

# THE LITTLE CANNON

*By Philip Rainford*

I'm not sure whether my life was a success. Success depends so much on how it is defined. Many view it as financial success, the accumulation of wealth, making it a numbers game. Others believe it is as simple as living a good life and doing no harm, of having kids to be proud of.

According to evolution, once you have reproduced, you are a successful member of the species. Every one of us can claim that our ancestors were successful as they reproduced a family line leading to us being born. Evolution does not explore how life started, only how it changes. It is blind, driven by external stimuli. It has no aim, no end state and no guiding hand. Those who believe in energy waves view evolution as simply a change in the gene frequency. Evolution seems to bubble away in equilibrium then suddenly explode, taking the species in a new direction.

So where lies - fate? Is it random chance? Being in the right place at the right time for the right set of events to trigger that fateful moment. I had led a life with no real ambitions; I hadn't even met my evolutionary purpose by reproducing. I led a simple life, doing what I could to help those around me and survive with minimum stress. So why was I drawn into the events that now surrounded me. How could such evil enter my life? I will never understand.

It all started one morning while I sat alone in a café having just consumed my coffee with toast and marmalade and ordered cereal. While I waited, I sat back to read the newspaper when an article on page three caught my attention. That of a man run down by a car the previous evening. It had happened only two blocks from where I sat. I don't know what it is that draws people to death and disaster; maybe it was that moment of weakness on my part that opened that door for evil to enter. I stared at the black and white picture, wishing it was colour but it didn't reveal much, just a man laying on the road with a sheet over him. The only thing visible was his hand. I struggled to catch what it was he was holding and decided it looked like a little toy cannon.

Why would he be holding a toy cannon? Was he taking it home to his kid? Was it a good luck charm that obviously didn't work or maybe a bad luck charm? I sniggered at my poor tasteless humour and then dismissed it. My cereal had arrived and there were other articles to read. I didn't think about it again, until...

Harry Tandoras was a homeless man in his fifties. Despite the warm evening he wore a heavy brown coat that doubled as his blanket at night. He scratched his heavily bearded face and watched the man in the suit being loaded into an ambulance. He had seen him knocked down, the fool hadn't looked. He just walked out in front of the car, headset shutting him off from the world.

Harry had once had a suit. He'd been what they call a successful businessman though now the media would refer to him as a failed businessman. He had made only one mistake; he'd trusted others and lost it all. The subsequent mental collapse destroyed him; depression stopped him re-climbing the ladder of success. Now he just survived, avoiding the stress and living alone on the street with the others of his kind.

No one seemed to notice the little toy cannon fall from the man's hand as they lifted him on to the stretcher. It was kicked aside by accident in Harry's direction. He was close enough to reach under the cordoned off area and pick it up. It was heavy, probably lead, painted army green with black wheels and he estimated it probably dated back to World War II but he was no expert. He pocketed the cannon and walked off while the coroner removed the man in the suit to the morgue.

Harry turned into the laneway that was his home with two others. He was greeted by Archie's toothless grin as Harry removed his coat to sit down. Archie, who looked closer to ninety than the seventy years he claimed, approached him excitedly. "Harry! We found a place by the river. We're movin' in tonight. You joining us?"

"What kind of a place?" asked Harry.

"Dunno, Tuddles says it's been abandoned all summer."

Harry shrugged. "Sure, sounds good. Winter will start settlin' in soon and it'll be getting' a bit cold out here."

"It'll be good you'll see. Tuddles is good at this, you'll see!" enthused Archie as he walked off to check out the main street.

Harry sat down to rest his tired legs and leaned back against the wall. He felt in his pocket and found the little cannon. He withdrew it, examined it carefully, then reached for the bag of possessions that he'd left in Archie's care. He carefully placed the cannon in the bottom of the bag and withdrew a half-eaten muesli bar someone had left on a park bench, and he finished it off.

