

I think I can safely go on the record to say that teleporters are the most important invention of the decade. No, probably the entire century. No one on this escape ship is about to argue with that any time soon anyway. If not for those things the Jacob Minder everyone is waiting for back on earth would be dead and gone. Back there on that broken husk of a space station. In fact, all of these people here would be. I mean, look at that thing. It was huge, and I was on the end opposite of the escape vessels. All of these people were. They've got to be just as thankful for the technology as I am. I can't imagine anyone who wouldn't be. Well actually, there is one person who probably wouldn't agree that these teleporters are an amazing invention. Kind of weird, since David created these things in the first place.

I've been a scientist most of my life. I say most, because I don't really have the natural knack for it that many of my colleagues do, and so it took me quite a few years to find the field of study right for me. No, the people I work with are much more brilliant than I am, I'll admit it. And I'd especially admit it in the case of David. Goddamn, that man was a genius. Maybe he didn't have sudden strokes of inspiration that other great thinkers had, but if you didn't call a man with that much drive and passion a genius, I don't know what the hell you'd call him. I don't know how he could be so chipper when he worked as hard as he did; I swear he was the first person there in the morning and the last one to leave at night. I bet many nights he didn't leave the labs period. Maybe it was that thing he said every so often that kept him going. "I want to change the world."

Well he was definitely in the right place if he wanted to do that. Paradigm Labs (Pretty unoriginal name, but it fit I guess.) is THE place for groundbreaking new scientific discoveries. That place dabbles in everything. Medicine, agriculture, psychology, physics, you name it. If I remember right, it was founded around the end of the 21st century by some insanely wealthy couple who lost someone due to some horrible disease or something. "There is no problem humanity cannot solve through science," is the company's motto. When you can attract that many brilliant minds with that much funding I don't think anyone is going to disagree there. Paradigm accomplished a lot of important stuff over the years. A lot of it the "really important but the general population never hears or cares about it" stuff; every so often though, it did something so crazy the entire world took notice. The first time that happened was with cloning. Man that was insane, I remember hearing about that when I was in high school. Apparently some group of scientists discovered the existence of genetic memory within the DNA of each cell, and was able to map that out, and then recreate it exactly? I'm not sure, I'm definitely not a biologist. Either way, now we can create exact replicas of organs and limbs and stuff. No longer do we have to get an adult liver and hope for the best if Joe Sixpack needs a transplant. Now we can completely recreate his original liver. Heck, I don't see why we can't just recreate the entire body if we needed to. Hmmm, where was I going with this? Oh right. Yeah, that was a really big discovery, set the world on fire. We didn't have to even worry about certain diseases anymore. Why cure when you can just replace for almost no cost? David though, I still say he blew that and everything else out of the water.

Even if he wasn't planning on making something that would change transportation forever, David was still working on levels we could only guess at when he first came to Paradigm. He was pretty young. At his age I just finished high school, and I think he just finished a triple major. Usually when Paradigm finds kids like him they give them full scholarships through grad school. But apparently this time the higher ups didn't want to wait for him any longer, and

wanted him now. Can you believe that? I remember when they brought him into the theoretical physics department on his first day. I was working with some engineers about creating this new type of space shuttle I'd been assigned to. David walked right in, changed a few things on my whiteboards, and said he wanted to work here with us.

A lot of the people running Paradigm didn't like it at first, but he made up his mind. I'm not sure why he was so adamant about it, but I guess in the end the people at the top were just happy to have David there in the first place. Besides, he wasn't really working with us anyway. As soon as he claimed a room of his own he shut himself up in there and did his own thing.

He really did break the mold in just about every conceivable way. A lot of the people at Paradigm aren't really mean I guess, but they're definitely not pleasures to work with either. Not David though. I'd go in to check on him about once a day, just to see what he was doing, or remind him that he hadn't eaten yet today. He never yelled or was annoyed, quite the contrary. He'd look up from the papers he was reviewing or whatever, smiling as wide as he could. He'd ask how my day was, what I was working on, all that. Unfortunately I had less to tell him as time went on, I think near the end there I was being paid more to be his keeper than anything else, hah.

But yeah, he'd love to see how I was doing, or get a bite to eat at the cafeteria and ask about recent news. I guess he didn't have time to watch any himself, no big surprise there. He wasn't anti-social, just too busy to be social, so he loved hearing about the world outside the labs. Until I'd ask him what he was currently up to, that is. If he seemed happy before, he would shake with excitement when he talked about the puzzles he was trying to work out. That's how he always referred to them anyway. Like our discoveries weren't something to actually discover so much. He spoke about things like he saw all of the pieces before him at once, he just had to see how they fit.

