

# Light Reading

Diamond's Light Reading for Schools Competition 2013

Winning story of the junior category by Lexi Tyack  
(Year 7 - Our Lady's Abingdon)

## A Paranormal Experience

It's been three days. Three long drawn-out days. Mum hasn't told me anything. Well, nothing that I didn't already know. You see, I was there, at the Diamond Light Source, the day Dad disappeared.

Dad's a scientist working at the Diamond Light Source in Oxfordshire. I know he's been working on a top secret matter. Nobody I know has ever heard of Diamond Light Source so Dad always has to explain what it's about. He says "Diamond generates brilliant beams of light which are used for academic and industry research and development". At that point I can see people's eye glaze over as he is about to launch a really boring lecture on the 2000 researchers who are using the beam over a range of scientific disciplines! What he doesn't tell them – and what I know – is that they also use the beam to explore paranormal disciplines. Yes – paranormal – you know – "ghosties and ghoulies and long leggedy beasties and things that go bump in the night!"

You have to understand that as long as I can remember Dad has been interested in "paranormal" activity. Whenever Mum, Dad, my younger brother Alfie and I went on holiday we would always end up in the dank dungeons of a castle. Dad reckoned he could always sense "the other side" but Mum said the only thing she could sense was the need for a cup tea and a cream scone.

There were also some old "strange but true" family stories that were dusted off on a regular basis. My Grandfather was a great believer in mysterious happenings. He had been an air traffic controller back in the Second World War. He always maintained that he had once been in contact with a military aircraft that simply "disappeared" – even as he spoke to the pilot over the radio. He claimed the pilot started to shout and scream in a terror. The voice of the pilot became softer and softer even though he was shrieking for help; the dot on the radar that was tracking the plane became fainter and fainter until it simply disappeared. The aircraft and crew were never seen again. It was recorded as "Lost at Sea" during combat but Grandpa said he knew better. He said they had entered the "4th dimension".

There was also the story of the Vicar walking with the parishioner on a snowy day. It was Christmas morning and the two were tramping through a snowy field in the early morning winter darkness. As the Vicar and the parishioner walked together the parishioner's voice began to get softer and softer until it simply faded away. Complete silence surrounded the vicar – too early even for the morning bird song.

As it was dark the Vicar had only been able to sense his companion next to him as they tramped through the fields. He reportedly said that they seemed to enter a patch of deep velvety black shadow and the next thing he knew his companion had gone. As the dawn light crept across the sky the Vicar could see two trails of footprints behind him showing the path they had followed. As he looked down

beside him he could see his companions' tracks stop. He looked back and was horrified to see the footprints almost melt back into the snow. It was as if the parishioner had never existed. Ahead and all around him the snow lay completely smooth. Nothing had disturbed the white blanket. Grandpa claimed the companion had also entered the "4th dimension".

I told you I was there the day Dad disappeared. It happened to be the day when Diamond Light Source organises an Open Day. You can meet the scientists and have a tour of the synchrotron itself. I should explain the synchrotron is this huge scientific machine designed to produce very intense beams, called synchrotron light.

I said Dad was working on something "top secret". Well I had guessed that it was serious business because very occasionally we had sombre looking, dark suited men, turn up on the doorstep. Dad always immediately hustled them into his study and you could hear the low murmur of voices as they discussed something Dad had discovered. I knew they were Secret Service Government agents. Not because they looked like James Bond, which would have been fabulous, but actually because of the complete opposite. They were "Mr Grey" – completely forgettable. You couldn't remember them the second they left the house and that was the key to their success. I had also gleaned from a snippet of overheard conversation that Dad was working on some sort of experiment to do with national security.

That Open Day visit was one where Dad was supposed to be demonstrating the synchrotron. I should add that my Dad is easily recognisable as he's very tall with bright red hair which is long and crazy. His hair needs quite a bit of grooming and as he knew many of the visitors would want to talk to him he nipped into his laboratory to put more hair wax in. I followed him sneakily as his lab is normally out of bounds because of the secrecy of his work. The room was small and cramped. Equipment was piled on the tables. I loved wandering around looking at all the names – diffractometers, long trace profilometers and spectrometers. It really was another world.

Dad's lab is right next to the beam room (as I call it). When I last saw Dad that day he was looking in the mirror. He had pulled it around to the window that overlooked the room where the synchrotron machine was housed so that he could see his reflection more clearly. I noticed that a beam line seemed to be reflected in the mirror. Dad peered intently into the mirror and I heard him murmuring to himself about a mirrored box he could see in the mirror's reflection, seemingly lying in the room behind him. I went to the toilet then and when I returned he had gone – disappeared – and still gone. I knew he hadn't just

disappeared. You see I knew that, somehow, he had been transported into the 4th dimension. I also knew that his top secret mission had been to find a way to enter the 4th dimension.