Tuddles exploded through the entrance, his massive bulk causing the doorjamb to shatter. He staggered for a moment regaining his balance and turned back proudly to his friends. “Well! What do you think?”

Archie and Harry had followed him in more sedately and looked around at their new home. They now stood in a large hall that had children’s paintings drawn on the walls. “I’ll be damned!” exclaimed Archie wandering around with his mouth open. “It’s a palace!”

“What was this place?” asked Harry still standing in the doorway taking it in.

“A kindergarten. Went outa’ business, lost its government funding,” replied Tuddles enjoying his friends’ enthusiasm.

“How do you know?” pressed Harry.

“Asked ‘round, I kinda find out things you know,” was the big man’s reply.

At the far end of the hall, Harry noticed a doorway to the left. He headed towards it while Archie still stood in awe of the empty room. Through the doorway, he found a metal spiral staircase leading to an upper level. Once he had gone, Archie and Tuddles’ curiosity drew them to follow. They found him at the top where a lounge area was located with four offices and a kitchen that branched off it.

“Hey! We’ve got bedrooms!” announced Tuddles heading for one of the empty offices and dropping his bundle. “This one’s mine!”

Archie ignored him as he went into the kitchen and started rummaging through the cupboards. Harry decided to take a load off and sit on the only piece of furniture on the premises, an old couch in the lounge area.

“Hey! The gas is on! We can cook!” announced Archie from the kitchen.

“What about power?” asked Tuddles.

“Nup! Just gas! But we do have - kitchen stuff,” he replied waving a plate and a saucepan.

Harry decided he liked the place.

Later that night, Harry unpacked, placing the little cannon on the window ledge of the fishbowl office he was using. Archie caught sight of it as he walked passed. “Where did you get that?” he asked gingerly popping in and picking it up.

“Found it in the street.”

“As a kid I always wanted one of these,” he said remembering better times. “Never could afford it. Solid lead I’d say,” he said testing its weight.

“You can have it if you want,” offered Harry.

Archie stared at him in disbelief. “You mean it?” Harry nodded. Archie’s face lit up and he raced back to his room to examine it more closely.

Harry stared out into the darkness beyond his room, lit only by a candle and began to feel unsettled by the dark.

They found Archie the next morning. He looked as if he was still asleep, clutching onto the little cannon. They returned him to the laneway that had been their summer home and notified a policeman before returning to their new home.

“Can I have the cannon?” asked Tuddles.

Harry nodded and was about to walk away then stopped. “Why?”

“To remember him by,” replied Tuddles, standing in Archie’s room looking through his possessions. Harry went off to his room and left Tuddles to distribute Archie’s belongings.

Harry woke with a start. He felt afraid, more afraid than he’d ever felt before in his life. Fear seemed to surround him but he could not see it in the dark. For a moment he could not remember where he was. He groped for his candle and matches and struck a light. There was nothing there but something evil seemed to permeate the air, the walls, the floor. He had to get out. He quickly got up, put on his coat and stepped into the lounge. “Tuddles? You there?” There was no response. Harry went into Tuddles’ room but it was empty. His fear was growing, he had to get out and then without further thought for his friend, he fled in a state of terror.

Once in the street, he started to relax. The fear began to subside. He looked around; the street was empty. He decided he’d go back inside. As he crossed the threshold, the fear returned and he quickly retreated back onto the street. He tried to enter again but the same happened.

Unnerved he returned to their laneway where he spent the rest of the night.

Morning brought with it a new fear. What had happened to Tuddles? He returned to the kindergarten and hesitated at the door. “Tuddles?” he called but got no response. He started to go in but stopped as he fought the fear that had returned in all its intensity. Steeling himself, he entered and ran upstairs to where they had been sleeping. He found Tuddles asleep in Archie’s room. He ran over and woke him, instantly Tuddles felt it too. With his eyes wide open, he stared at Harry and they both ran from the building as if the devil himself was on their tail.

“What was that?” asked Tuddles.

