

Diorgo Jonkers
diorgo@gmail.com

about 5,900 words

The Flea Particle
by Diorgo Jonkers

Prologue: Physicist Mary Kosa became immortalised in 2011 when she discovered the flea particle. It is an unusual, rare particle that latches onto other particles and drains tiny portions of their energy. Initially the particle was studied and scrutinised, until nothing new could be learned about it. No practical use for it could be found, because its behaviour, which seemed random and erratic, could not be predicted nor controlled. There were rumours of companies trying to use it to absorb radioactive waste, but they eventually gave up. Twelve years later the research and interest has dwindled to a few curious students, and the flea particle remains largely forgotten.

#

Mary Kosa is standing in a queue at the traffic department to renew her vehicle license. She has been in the queue for forty minutes. Mary looks at the people around her. She wonders if our cave-dwelling ancestors ever imagined doing something as unnatural as filling in forms and standing in queues. Occasionally she moves the filled-in form from one hand to the other, to prevent a sweat build-up ruining the ink. Once more, she double checks the form. Her eyes pause on the date. 17 April 2023. It has been twelve years and one month since she discovered the flea particle. Her cellphone rings, a muffled vibration in her pocket. She looks at the name on the screen, Leon Brown. A name she hasn't heard in months.

"Hello."

"Hi, Mary?" an uncertain voice asks on the other side.

"Hi, yes, Leon. How are you?" she asks smiling. A habit she started when she read somewhere that people on the other side of the phone can sense when you smile.

"Good, thanks. And you?"

"Well, thanks. Standing in a queue at the traffic department."

"Oh, OK. I'm just phoning to let you know that Candice had a nervous breakdown three weeks ago."

"That's terrible news. How's she doing?" she asks quickly.

"She's OK now, but still at the clinic. The Silver Swallow, I don't know if you know it," he continues, sounding tired. "She'll be home next week."

"That's good to hear. I'll try and visit her this weekend. Thanks for letting me know."

"Yeah, I wanted to call sooner, but the first week was so hectic. Then the second week flew by."

"That's OK," she assures him.

"Only now getting 'round to calling her old friends and colleagues," he says. She contemplates asking what caused the nervous breakdown, but decides to ask another time.

"How are you holding up?"

"Yeah, taking it one day at a time. Just glad she's OK and coming home soon. Anyway, I'll let you get back to standing in a queue," this time it sounds like he is smiling.

"Thanks again for the letting me know. I'll call you before visiting her this weekend."

"OK, until then."

"Take care," she says, then waits until he ends the call, which she usually does in case the other person wants to add something. The line moves forward and she automatically takes two steps forward.

Slowly a storm of thoughts gather in her mind. She has not spoken to Candice in months. Her breakdown was three weeks ago. What date was her breakdown? How close was it to the twelve-year anniversary of the particle's discovery? Candice was also in the lab that day, along with three other people. Should she call them? No, Leon probably has, or will. The date is a strange coincidence.

Mary reflects on the last twelve years and realises she has achieved little. She changed careers to become a botanist.

Her marriage has seen ups and downs, but she and Craige are still the same people they were back then. Financially they have not grown, with debt rising and falling like never-ending waves. Her circle of friends have become smaller.

She remembers the joy and optimism she felt when she discovered the particle. It seemed to promise great advances in her career. For a while she was blissfully happy. But then the particle turned out to be useless and she spent too much time and energy trying to prove otherwise. An overbearing unhappiness lingers at the edges of her consciousness. She closes her eyes and blocks it out. Her life is not bad. It is just static, standing still on one spot. Will she be in the same position twelve years from now?

"Er, excuse me," a voice says behind her. She opens her eyes and looks at the elderly man. He smiles and points in front of her. "The line has moved," he says.

"Sorry," she smiles as she steps forward a few paces.

#

Friday evening Mary gets home late from work. Craige has made supper. She finds him lying on the bed watching television.

"How was the meat?" he asks as she walks into the bedroom. He often asks when he made something he is proud of.

"It was good," she smiles at him. She coughs out loud.

"That doesn't sound good," he turns to her and mutes the television.

"I think I'm coming down with something. My throat hurts a bit," she replies as she rubs her throat.

"Will you still be able to visit Candice tomorrow?"

"I should be fine by then. I'll take some vitamins and lemon tea before I sleep." She sits down on the side of the bed and takes off her shoes.