Once it was apparent that he had simply "disappeared" the Government agents were all over the facility and the building was put into complete "shut down". Mum's been holed up in the study with the agents and Alfie and I have been pretty much ignored.

After he had been away 3 days I realised that I had to help him return. The only way to find out how to help him was to go back to the lab. I crept out of bed and as I slipped down the stairs I heard the troubled breathing of Mum and Alfie. I felt bad. What if they woke in the morning to find me gone too? For a minute I considered going back. I pushed that thought away. I had to find out what had happened to Dad.

So I went to the facility, dressed in black, cycling through the back country lanes, in the middle of the night. The break in was easier than I expected. The laboratories are alarmed but I had watched Dad often enough to know the code – 012345. Simple as. Dad might be a top rate scientist but he wasn't very creative. I sneaked down the corridor towards the lab.

The mirror was still where Dad had pulled it to. No-one had moved anything. I was the only person to have worked out what had happened. I felt scared, suddenly the world seemed enormous and I felt tiny. I was a tiny cog in a giant mechanism that had been working for eternity. Everyone knew their place on planet earth. If anything went wrong I could destroy that perfect world that we are all so familiar with. I took a deep breath.

I looked into the mirror and I could see a mirrored box within the reflection. My reflection stared at me with unnerving eyes. I looked up and, to my horror I noticed that the reflection of me hadn't done so – it remained motionless in the mirror. I screamed. A hole in the mirror opened. I reached in and picked up the mirrored box within the reflection – the room closed in on me and the beam line swirled around me. The mirror grew and I shrank. With another deep breath I stepped completely through and found myself not in the lab but at my kitchen table! Dad was opposite me. Had it had all been a dream? But then I spoil it by looking to my right. Sitting there was none other than me – staring at me. "What?" I said, "How is this possible?" "It's not" the other me replied "You're not" "Lauren!" cried a voice. "DAD!" I screamed. It had to be him. Just had to be.

He told me everything. It turns out that the 4th dimension is actually what you see in a mirror so in everyday life you see it, the 4th dimension. When Dad and I came through it was because the beams were so intense that they actually managed to split the particles. The opening had appeared as the mirrored box. The splitting of the particles had opened a door through the dimensions.

The Government had known there was a 4th dimension and wanted Dad to find a way in. What nobody realised is that the 4th dimension is an exact replica of our dimension. So not only was there another Me, there is also another Dad, and Mum and Alfie. It was all very mixed up. Because Mum is in the 3rd dimension there isn't two of her. But I'm in the 4th dimension meaning there won't be a me in the 3rd. Dad now had the answers to his questions. We could now return. But although we could make sense of the 4th dimension we couldn't work out how to get back.

Despite the bizarre familiarity of this world we needed – and wanted – to get back to our dimension. Our replica family had also had to keep us hidden. As equally as the 3rd dimension was interested in the "4th" dimension those in charge of the "4" dimension would be very interested in us.

We all thought long and hard until replica Dad burst out

"Wait! We could send you back the way you got here." "Huh? Oh yeah! I forgot. How could I do that?" Dad laughed.

Getting in the Diamond Light Source without causing attention wasn't easy. We had to run down corridors when there was no-one there or look down as people walked by so they couldn't see that we were all the same. But finally we reached the lab. The mirror was standing in the lab. A feeling of fear crept over me.

"Dad, I'm scared" I squeaked. "You did it once. I know you can do it again" he reassured me.

I was ready, ready for anything. I had Dad now. That was all that mattered. Holding hands we braced ourselves for the horrible feeling of isolation and suffocation as we travelled through parallel worlds.

We were back home. Mum and Alfie cried with relief. Dad met again with the Government agents. I grabbed Dad to be alone with him for a moment as I wanted to talk to him. "I don't think we should tell anyone about it" I said. "Don't worry" said Dad, "we know enough and we also know that we should respect the people of the "4th" dimension".

Dad said that they ceased using the Diamond Light Source for paranormal research. There was enough to discover and research in our own world.

It was as if it had never happened, as if the 4th dimension had never existed.

## Judge's comments

*"Lexi's story is a gripping thriller, which we all found incredibly exciting to read. The top secret plans and government agents all add to the excitement, but the relationship between daughter and father is really at the heart of the story. It's worth adding, however, that Diamond are definitely not looking for a fourth dimension in reality!"* Laura Holland, Diamond's Outreach Manager