“I don’t know but I think we should pool our funds and go to the pub.”  
Tuddles agreed but there was one problem. All their possessions were inside.  
Together they braved the fear.

I have been known to have the odd drink after work especially after a long day. It was just that sort of a day that drew me back into the story. I found myself a little booth in the corner, one of those boxed in cubicles. My arms were loaded up with books and assignments from the class I had just conducted at the local University. I dumped these on to the table, slid into the cubicle and started to sort the papers into a coherent order.

While engaged in this activity I failed to notice an attractive blond woman approach my table. “Newman Stark? I thought that was you.”

I looked up. “Sarah! What are you doing here?” I asked stupidly, embarrassed at being caught out alone in a pub.

“I’m meeting up with the Professor.”

I was shocked. “Are you sure that’s wise?” I asked as my eye took in her sweet round face, blonde hair and well-proportioned body. You might have gathered that I was attracted to her but she was looking in the other direction. “The Professor is married, and your affair has already been made public.”

“It’ll blow over, see you Newman.” With that she walked off to another table and was joined very shortly after by the Professor. I couldn’t take my eyes off them, Sarah’s low-cut sleeveless top was revealing too much to ignore.

“Can I take your order?”

I looked up at the intrusion and caught sight of the waiter. She was not as attractive as Sarah. I gave my order and tried to get my attention back to my papers. I even moved around in the cubicle so my line of vision was not focus in their direction. As I did I sat on an object, which I quickly removed and discovered it was a little toy cannon. It was heavy and looked familiar. Then I recognised it as the one in the newspaper. How had it got here? I decided to find out.

I approached the bar and caught the attention of the barman. I showed him the object and informed him where it had been found. “That cubicle hasn’t been used since this morning, a couple of chaps were drinking there. The big one choked on something and had to be taken to hospital.”

“Was he alright?” I enquired.

“Dunno, they took him away and I ... dunno,” said the barman with a shrug and a friendly smile.

I handed him the cannon. “I think they left this behind.”

He took the cannon, momentarily glanced at it then placed it under the counter. “If they return I’ll be sure they got it. Can I get you anything?” he asked cheerfully.

“No, I’ve ordered,” I replied and returned to my cubicle.

A few days later, I again ventured into the bar after another bad day and was surprised to find the barman had been replaced. This disturbed me as he’d been there for the last seven years, since before I’d started teaching at the University and I’d never failed to see him on duty. I enquired about him to his replacement.

“Hank? Committed suicide,” replied the young red-haired man dismissively as he stood before me polishing glasses.

I was stunned and stuttered an incomprehensible response. “He what? How? Where? Why’d he do it? He seemed so happy?”

“Not on that last night. He became very agitated and snappy with customers. Something was really stressing him out. Then he had a major blue with the boss over shortages in the till and stormed out. Never seen him so angry.”

“Have you been working here long? I’ve never seen you before,” I asked.

“I’m normally do the day shift but I was working here that night helping out.”

“Thanks,” I replied and turned to leave not noticing Sarah approach and bumped into her spilling her drink. “I... I... I’m so sorry, Sarah. I didn’t see you.” I stammered apologetically. Then I noticed something was wrong. “Are you alright?”

“Professor Stone is dead. Collapsed from a heart attack this afternoon,” she replied and broke down. I placed an arm cautiously around her, I had feelings for this woman but was afraid to let her know, so I led her gently over to my cubicle and sat her down.

“Were there any warning signs?” I asked after letting her recompose herself.

“No, but he was really strange the last few days, ever since the barman killed himself.”

Those words sent a chill down my spine but I was not entirely sure why.

“What do you mean? How are they connected?”

“Being a criminologist and a local, the Professor was called in by the police. He told me he found a toy cannon on the body and...”

I cut her off and instantly regretted it but pressed ahead. “Did you say toy cannon?” She nodded startled by my aggressive response. “Sorry, go on!”