"If I didn't have to work I could've driven you," he says. After a pause he adds, "I could ask Tony to sit in for me at the viewing tomorrow."

"No, it's OK. He worked the whole of last weekend. And it will be great if you are able to sell that property instead of him." She regrets saying that. Sometimes he is oversensitive when it comes to money issues.

"Yeah, true," he says as he turns back to the television. He turns up the volume and continues watching.

"If I feel worse tomorrow morning then I'll postpone my visit to Candice."

"OK."

She hopes that she does feel better, because the past few days she has been thinking almost non-stop about twelve years ago. She has been feeling a strong urge to talk about the past to Candice, or anyone from back then. She is also curious to find out what caused Candice's nervous breakdown.

"I guess you guys are gonna talk about the past," he says without looking at her.

"Yeah, but mostly about the last few months."

He continues, "OK. Well, I think you shouldn't spend too much time talking about the way back past."

"Why?"

"I don't want you to," he pauses, thinking about what to

say next. "I don't want you to become, like you were."

She knows what he means. He left out the word 'obsessed'. She feels a little angry at what he just said. She was obsessed back then, but that was long ago. Mary gets up and starts walking to the bathroom. She feels a little light-headed and stumbles.

"Hey, you OK?" he asks, getting up with the intent to help her.

"Um, just got up too quickly. I'm going to bath." She continues into the bathroom and closes the door. He hears her open the taps. She sits on the edge of the bath and looks at her reflection in the mirror. She knows she is not obsessed. The last few days she has been thinking about the past, because she has not thought about it in a few weeks. Not really thought about it.

Every now and then she gets an email from someone asking her about the particle and the research she did. Usually it is a student, and occasionally a journalist. All of the information is publicly available and sometimes she wonders why they contact her at all. The most memorable emails she got was from a Simon Trevors about a month ago. He claimed he was studying the flea particle and discovered something new about it. He was going to visit her to show her his discovery, but she never heard from him again. She tried to contact him and tried to find out where he lived and worked. But she never could get hold of him. Eventually she decided that his claims were false, or it was a prank, or he was a wacko. After the excitement of their email discussion, she had to convince

herself it was not real. She had given up all hope that she would ever hear from Simon Trevors again.

Later she comes out of the bathroom and puts on her nightgown. She sits on the bed with her knees drawn up to her. Craige walks to her side of the bed and bends down. He kisses both her knees. She smiles. He often did that when they were younger, during their more intimate moments together. After a while he says, "I'll make you some lemon tea." He gets up and goes to the kitchen.

Mary wakes up in the middle of the night from a dream. In the dream she was in a lab, looking at bacteria through a microscope. The zoom was too great for such a small microscope. She could clearly see the bacteria. Some of them were shaped like letters. She remembers reading the words formed by the letters, but now that she is awake she cannot remember the words. Suddenly the bacteria started moving violently, similar to the static on a television that has not been tuned in properly. Black spots started appearing in the sea of motion. Slowly the black spots grew larger, consuming the bacteria. Soon her view was almost completely black and she realised the darkness was moving towards her, up out of the microscope. That was when she woke up. She stares at the dark ceiling for a while before falling back to sleep.

The following morning she wakes up to find Craige already gone. She looks at the time and realises she overslept by an hour. She clearly remembers setting the alarm before going to sleep. Her throat feels slightly worse than last night and her body has a few aches. She convinces herself that she feels

fine enough to drive.

Almost three hours later she reaches The Silver Swallow clinic.

"Hello, can I help you?" the receptionist asks from behind her desk.

"Hi. I'm here to visit Candice Brown," Mary replies, smiling.

"They're in the hall. The play's about to start."

"Play?"

The receptionist points at the wall. There is a large poster stuck on a notice board. The title on the poster is, 'The mother and the terrorist'. It features colourful characters in dramatic poses, and a few dates, including today. The receptionist says, "She's acting in it. You better hurry if you want to talk to her before it starts."

"How do I get to the hall?"

"Go back outside, then turn left. Walk until the end of the building. You'll see the hall across the parking lot. There's probably still a bunch of people outside."

"Thanks," she says and walks out. A short while later she reaches the hall. She approaches the orderly standing at the door.

"Hi. Do you know where I can find Candice Brown?" she asks loudly so she can be heard over the noise coming from the crowd inside.

