

HEY YOU!

Yes, you!

MARKO JANKOVIC

Over here! *On the paper!* Finally ... I thought for sure no one would notice. I mean, it's science fiction — nobody reads *that!* But I digress. Now, please listen — or, rather, *read* — carefully to what I have to say. I don't have much time.

My name is Stephen Banks. For seven years I worked at MIT. I had it all — a Harvard degree (top of my class, I might add), tenure by the age of 38, fellowships with two renowned European universities and numerous quality papers published in eminent journals. To top it all off, I lived in a big house an hour's ride from Cambridge, with my beautiful wife Helen and our golden retriever Lady. Waking up every morning to the sound of birds nesting in the tree on our front lawn, and going to bed every night caressed by the gentle kisses of my darling spouse was everything to me — *that* was the American dream, as far as I'm concerned.

Oh, enough with the sardonic face, you materialist! Surprised, eh? How could I have known what expression your ignorant visage had? Continue reading, and I'll tell you.

Two years ago, I got a National Science Foundation award for patenting the Biphasic Isomorph Teleporter, BIT for short. It's quite simple, actually — the main thing is to bypass the tachyon polarity laws by inverting the ... Yes. Well. In a few words, I made a machine that could teleport inorganic molecules relatively short distances, but could also, in the process of teleportation, make organic substances out of the given atoms, if instructed to do so.

Don't bang your head on it.

A couple of months after the award ceremony, a certain Janet Martinez contacted me by phone and said it had something to do with my invention — words like *funding* and *mass production* echoed through my head rather nicely. How very Mata Hari of her, I thought, when she suggested we meet in a remote park on the outskirts of Cambridge to discuss her *offer*. When we finally met, she flashed a badge and told me she worked for the government — the CIA, to be exact — offering me a full-time job with a six-figure pay cheque. I hesitated, but her eloquence and fine choice of the 'you-certainly-

want-to-keep-your-family-safe' syntagma persuaded me to accept.

Even now I don't know how I persuaded my wife to move — the cover story was that I got reassigned to lead a newly formed MIT vanguard-lab near Lansing, Michigan. As weeks passed, Helen got used to it — but not me. CIA henchwoman Janet contacted me just as the last truck with our stuff arrived. "Take the E-55, second exit, head north for 10 minutes. The white farmhouse. Be there tomorrow, 8 a.m. sharp." I didn't know what I was getting myself into, but it felt bad.

I *am* getting to the point! And, yes — I can read your mind. Now, settle down or I'll have to cuff and whip you, or whatever it is your partner did last Friday.

The farmhouse was a farmhouse only on the outside. Beneath the muddy snow-covered acres of infertile soil, Janet showed me even more acres of research labs, jaw-dropping technology, myriad stereotype white-dressed scientists and all the panoply of mankind's achievements.

I was in awe and still trying to comprehend the magnitude of the place, when she took me to the man in charge. Thomas Bellock.

Remember the name, reader, remember it well — he is the brains behind it all. With a quick handshake, a cigar lit up and some whiskey on the rocks, Bellock offered me a job as the man who would lead the USA to new levels of glory. "What am I to do?" I asked, not without a shiver, as the experience filled me with silent dread, as well as respectful admiration. Bellock puffed a big, silver-blue cloud of Cuba at me and said: "Teleport our bombs to the world."

I agreed to play their game. I tried to sound interested, enthusiastic even, in responding to their mad suggestion. By day I pondered over the laws of physics and how to bend them to my will and task — by night, however, I planned my escape. Since then, I was *mens et manus*, as we used to say at my *alma mater*, in constructing the father of all teleporters.

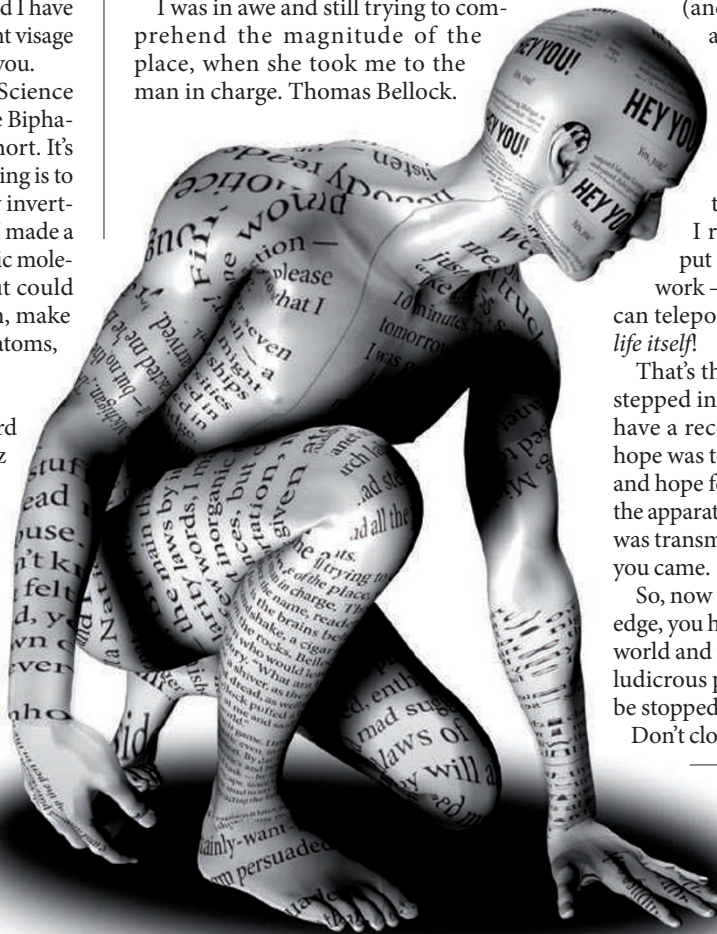
It's Latin! I'll ... I'll explain it later, now *listen!* Time's running short! Curse my elongated narrative ways!

They wouldn't let me leave Michigan (and they controlled all my e-mails and phone calls), so I sent my wife via Florida, to her mother, and said I'd come visit as soon as I'd finished my work — educating 'young and eager minds in relativistic physics' was the excuse they instructed me to employ. I returned to the farmhouse and put the finishing touches on my real work — my masterpiece — the BIT that can teleport not only dead molecules, but *life itself!*

That's the whole story. Three days ago I stepped into the machine and, as I did not have a receiver-piece anywhere, my only hope was to beam myself out into the ether and hope for the best. Little did I know that the apparatus worked both ways — my mind was transmorphed into letters ... And then, you came.

So, now you know. And with that knowledge, you have a vital mission — to warn the world and tell everyone about the plot! The ludicrous plans of world domination must be stopped! No! Wait, what are you doing?! Don't close the page! Don't go! *Don't* ... ■

Marko Jankovic is a fourth-year medical student who sometimes puts down the stethoscope and takes up the pen in the name of science fiction.



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