“He said he had an irresistible urge to steal it and that disturbed him. Especially since he did take it. He went home that night feeling quite agitated and next day he was snappy, irritable and quite distracted. He also kept taking out the cannon and looking at it as if afraid to lose it. It started to make me feel uneasy.”

“The barman was also quite snappy and irritable before he died and the previous owner of that cannon nearly choked to death. The owner before that was run down by a car and killed.”

“How do you know?”

“Because I found the cannon in this cubicle and handed it to the barman.” I got up and approached the red headed barman who was still cleaning glasses. Sarah followed. “Excuse me,” I said gaining his attention. “Did Hank ever mention a toy cannon?”

“Funny you should mention that, he kept mumbling about a toy cannon. He seemed very possessive of it.”

“Thanks,” I said with a smile and turned back to Sarah. I drew her out of earshot of the bar before speaking. “There is something going on around that cannon.”

Sarah looked sceptical. “How can a cannon be connected to their deaths?”

“I’m not sure but I’m going to find out. Do you want to help?” I asked hopefully. She nodded enthusiastically.

The next evening we met at the railway station. Excitedly I reported my findings. “I found the man who choked. He survived but only just. There were three homeless men, one picked it up off the road, one died in his sleep and the other barely recovered in hospital. They dropped the cannon in the bar but told a story of the cannon making them feel very afraid.”

Sarah didn’t challenge my findings and I soon realised why. “I found out that the police inspector who called the Professor in, took the cannon after finding out that the Professor had removed it from the barman’s body. He was killed in a shoot out last night. The Professor’s wife was given back the cannon.”

“We need to warn her!” I said alarmed.

“Not me. She hates me. I’m the other woman,” replied Sarah.

“I need you to back me up. Otherwise she’s going to think I’m crazy.” Sarah nodded unsure. I didn’t reveal that I was also unsure but I was enjoying working with her and didn’t want to lose that.

“Do we know where the first victim got the cannon?” asked Sarah.

“No, haven’t tracked him down yet. Shall we get a taxi?” Sarah agreed as neither of us had a car and we needed to get to the Professor’s house quickly.

I rang the bell and waited. Sarah hung back in the shadows. We waited impatiently for the door to open. When it did, we were greeted by an elderly woman holding a cigarette, her ageing features were accentuated by a lack of makeup and her dishevelled hair. “What do you want?” she asked in an aggressive husky voice, not noticing Sarah.

“I was an associate of your husband. I wonder if I could ask you a few questions?”

“What for?” You criminologists always looking for a crime when its nature at fault,” she replied in a croaky voice indicating years of scarring in the throat from smoking. Then she saw Sarah. “You’d best watch out for that one,” she said with venom in his voice. “She’ll steal your heart. She stole my husbands.” She glared at Sarah then turned back to me. “You married?”

“No, ma’am.”

“Probably just as well. Why are you really here?”

“We believe the Professor had a toy cannon in his possession when he died.”

“So what?” She stared at us for a moment waiting for more.

“We believe anyone who has it will die.”

She started to laugh but was stopped by a bout of bronchial coughing. “You mean it’s cursed?”

“I’m looking for a more scientific explanation but I need to borrow the cannon,” I replied hopefully.

It was then she simply shut the door and left us standing outside.

“What now?” asked Sarah.

“We get proof,” I stated and walked off with Sarah following me back to the taxi that awaited our return.



Next morning we both expected to hear that the Professor's wife had died but found she still lived when I tried to contact her by phone. She hung up in my ear.

As we sat in the café Sarah opened up her laptop. "I did some investigating of my own over night. Have you heard of Doctor David Lamb?"

"Science Faculty, why?"

"He was the first victim, the one you saw in the paper."

I suggested we needed to talk to his colleagues and find out where he got that toy cannon.

We arrived at the Science Faculty and approached reception. "Could we talk to Doctor Lamb's colleagues, please?" I asked the middle-aged woman behind the desk who reminded me of my Primary School Principal.