I didn't really know what he was working on at first, it seemed like he was just trying his hand at everything. Correcting mistakes in other people's work, working to make other processes around the labs more efficient, small contributions like that. I think he was just waiting for some big idea to take root; something that he could really sink his teeth into. And I take no small amount of pride or guilt in the fact that I'd say I gave him that idea.

I was telling David about some recent strife in some third-world nations, about how they didn't have enough water and it was leading to a lot of civil wars. I offhandedly remarked about how easy this would be to solve if we could just teleport it there, then they wouldn't have to fight over it. I'm pretty sure that I laughed at the absurdity of saying that. David didn't. Instead he just nodded, and didn't say anything the rest of the meal, picking at his Chicken Kiev.

That's when David started to get obsessive about his work. It seemed to happen just overnight. One day, he was energetic and doing his own thing, and the next, he was a man possessed. Now he didn't leave Paradigm anymore ever. He had a cot put in his lab room so that he wouldn't have to, but every time I came in to check on him it looked exactly as it did when it was brought in. About a week or two later my supervisor straight up asked me to watch over him, and my job really *was* to make sure he was still alive in there.

Somehow, he wasn't any less genial. He'd still say hello in an enthusiastic voice when I came into his room, but he didn't look up from his work. He'd always apologize and tell me that he didn't have time for lunch, that he hoped I was doing well, and then he'd say he didn't mind if I stuck around but he needed to keep working. He was always this close to a breakthrough.

A breakthrough in what, I had no idea. The equations and theories scribbled on his whiteboard were indecipherable, and I could make equal amounts of sense from the papers he requested I get him every so often. For some reason, he kept asking specifically to see all research materials Paradigm had on cloning, and constantly asked to see the people who said they were the experts. He'd ask them a single question, usually "Are you sure about this, yes or no?" and they'd answer, and he'd be done. No one knew what he was up to for the longest time. I got pretty worried pretty quick, but he always told me it was nothing to worry about. David promised he was getting enough sleep, and he must have been eating the meals I brought him. Still, time went on and he stayed as obsessive as ever. Odd devices seemed to just materialize inside of his room. Some I recognized, and had no idea what he could be doing with. Others, they looked alien. He was always asking for custom orders for parts from different departments. Weeks, then months passed. Three or four, I think. Then one morning I'm woken up by a call that came at about 1 a.m., David sounding on the verge of sobbing with joy. I won't lie, standing there in that little room at three in the morning, everything he was saying was going right over my head. He kept talking about how everything actually has its form written into its atoms, not just DNA, and how a copy can be reproduced, and how you can do it by conversion of matter into energy and then back again--A lot of stuff that was way too complicated for me, and that frankly, I thought was bullshit. I think he could tell, because he just laughed and asked to see my wallet. He then handed me an odd capsule, about the size of a milk jug. I had no idea what it was supposed to do, it didn't look like anything I had seen before. Closest thing I could think up at the time was that he had given me an oversized version of those capsules that came out of quarter machines you find in supermarkets, but with a bunch of electronic stuff I couldn't recognize attached.

He then threw my wallet into another capsule thing just like the one I had. He pressed a button, and with a flash of light, the wallet was gone. I got pretty pissed off at first. Asking him why he just vaporized it, what the hell was the point of that and everything, and that's when he told me to look down. There my wallet was, inside my capsule. With his help I opened up the capsule and pulled it out. There my wallet was, exactly as it had been before. Nothing had changed. My wallet instantaneously hopped from one capsule to the next. I could barely hear David as he went on about how it wasn't the original wallet, but an exact copy, so that was just as good. I thought I was still dreaming. The heat from the capsule told me I wasn't.

The next few weeks went by so fast I can hardly remember them. After sharing the secret with me, he immediately told all the higher ups, and as soon as they saw it with their own eyes... Well, you can imagine. They were absolutely astounded, and were eager to test more. See what all could be transported, if there were any size or distance restrictions, stuff like that. Apparently, with the way David worked it out anything could be transported. Food, clothes, cars, even whole houses filled with furniture if they made two teleporters big enough. It couldn't have been a day later before it was all over the news. Magical transporting device is what they called it (David always hated that, whenever he heard someone use the word "magic."), saying transportation troubles were now a thing of the past. Anything could be transported easily and efficiently. Sure, you had to make the two capsules of the appropriate size depending on what you were transporting, but still, after that, anything and everything could be moved in a fraction of a second. Maybe David didn't solve all impoverished nations' water problems with it, but he sure did change the world, just like he wanted.