"Brown? She's prepping back stage. Show starts in fifteen minutes." He leads her in and points at the door at the end of the hall, next to the stage. The stage curtains are closed.

"You can go through, but don't stay back there too long."

She walks in and looks at the crowd. About a third of the crowd are children. A few strewn chairs block her way, which she pushes out of the way. She knocks on the door and waits half a minute. No reply. The handle turns in her hand and she walks through. She sees Candice talking to a man. Candice has camouflage makeup on her face and is wearing a dark green army uniform. Mary recognises her even with the makeup on. There are a few other people dressed in costumes. Candice is slightly slouched forward. Mary walks to her.

"Candice!" she calls. Candice turns in surprise.

"Mary? Mary Kosa!" Candice says. A wide smile appears on her face. She hugs Mary. "Wow, it's been a while hasn't it!?"

"Yes," Mary smiles at her. "How are you?"

"Agh, tired of people asking me that question," she jokes and sticks out her tongue, making a sick-like gesture.

"Otherwise, I'm well."

"You look well."

"Hey, you're just in time for the play! Glad you made it. Everyone else is already here."

"We can talk after the play. If I knew it was today then I would've come tomorrow, so that we could've had more time together."

"You mean you didn't come for the play?"

"No. Leon phoned me a few days ago, but today was the first day I could come through," Mary says. For a moment Candice has a puzzled look on her face. In the background the crowd is still noisy and they hear someone turning on and

testing a microphone.

"Oh, now I understand. It hasn't visited you yet,"
Candice says.

"What do you mean?"

"It will appear when you are alone. When there is no one
else to interrupt or call out to."

"Candice, I don't understand. What will appear?"

"The thing that left the fleas behind. You'll see," she
says, as she turns her head to look at the stage. For a brief
moment Mary feels frozen. A feeling of foreboding creeps up
her spine and enters her mind where rational thought slays it.
She tries to speak, but her throat feels dry. She coughs.

"We're on in five minutes," a man calls out to Candice in
a low voice. The same man she was talking to earlier.

"I have to go. I hope you enjoy the play," Candice smiles
broadly as she walks to the stage area. Mary stands there for
a moment, then a few other actors push past her. She steps
back, out of their way, and continues moving back until she
feels the wall behind her. Pressed against the wall, she
wonders what Candice was talking about.

Her mind starts racing and an oppressive feeling starts
seeping into her. She puts her hands next to her sides and
presses them against the cold, hard wall. The sensation breaks
her train of thought. She returns to the hall and finds an
empty seat near the back. A formally dressed man steps out
between the closed curtains with a microphone in his hand.

"Welcome, ladies and gentleman. And all the childrens,"
he looks at some of the kids as he says the last line. There

is a round of laughter from the crowd. They quiet down as he continues, "It's my privilege to introduce the play we're presenting this afternoon, 'The mother and the terrorist'."

Mary finds a leaflet on the floor. She runs her finger down the list of actors until she finds Candice's name.

'Candice Brown - The terrorist'

"Let me give you a bit of history about our plays," the man on the stage continues. "You see, a few years ago one of our doctors, doctor Betha started the tradition. She knew that sometimes when people pretend they are someone else they can release parts of themselves which are normally shackled by inhibitions, fear, self-doubt or the expectations of society," he pauses for effect.

"This release has healed people, because they experience new parts of themselves. Essentially, it frees them. And at The Silver Swallow our main mission has always been to free people. To help them free themselves. From themselves or from the things in their lives which they believe bind them," he nods his head for emphasis.

He smiles and continues, "Of course, we don't claim doctor Betha discovered these techniques or ideas, just that by trying it out with people and experiencing its effects first hand, she came up with the idea of using plays as a healing process."

The man's voice is almost hypnotic. She looks for his name on the leaflet. 'Bennie Sauls - MC'

He continues on stage, "To cut a long story short, because I see some childrens are getting restless," he smiles

down at the crowd. "Each actor makes up a character and decides what the character will say and do. Then we write a story, but the story is moulded to fit the characters. So, without further ado, let the show begin!" the man shouts as he steps back behind the curtains.

The crowd claps. The lights dim to almost pitch black, then there is a moment of silence. The curtains open and the lights brighten, but not completely. Mary looks at the scene on the stage, her heart skips a beat.