"Who's asking?"

"Newman Stark. Faculty of Criminology."

"And what is this about?"

"We're investigating his death," I replied. She looked at me over her glasses just the way that School Principal used to look at me when I was in trouble.

Without saying a word to us she got on the phone. "Kevin, you have visitors," she said, hung up and stared at us. We waited.

A short time later a short, little middle-aged man approached from along a long corridor. I listened to his footsteps as he drew nearer. I noticed he looked flustered but was trying to appear calm. He also seemed out of breathe and his hair was quite dishevelled from his running his hand through his hair.

"Can I help you?"

"Did you work with Doctor Lamb?" I asked.

"I did. What is this about?" he asked looking to Sarah.

"It's about a toy cannon." I watched as his face drained of blood. He hesitated and then told us to follow him.

We were led up two flights of stairs without any conversation and taken to an office with a sign on the door that read 'Dr David Lamb'. After we entered our escort shut the door. The first thing I noticed was the model soldiers and WWII model planes and vehicles. "I can see where the cannon came from?"

"What happened here?" asked Sarah.

"Who are you? What do you want?" asked the man nervously.

“I’m Newman Stark and this is my associate Sarah. We’re from the Criminology Faculty and we believe that cannon has killed five people.”

“Five! Oh! My God!” exclaimed the man turning away in torment.

I approached him. “Do you want to fill us in?”

He failed to respond at first. I waited. Eventually he broke the silence. “I’m Doctor Kevin Hallet.” He turned as he spoke. “You’ve heard of Murphy’s Law?”

“Of course. What can go wrong will go wrong. What of it?”

“We had a theory that it was driven by the negativity in our society. If we were more positive the Law would become more positive.”

Sarah intervened. “You mean what could go right would go right?”

“Precisely but media keep feeding us the negatives, programming all of us to think negatively,” continued Hallet.

“What did you discover?” I asked fearful of the answer.

“That we were right! There are two kinds of psychic energy. Positive and negative and they influence the outcomes of events by changing probability.”

“What has this got to do with the toy cannon?” I pressed as I watched Hallet hesitate, obviously not wishing to reveal what they’d done.

“We isolated and tapped into the negative energy field and transmuted the cannon by using it as a focal point. Now it emits an extremely powerful negative aura.”

“And that aura causes everything near it to go wrong?” asked Sarah.

“Yes, by making the worst possible probability a reality.”

“So what are you doing about it?” pressed Sarah. “Can’t you reverse the process?”

“It’s not that simple,” admitted Hallet. “I have to give it some thought. But we’ll have to retrieve the cannon. Do you know where it is?”

I pounded on the door ferociously but got no response. Fearing the worst I broke a nearby window and managed to climb inside. I was helping Sarah in when Professor Stone’s wife appeared. “What are you doing?”

“We need that cannon. If you don’t surrender it, it will kill you!” I warned as I watched her clutch something closely to her breast.

“No! It’s mine!” she cried protectively in her husky voice.

“You don’t understand...”

“I don’t care! You can’t have it!” she insisted and started coughing. The fit continued for too long and took the breathe out of her until she finally collapsed. Sarah rushed to her side. The older woman grabbed her arm as her coughing continued and glared at her with such an expression of hatred and malice that it took us both by surprise. No one noticed her slip the cannon into Sarah’s purse and then she let go. “See you in hell! You bitch!” she said as the coughing stopped. Sarah stepped away watching the old woman slowly relax. She seemed oddly content. I noticed she also seemed to become too relaxed. I checked her ... she was dead.

I opened her hand to get the cannon but it was not there. I searched the body but it was nowhere to be found. Together we searched the house but could not find it. We decided to return to Hallet’s lab.

“Have you got it?” asked Hallet as we entered. We both shook our heads.

“Have you got an answer on how to destroy it?” I asked.

