind of projection.

"Well, technically I have been here before," the man answered.

"Impossible!" Anson clamored.

"Well, part of me has anyway." Stock explained. "You see, I had a kidney transplant. One of the builders who set up this place was the donor."

"You needed a kidney?" Anson sounded surprised. The man looked the picture of health.

"No, not at all," Stock explained, "But it was the only way to get in here. We have a whole subsidiary company that deals with matching organs to travelers. An organ travel agency, if you like. Turns out I was a match for one of the labors on your house. Lucky me. Now as I was saying, these memory chips..."

Yes, we can never escape the jungle. Nor the lion and his minions, it's only a matter of time. No matter how powerful we think we are, we are never as powerful as the jungle. That humid, tangled wilderness, infested with crawling, flying, leaping dangers.

Howard Detrick had been a Vice President of the Instant Express company for years. If Anson ever had any friends, Howard would have been one of them. As a result, Howard was one of the few people who was permitted to visit Anson at his home in Maine. He had never been in the home itself, of course. The guards kept an old-style Chevy at the front gate and after transporting there, Howard drove himself to a little guest house across from the main house. Naturally, he could have transported into the guest house directly, but Anson hated that.

As he pulled up the driveway, he saw Anson throwing bits and pieces of his transporter out into the front yard. The grass was littered with circuit boards, wiring and one man in a slightly battered suit. Anson was still throwing wiring out the front door when Howard pulled up.

Howard jumped out of the car. "Phillip, what are you doing?" Howard address Anson by his middle name, since Anson never used ... in his words ... "that other name."

Anson pointed and shook his finger at the man in the rumpled suit, laying on the grass, shaking his head from being thrown out the front door. "I didn't create this for the likes of ... HIM!" He screamed.

Yes, we can escape the jungle, but the jungle also cannot escape us. Try as we might, a dark tiger lays dormant in each one of us. Ready to jump out. Ready to leap and pounce upon its unsuspecting prey. It needs only the right trigger.