There are five scientists in a lab. They are wearing lab coats. Candice is not among them. The woman in the foreground turns to the crowd and says, "Our world is on the verge of a crisis. Our natural resources are almost depleted. My dream is to make a great discovery that will save us from this dire situation! I want to ensure a future for my daughter and all the other children in the world. I will work hard and devote my life to my dream!" She turns to her desk and continues working. The other scientists are busy working in the background.

"I did it!" she exclaims after a few moments. She holds up a test tube. The other scientists gather around her, filled with curiosity. She continues, "I have found a new energy source. It's easy to make, cheap and environmentally friendly!" The other scientists are amazed and congratulate her. They all cheer in unison.

A male scientist says to her, "Your dream is almost fulfilled, Emma! You have persevered and your discovery will change the world, and the whole world will know your name."

Emma beams at the audience.

The lights dim to near darkness. The audience claps enthusiastically. Mary feels a little uneasy, because the scene represented what could have happened to her. On the stage the scenery is moved around. The lights return and the scene has changed to a battle field. Candice is standing in the middle of the stage and there are a few slain soldiers on the ground. Candice looks sad, and there is a large doll lying across her outstretched arms.

Mary knows who the doll represents. Seven years ago, Candice's niece, to whom she was very close, was killed. She was hit by a stray bullet during a shootout between two gangs. Candice was unhinged by the death of her niece. The drawn-out court case against the killer also took its toll on her. It took her years to properly overcome the ordeal.

"I had a daughter once," she says on stage. "But this war-torn country took her away from me. I have seen many children suffer and many die. Helpless, I have heard children's crying fade to silence as they died of hunger in the dead of night. But now I am stronger and no longer helpless!" She lifts the doll up into the air.

"I will make sure the whole world unites to put an end to the suffering of children!" She lays the doll down on the ground. "I will travel around the world and ring a loud bell. The bell will not stop ringing until they take note and change the world!"

Suddenly four soldiers run onto the stage. Their uniforms are different to the one Candice is wearing. They try to

capture her. She escapes their clutches and runs off stage. The lights dim again.

A few other scenes take place during the play. Each of them focus on a main character's struggles and dreams. There are hardly any links between the scenes. Once they mentioned a scientist who discovered a new energy source, and once they mentioned a terrorist who travels around the world blowing up important buildings and monuments, but never killing anyone in the explosions.

The play has been on for almost one and a half hours. The lights dim again. In the darkness, Mary has a feeling that someone is watching her. She looks around the crowd and sees a man's head turned in her direction. She recognises him as the lights come on. Ben Rogers. He was also in the lab that day. He looks worn out and has dark rings beneath his eyes. She wonders if he has been working all night, because he was always a workaholic. He waves at her with a faint smile. She smiles and waves back.

Mary recalls something Candice said earlier, "Everyone else is already here." She thought Candice was referring to the crowd, but was she referring to their old work colleagues? The ones who were in the lab twelve years ago.

She is about to scan the faces in the crowd when she looks at the stage. It is the science lab again. Candice is busy placing a bomb on Emma's desk. Emma walks onto the stage and stops when she sees Candice.

"Who are you?" Emma asks.

Candice draws a gun and points it at her, "Don't move."

I've read about you and your work. We both dream to change the world, but unfortunately our dreams clash!" She steps aside to reveal the bomb on the desk. Emma gasps. Candice continues, "Energy in the hands of a single corporation will devastate the world's economy. It will bring too much suffering to poor countries, and I cannot allow that to happen."

"You're wrong!" Emma says, while she slowly moves closer. "Your anger has blinded you. The energy will be shared by all."

"No, it's your naivety that has blinded you! I don't wish to harm you, but I will if I must."

Suddenly Emma lunges forward and lies down over the bomb. She holds on tight to the desk and calls out, "I won't let you destroy my dream to fulfil yours! You'll have to kill me first!"

Candice pulls at Emma, but she holds onto the desk. Candice points the gun at her and says, "You mistake my dream for destruction, but it's to stop the suffering of children!"

"What about my daughter? If I die she will be the one to suffer." Candice takes a step back. Emma continues, "Let me help you spread your message, but not through violence. Let's talk to the media, together." Candice sits down on one of the chairs. Emma has hope in her eyes.

"They'll take me to prison for the crimes I've committed," Candice says.

"If you turn yourself in then they might lessen your sentence."

Emma gets up from the desk and walks to Candice. She

leans forward and holds out her hands. Candice puts the gun in Emma's one hand and takes her other hand.