“It’s not a case of destroy but rather re-energise it with positive energy but we need the cannon,” stressed Hallet watching as Sarah placed her bag on the counter. She noticed him watching and became self-conscious. “What’s in the bag?” he asked approaching. Sarah stepped back, his eyes looked crazed and alarmed her.

“What is it, Doctor?” I asked as he grabbed the bag opened it up and withdrew the cannon. I looked to Sarah who was equally surprised.

“You did find it!” he said clutching it possessively to his chest.

Sarah and I both recognised the signs. “Doctor! You’re falling under its influence!” We both stepped towards him.

He stepped back. “You can’t have it! It’s mine!”

I stepped in front of Sarah protectively and approached Hallett determined to get the cannon. “Doctor! We have to neutralise or re-energise it before it kills you!”

“I don’t care,” he yelled. “It’s precious. We can’t neutralise it!”

“We must!” I replied firmly, unaccustomed to raising my voice as I reached forward and grabbed it from him, having closed the distance between us. I backed off and handed the cannon to Sarah as the Doctor fell to his knees.

“Please! I must have it! I must!”

I turned to Sarah who was clutching the cannon possessively to her chest as she watched Hallet pathetically pleading for the cannon and I wondered if I’d made a mistake handing it to her. “Sarah! Are you becoming afflicted?”

Sarah stared at me and then at how she was holding the cannon. “I don’t think so,” was her reply as she stepped forward and gave me the toy.

I handed it back to her. “Take it out of the room it seems to affect those around it. Then come back.” Sarah did as I asked as the Doctor regained his senses. He looked at me embarrassed and we waited in silence.

He watched Sarah carefully as she returned. “Why aren’t you affected?” asked Hallet, returning to normal. “Are you married?”

“No!” we both answered together as if this was unthinkable.

“Are you having an affair?”

“No!” we replied again together with less enthusiasm as if we’d both had to think for a split second before answering.

“You definitely care for each other,” observed Hallet and grabbed an instrument off a nearby bench and started taking readings.

“What are you doing?” I enquired.

“You are both bathed in positive energy driven by deep emotions that are mutually shared. They are neutralising the affect of the cannon on you. While I’m emitted negative energy. Bring it back and place it on that pedestal.”

He indicated a small shelf between two electrodes. I nodded to Sarah who retrieved the cannon and placed it in the device. Hallet moved towards his instruments and turned them on. It immediately short-circuited and hurled Hallet across the room. I raced over fearing the worst but he was still alive. “What happened?”

“You will need to operate the equipment. It’s attracting negative energy causing everything in the vicinity to go wrong.”

“How am I supposed to do that? It’s broken?” I said pointing out the obvious.

“Take the cannon away both of you while I fix it then return in an hour. We’ll try again,” instructed Hallet as he pulled himself unsteadily back on his feet. Reluctantly we obeyed stepping outside heading for the deserted University grounds and a clear night sky.

I found myself running down the street at night, unsure how I got there. The buildings were old and the streets unfamiliar, their vintage implying they were European. How had I got here? Where was I? And what was I running from?

I approached a “T” intersection and before me stood a massive concrete wall with razor wire along the top. I recognised it as part of the Berlin Wall but that had been pulled down decades ago. My grandparents who lived in Germany had told us

stories of the Wall that had frightened me as a child. Now it stood before me in all its horror. I moved hesitantly towards it then heard the approach of soldiers. Unsure of my situation I decided to hide. Behind me was a high wire mesh fence mounted on a short brick fence. It was open at the end and I darted behind the fence and lay down flat behind the bricks.

Then I heard them, a group of four locals approaching the intersection. They arrived at the same time as the soldiers and had no time to hide. They froze like rabbits in a spot light. Well as I have heard rabbits freeze given that I have never hunted rabbits. Fear began to grip me as I lay there, not for myself but for those I was watching. I had no reason to fear but I had a feeling, a sense all was not going to go well.