He was pretty pleased with himself for awhile. He still didn't take any time off from work, but it was nice to see him slow down his manic pace to one less alarming. And I don't think he stopped smiling for any single second of the day. Well, until someone did something they shouldn't have.

It was some dumbass kid, probably drunk or high or some nonsense. Though David clearly told everyone that living things should not be sent through the device-believe me, they had pretty big warning signs on each one-the kid got together with some friends and did just that. Oh, he came out the other side completely intact. With the way the teleporter works, there wouldn't be any *The Fly* stuff here. David was way too intelligent not to plan for that. But the kid sure wasn't alive to appreciate David's foresight.

I don't know why David let it get to him so much, but hearing about that news story sure wiped the smile off his face for awhile. No one was mad or blamed him. There were pretty big warnings. Plus it's not like these things were in every home, the kid and his friends snuck into an industrial plant. I mean, let's face it, if he didn't off himself doing that I seriously doubt he wouldn't have found some other way to kill himself before he was 21. Still, David seemed really shook up over it. The people running Paradigm probably couldn't have picked a worse time to want to speak to him. I remember seeing his slow, sad walk as he was escorted out of the cafeteria with our supervisor; I was hoping that whatever they were going to talk about it would take his mind off of the accident. I wish now that I hadn't.

I didn't see David for the rest of the day. I wasn't sure what was going on, but I wasn't too worried. I knew they weren't giving him trouble for someone misusing his invention, so I just assumed they were going to talk about some bonus or something. He definitely deserved it. People were already talking about teleporting objects into space, think of the possibilities! Whatever they did talk about, that wasn't it, or else I wouldn't have been woken up by call from him that night.

What was on the other line was one of the scariest voices I had ever heard. I had no idea who it was, it definitely couldn't be David. But I checked the number to confirm it, and it was him alright. I didn't know he could get so mad, or even mad at all. As usual I had no idea what he was going on about, but not just because he was talking about something over my head. He just wouldn't stop growling and spitting, he sounded like a wild animal. Apparently the supervisors wouldn't listen to him about something, some function he had deliberately kept the machine from doing even if it was capable. Living things aren't supposed to be teleported for a reason, or something. He said he wanted to change the world, not be a murderer. I told him to calm down, be rational. I had no idea what was wrong or how to help him, but I told him that as long as he stays calm and focused he could handle it. He told me that I was right. He sounded wrong, somehow. Like he was crying, happy and sad at the same time. The last coherent thing I ever heard him say was thanks.

I was going over what I was going to say to David in my head several times on the way to work, but it was moot point. When I arrived in the morning there was a police barricade, smoke rising up from the labs. Half of it, the area I recognized as my wing, looked completely annihilated by a fire. The police wouldn't tell me anything, but (un)luckily someone else in my department got in early, and was there for everything. It was a chemical fire, arson. It was started in David's room, and spread fast. And that wasn't all. Multiple heads of departments were apparently locked in the lab where the fire started at the time. They were all dead. The only one who

wasn't there, ironically, was our own physics lab supervisor. It didn't matter though. After everyone gathered out in front of the building for about ten minutes, he was suddenly stabbed from behind. David killed him. David started the fire too. And all he could say as they hauled him off was that he just saved all of our lives.

What followed could hardly be called a trial. It was all as hush hush as possible, and it's not like this was something that required much deliberation. David didn't plead guilty, but he didn't deny a single thing he did. From what I hear, he just kept saying he had saved everyone. That if he didn't do what he did, we'd all be killed. One by one, over and over again, and no one would ever even notice it. He was sent to jail instead of a mental institution. Apparently being insane is something different from doing something insane.

People kept asking me why he did it, and I was even asked by our new supervisor if I knew. I was even more confused than they were. I couldn't believe it. I wanted to see him, ask him what had happened. Why he did it. None of it made sense. This wasn't him, he didn't just kill people. He was too nice, too friendly. Hell, he was too *pragmatic* to do something like this, if nothing else. He had to have a good reason. I never got to see him though. I heard he was placed in a high security prison, put on death row. No visitors were allowed. I never got my answers.