"I've heard of famous prisoners who have written and published bestselling books," Emma says. "If you have a message worth listening to then it will be listened to."

She helps Candice up and they both walk to the front of the stage and bow, hand in hand. The crowd starts clapping. The other actors walk onto the stage and stand next to the two women. They all bow a few times. The audience continues clapping as the curtains close.

The crowd starts getting up and moving to the exit. Mary studies their faces, trying to see if any of her other old colleagues are there.

"Mary, how are you?" a voice says behind her. She turns to look at Ben.

"Ben. I'm well," she says as they hug. "How have you been?"

"Good, good," he smiles and nods. She quickly glances around.

"Have you seen any of the others here, from our lab days?" she asks him.

"Yes, I saw Frank and Samantha. They were in the front row," he turns to the front row. "There they are," he says and points to two people.

"Shall we join them?" she asks and starts walking before he can answer.

They reach Frank and Samantha. After about fifteen minutes of greetings they all move outside and stand on the

lawn together.

"It's hard to believe so many years have passed," Frank says, as he puts on sunglasses. "Sometimes it feels like yesterday."

"I know what you mean," Ben replies, smiling.

"I wonder what's keeping Candice? Interesting lab scenes they had, don't you think?" Samantha asks, looking directly at Mary.

"Yes. That must have been Candice's idea," Mary says. She is burning to ask them if they know anything about the things Candice said earlier.

"No, I spoke to her yesterday. She came up with the terrorist bits, but the lab stuff were the writer's ideas. Apparently he knows quite a bit about the work we did," Ben says. This piques Mary's interest.

"Who was the writer?" she asks. Ben points to the folded leaflet in her hand.

"He's in there." He takes the leaflet from her and opens it. He points at the writer's name. 'Simon Trevors - Writer'

Mary stares at the name. It cannot be.

"You look like you just saw a ghost," Frank says to her. She wonders if she should tell them. She has never mentioned Simon to anyone else, not even to Craige. Her mouth feels dry.

"Ah, here comes Candice," Samantha says, looking over Mary's shoulder. Mary is focused on the leaflet in her hand. Her hand trembles slightly. She wonders if Simon is a patient or works for The Silver Swallow.

Behind her she hears Candice say, "Hey, everyone, this is

Simon, he helped with the play." Mary freezes.

"Hello," she hears a man say in a low voice behind her. She spins around. The sun is directly behind Candice and the man. The rays blind her and she cannot see his face. Suddenly she feels faint and falls forward onto her knees. The next moment she sees the ground rushing towards her. In the distance she hears Samantha call her name, and then darkness.

She dreams she is on a beach by herself.

She wakes up and discovers she is lying in the back seat of her car. She lifts her head and looks out the window. The car is still in the parking lot of the clinic. Nearby, Candice and the others are sitting on a bench and on the grass. Simon is nowhere to be seen. She gets up, feeling a little dizzy. A bottle of water is lying on the seat. She opens it and drinks a few mouthfuls. She opens the door and walks to the others.

"Hey, you had us worried," Ben says with a half smile.

"The nurse checked you out. She said it looks like you collapsed from exhaustion and haven't slept or eaten properly. Also you've got flu," Samantha says, as she rubs Mary's arm. "You must drink lots of liquids and get some rest."

"Thanks," Mary says. She looks at Candice, who is sitting quietly on the grass.

"Craig is on his way to pick you up. Says he doesn't trust self-driving cars," Ben says.

Mary nods. She looks at Candice. "Where's Simon?"

"What did you think of the play?" Candice asks her.

"I enjoyed it," she replies. Her heart is racing.

"Good! I knew you would," Candice nods.

"It was pretty close to home. How much of it did Simon write?"

"He wrote the lab scenes."

"That's the third time you asked about Simon, Mary. Do you know him?" Frank asks. She thinks for a moment.

"About a month ago I received an email from him. He claimed he was studying the particle and had discovered something new about it," she says, studying the reactions on their faces. "Apart from Candice, have any of you been in contact with him before?"

"First time I met him today," Ben says. Frank and Samantha shake their heads.

"Listen, the particle's in the past. If there was anything new to discover, it would've been found years ago," Frank says. He sounds stern.

Mary starts, "New technology could've--"

"Mary, listen to yourself," Frank says. "Do you think this is a good time to talk about it?" he asks with his hand half gesturing to Candice.