I heard the soldiers shout at the group and aim their rifles as they broke formation and approached. There were only six but they had the advantage of weapons and uniforms to intimidate their victims. They herded the locals back against the fence which made me even more nervous and I curled up closer to the wall wishing the ground would swallow me up. I didn't look but I heard a lot of shouting and the fence shuddered as people were pushed against it. The local group were becoming scared and pleaded to be left alone.

The explosion of gunfire made me jump, made worse by being showered by sticky moisture that I assumed was blood. Silence fell then I heard the soldiers walk away satisfied, reform and march off. Once I felt they had gone I ventured a peek. It took a moment to build my courage. My worst fears were confirmed.

I ran and ran and ran, down stairs, across parks, up alleys and over bridges until I reached a hotel. Breathless I entered – all looked so normal. I darted into a wash room, remembering the blood, washed myself and emerged still feeling conspicuous, like a hunted man. Nearby I saw a Reception Room was occupied so I joined the party. I could at least get a stiff drink, which I enjoyed when stressed, and blend into the background while I figured this out.

“Newman! Are you okay?”

Sarah's voice broke into my thoughts. I looked around and found I was back in the University Grounds holding the cannon. “What happened?”

“You just went quiet for a moment. I was asking you how do you think the cannon ended up in my bag?”

“I think Mrs Stone hated you enough to pass it in as she died. But more importantly I think this energy force might have an intelligence.” Sarah stared at me. “It just took me somewhere else. It put me in a place where I was afraid; to break down my resistance.”

Sarah stopped to consider this as other thoughts entered her head. “What do you think Hallet meant, that we had deep emotions we mutually shared?”

Taken aback and being a coward. I pleaded ignorance rather than confess my feelings towards her. At the same time I wanted to say something cruel that would forever kill that blossoming relationship. In that instant I knew it was the cannon again trying to break down our resistance. I braced myself and turned to Sarah, fear nearly paralysing me into inaction as I said with difficulty. “I love you, Sarah! I always have, since the first time I saw you.”

It was Sarah’s turn to be taken aback, she stared at me bewildered for a moment, then grabbed me, pulled me towards her and my world exploded into stars, the earth moved and my head swooned.

I could have killed Hallet because he chose that moment to summon us back to the lab. We reluctantly pulled apart and followed him inside.

Sarah placed the cannon on the platform as the Doctor briefed me on the controls. He then stepped back towards the door, as far as he could get away from the cannon’s influence. As he did I saw his eyes fixated on the cannon as if he was fighting an urge to step forward and grab it from the pedestal.

I started the equipment, a hum filled the room and the cannon was bathed in light from the two electrodes. Lights began to glimmer as the cannon energy fought to project its influence through the room. Sarah stood closest to the cannon, I watched her back thinking of the kiss and loving her even more every second. Then my eyes caught sight of a letter opener lying on the bench. I pictured myself plunging it into her back me and an urge to do it gripped me. I looked away but my attention drifted to a power lead and I thought how easy it would be to come up behind her and garrotte her with it. Again I resisted the temptation and focused on her standing in front of the beam. I wanted to approach her, hug her, hold her. That would give me a greater hold so I could push her into the beam. It would probably kill her but she would dislodge the cannon. I started to approach her then she turned with a knife in her hand raised in my direction. Then...

...the power went out, the hum stopped and the electrodes stopped pounding the cannon. We had been plunged into darkness but had we been successful? Out of

the void a voice. “I’m only reading normal energy reading 56% negative, 44% positive. I think we did it.”

“Is that good?” I asked. “Shouldn’t it be 50/50?”

“No that would mean everything had an equal chance of success, our world is definitely slanted slightly towards Murphy’s Law,” replied Hallet.

I arranged to meet Sarah that afternoon at the café. Neither of us slept well. We’d both had a lot to think about. The Doctor confirmed the cannon was reenergized and now harmless. We met to discuss how our relationship had been reenergized. That night we both slept very well together.

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