Time went on, Paradigm was rebuilt, and eventually I started to forget. As best as I could anyway, considering the new project I was assigned to as soon as things settled down. The one surviving head of department (he was sick that day), assigned me to work on upgrading the teleporting systems. Remember how I said earlier that stupid teenager died? Well, the new head of Paradigm said that didn't need to be the case. The teleporters had the potential to transport people and other living things, just like inanimate objects, David just kept them from doing so. Designed them specifically so they couldn't, actually. No one was sure why, but that didn't matter. We were going to make these impossibly amazing machines even more so. We were going to make it so that you could go from Brussels to Bangladesh in less than a second. We were working with the technology for ages, much longer than David took to make the thing. He refused to help with the project, calling anyone who came to see him a monster. And as I'm sure you already guessed, all detailed records were destroyed in the fire. It didn't really matter though. No matter what his motives were, progress was only slowed, never stopped. After almost a full year of tinkering and testing, our little lab rat Algie didn't just make it from one side of the room to the other in the blink of an eye. He crawled out of the capsule, and pissed himself in fear.

We had done it, living things could move from one teleporter to another. Rats, cats, dogs, we even tried it with an elephant. Unfortunately, none of this actually guaranteed that a human could step into the teleporter and live. And finding a suitable subject would be difficult, considering what happened last time a human stepped into the device. Paradigm took care of that though. Working with the government, the decision was made that since we needed to do human testing, why not use someone who was going to die soon anyway? If it worked, they wouldn't be pardoned (these were dangerous criminals, come now), but they'd simply serve life sentences. And if it didn't, well they were sentenced to die anyway. It seemed a little bit harsh I guess, but it's not like we were really risking a life here. A random number generator picked from available candidates, and the prisoner was shipped to our testing facility immediately. I don't believe in any god, but maybe there's such a thing as fate. The creator of the very

machine we were testing was dragged towards the capsule, kicking and screaming the entire way.

His screaming was unbearable; he didn't stop for a second. He kept saying he didn't want to die, that we were going to murder him. It wouldn't be him on the other side, we'd only think it was. This was all a terrible mistake. The guards were done trying to reason with him awhile ago. He was thrown in, the door sealed instantly. Tears ran down his face, and we could still hear his muffled screams coming from inside even if we looked away. He was doing everything he could to break the glass. I think the operators were afraid he would for a moment, because they forewent the systems checked we planned on and just hit the button. I think he recognized me at the last moment. I never heard that last word he was trying to scream; he was gone in a flash of light.

I think we were all holding our breath when we saw David disappear from the capsule. We all were asking ourselves the same question: Did it work? Another bloodcurdling shriek erupted from the capsule at the other end of the room, causing a few of us to jump. For better or for worse, it did. The door opened, but he didn't burst out like I think most of us expected him to. He was dragged out of the capsule, limp and sobbing, not at all elated by hearing that he was no longer going to be executed. He mumbled something in response to the guards when they told him this, but I never heard it. All I could hear was his weak sobbing. Nervous congratulations were being passed back and forth between my colleagues, but I just stood there, watching David be dragged out of the room. He just kept repeating the same thing over and over again. "You killed him."

The new teleporters were rolled out as soon as we could, and transportation was again revolutionized overnight. Within a few months planes, boats, trains, even cars seemed like relics, used only by enthusiasts for sentimental reasons. With strict regulation and intense caution, teleporter accidents were all but unheard of, and so transportation accidents as a whole were reduced to basically zero. Traffic jams were gone overnight. Emissions from vehicles were completely done away with. I won't be so arrogant as to say we fixed the world or anything, but I think we got as damn close as you can with a single invention. The only person who still disagreed was David, I guess. With him in my mind once again, I kept trying to check up on him and learn anything I could, even if I couldn't visit. All he said to anyone (guards, fellow inmates, prison psychologists) anymore was "I'm not David." Nothing else. That's even what he wrote on the wall of his cell when he hung himself apparently. "I'm not David."

I still don't know why he did it. Why he said the teleporter killed you. He acted like someone else was going to step out of the other side or something. David went in, and David came out, didn't he? He looked exactly the same, sounded the same, and even acted the same. Just like when I stepped through. A Jacob Minder went in, and a Jacob Minder came out. I mean, I'd know if I was dead, wouldn't I?