"Don't mind the recovering patient," Candice says with a wave of her hand.

"You know something," Mary looks at Candice. "Earlier you said 'it' hasn't visited me yet. You said 'it' left the flea particles behind. What did you mean by that?"

"I also said 'you will see'," Candice smiles. Mary starts to feel despondent.

"What do you mean!?" she shouts at Candice. She moves closer to Candice, who gets up and takes a step back.

"Whoa," Frank says as he blocks Mary's path. He gently pulls her to the side, away from the others. "Listen, I spoke to Leon. Candice hasn't been recovering as well as they hoped. They decided to keep her here at least another week. The things she said may not have sprung from a healthy mind."

"No, that's not it. There's something she's not telling us," Mary says determined. "How do you explain Simon? The emails he sent and then appearing here, with all of us on the same day?"

"I don't know. After you collapsed he just stood there, staring at us. He said almost nothing then left after a few minutes. We were too concerned about you to give him much attention." Frank shrugs his shoulders. "I can ask the clinic about him, if that'll make you feel better."

"Mary!" she hears Craige's voice calling from somewhere. She turns and sees him standing next to a taxi, near the entrance to the clinic. He talks to the taxi driver, who then drives off alone. Craige walks to the group. He greets everyone and chats to them for a while. During that time Mary keeps a short distance from them, and occasionally she stares at Candice. Eventually they all say their goodbyes.

"I'll let you know what I find out," Frank says to Mary as they hug.

Candice walks over and opens her arms for a hug. Mary considers not hugging her. She changes her mind and gives her a quick hug, then walks to her car.

Craige gets into the driver's seat and looks at her for a moment before starting the engine. He can tell her mind is

somewhere else. He turns on the radio.

#

A week later Mary is standing in a forest. She has been assigned to identify new plants growing there. An anonymous caller reported the plants and was concerned it might be a weed introduced into that area. She and her guide found the plants about five minutes ago, then he had to rush off on an emergency. She kneels next to the plants and unpacks her equipment. She has not heard from Frank yet and wonders how long to wait before calling him.

It is not weeds, but plants infected with something, which gives them an eerie orange colour. She wonders why it has not spread to the surrounding foliage. Her cellphone rings, a muffled vibration in her pocket. She looks at the name on the screen, Candice Brown.

"Hello, Candice," she answers.

"Hi. I got home today."

"That's good to hear," she smiles.

"Sorry about last week. I wasn't completely myself."

"That's OK. It was a tiring day. I'll visit you next weekend."

"That would be nice," she says and pauses briefly. "Has it visited you yet?"

"Can we talk about that next weekend? I'm busy working," she replies quickly, knowing well that all phone calls are recorded and stored in a database.

"Please, just listen for a minute. I think it's important."

"OK."

"When it visited me I could not face it or the things it tried to tell me, which caused my breakdown. I think it might be afraid you will react the same way."

"I see."

"So it might not have visited you directly. Maybe it appeared in another form, or in some other way tried to get its message across."

"OK."

"Yeah, so if you had any visions, strange dreams or something like that. Anyway, I'll see you next weekend."

"See you then," she holds the phone to her ear until after the call ends. The only recent strange dream was about the bacteria. She looks down at the orange covered plants. She bends down and looks at a plant closely. Is the orange colour caused by bacteria?

She sits down on the ground. She closes her eyes and tries to remember the dream. It takes a while for her to focus. Slowly the images of the dream's bacteria fill her mind. She starts to see the bacteria that were shaped like letters. She is trying to remember the words that were formed in her dream. Mary clenches her teeth then relaxes and calms down. Slowly words start forming. Hazy at first, moving in and out of focus. There seem to be five words. She tries to focus all her attention on the words. Suddenly they pop clearly into view.

'use bacteria to harness energy'

She opens her eyes. Her thoughts jump to the play, to the

woman who discovered a new energy source. Then it jumps back to the bacteria.

The understanding hits her like a wave. For the past twelve years the flea particles have done nothing but absorb energy. It never releases energy, therefore it is still stored in the particles. If it could be harnessed, it might be used as a new source of energy. Somehow the bacteria can be used to harness it. She just has to figure out how. She smiles uncontrollably, then she starts laughing.

She doubts Frank will ever find out anything about someone named Simon Trevors, and they will probably never hear from Simon again. Or rather the thing posing as Simon. Its message has been received and understood.

END