

Danny Dunn and the Light in the Floor  
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## Synopsis

Danny, Joe and Irene have spent a wonderful summer exploring their town of Midston: its museums, the beaches, the sights of the boardwalk, and their local library. Danny especially, enjoys the sciences and shares them with Joe, who is a complete antithesis to Danny - Joe is a poetry writer and dislikes school in general. Danny's other friend, Irene, is very much into science and mathematics. She outdoes Danny on tests in school, projects at the local science fair and in the challenging classes they share. Rather than have animosity toward her, she and Danny explore "all things science and mathematics" (with Joe in tow) and with their esteemed friend, Professor Bullfinch.

This past summer, the professor has been discussing the possibility of "string" theory with Irene's father, the distinguished astrophysicist at Midston University and the dour Dr. Grimes. They explore the idea of the fabric of space being able to support "tears" or "rips" in its fabric. Such holes could lead to an instantaneous movement from one end of the galaxy to another and back again in small units of time, perhaps in days and hours instead of thousands of years.

The "strings" that bind the universe together, gravity and space, are always flexing and shimmering. These vibrations began in the dawn of time and just after the Big Bang. Over the eons, space, time and gravity have allowed themselves to be sorted out and form the universe that is known today. There is pattern and stability in the universe, with occasional "disturbances" in its structure as the expansion continues to this day, according to the cosmologists of Danny's time.

These disturbances or "fracture" in the strings of three dimensions in space as we know it may possibly contain "holes" or patches of openings large enough to explore and venture into. It is thrilling for Danny and Irene to consider such a concept. Think of it: to leap into an unknown fabric disturbance; explore the new, strange world, and to do so within a span of a livable amount of time - and return to tell about it!

Sadly, such an idea of a "forgotten door" leading to somewhere else is best left to the science fiction writers of Danny's time. Dr. Bullfinch feels that it is not possible to "make" such a door artificially on Earth. It would take some huge physical disturbance in the strings of space, gravity and time to do so. It is too complicated to consider. Hence, the

professor concludes that it is very much out of reach for such a remote possibility to happen.

Or so Professor Bullfinch thinks.

After the new semester began, and Danny's friends settle into their new classes, Joe and Danny discover things missing from Joe's room.

Inconsequential and trivial at first (indeed, Danny felt it was a prank pulled off by Joe!), the losses escalate into larger items. Joe loses a favorite pillow; a set of weights for working out (which Joe hardly uses); a tool kit; and a root beer candy-filled glass jar (Joe's favorite flavor).

These items are not misplaced. They simply disappear during the day while Joe and Danny are in his room. Danny and Joe are astonished while watching this happen: one moment, these objects are there, the next, they are gone! Breathlessly, they tell Professor Bullfinch about these strange events. The esteemed professor dismisses them as "elaborate pranks", youthful transgressions which are normal behaviors in Joe and Danny's age group.

Determined to catch the thieving predator(s), Danny spends the night at Joe's house one Friday evening. Irene joins the Pearson family (as well as Danny and Joe) for dinner and to watch a meteor shower. This shower is unusually robust. Thousands of meteorites, from a very-recently discovered comet in the path of Earth's orbit about the sun, are colliding with Earth's atmosphere that evening an hour after the sun had set. As Joe so poetically put it, "Dancing jewels of stone burn up in the atmosphere, putting on a flickering, colorful light show for us all."

Unknown to the three youngsters, the thousands of bits of dust falling through the atmosphere "are burning up" as they travel into it, producing holes in the space-time fabric. Many of these holes are unnoticed as they occur in desolate locations and without any human witnessing them. As Irene bid everyone a "good evening" and goes home, Joe and Danny retire to Joe's room.

An hour later, Joe is awakened, terrified. A bright light is coming up from a crack in the floor in Joe's room! It has lit the ceiling in an unnatural glow. The opening widens and Joe tumbles into it. He claws at the edge of the floor while below the foundation. Danny is equally

frightened. He collects his wits about him, and tries to help Joe. Danny slips, loses his grip and Joe tumbles into the floor. The light fades and Joe disappears.

Thus begins the tale of rescue, scientific analysis and a chase through another dimension. Professors Bullfinch, Grimes and Miller, along with several graduate students with a background in theoretical physicists from Midston University (and extensive, sensitive equipment) explore the rip in the room at the next meteor shower. Their adventures take them through a most unique planet: one with a trinary sun system and several moons, eclipses of scintillating colors produced by them, gravitational effects unlike Earth's, and biological growths most unusual for the researchers on Earth to ponder over. Perhaps most intriguingly of all: they discover intelligent life.

And then there's Joe. Living in the new world, experiencing the new dimension. Immensely glad to see his friend and the others, Joe, suddenly homesick, aspires to go home.

Several researchers back at Joe's house on Earth wait for the hole in the room to form again, so any safe rescue of all them can be effected. A meteorite storm (the following month on Earth) again elicits the fabric of space to become flexible. The hole forms, where Joe's room used to be. The rescuers are ready this time. Wearing harnesses and held fast to Earth-bound anchors, they see the travelers attempting to come home. A rescue plan is put into action and belaying lines are strewn from Earth passing into this "door" to the other side, in an attempt to bring Joe and the others home.

A chase ensues. Chaos and confusion reign as everyone tries to rush Joe safely back to his home on Earth. Two of the researchers do not make it back. The door closes, and they are lost forever, but where? Professor Miller attempts to explain the physical laws of this flexible fabric opening and closing to them.