

THE DIAMOND PARALLEX

Elizabeth Stanger

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1st Place

Youth Division

It all started in 2047 when I was in eighth grade. Miss Beckett had announced an optional science fair project. As soon as the words left her grotesquely large mouth, I glanced over to Miriella Caselli and she looked at me.

“I trust Oakley Hartman and Miriella Caselli will be working together?” It wasn’t much of a question. We had always worked together, ever since the “N is for Noodle” project in kindergarten and we loved to go beyond what was required. We just worked well together and people would tease us about it. Even teachers. I didn’t think that there was a problem with having a girl as your best friend.

Miriella and I daydreamed through our classes, thinking of a science project. I could not focus on any of my classes, not even orchestra, which was my

favorite because I didn't have to load my head with new facts, every second of class.

I came up with the idea of a machine that could view the future without actually traveling there. It became obvious that we would need more than one year.

Soon, Miriella suggested a super computer, but instead of a screen, it would have a balloon attached to it. If you pressed your face into the balloon you would see a futuristic image after stating where and when you wanted to view. That's just what we tried to build. We made the machine, but couldn't get it to predict the future.

"How are we going to do this?" Miriella contemplated as we sat staring at the machine in my room. It was perfectly built with a metal base and a clear balloon that looked like it could float away any minute, connected to the three dimensional, trapezoidal body.

"I don't know!" I complained. "It's cool watching *Zombie's Apprentice* on the balloon, but it's not the future."

Inspiration came in History class of all places. Mr. Gibson had said, “We remember the past to learn for the present and future. We learn so we won’t repeat mistakes.” You know that’s what history teachers *always* say.

We loaded the machine with history files, encyclopedia entries, and geographic information. The machine could then find patterns in the past to predict future events.

“This isn’t specific enough,” I said as I watched humans being confused through the balloon. We knew there would always be confusion. “It’s as believable as a fortune teller; it’s extremely vague.”

“What if?” Miriella muttered. “What do you think about this, Oakley? What if we transferred human thought to the machine?”

“Yeah! It could read human feeling and past experience to predict actions! But how?”

“Well, that’s an issue.” We sat pondering our predicament. Miriella spoke once more, “I think we could make stickers with a tiny robot on them, or something, that’s small enough to travel through the skin. Then it would go to the brain to collect information that could be sent back to the machine.”

I was in awe. Miriella always was the genius of the grade. “That was fast thinking! Way to go!” I high-fived her.

We purchased stickers from “Adhesives Incorporated”. They were circular stickers with diamond designs on them. Using microscopes and various tools, we created tiny robots that could send information to the machine. They looked something like tiny Frisbees, but were so minuscule that they looked like a grain of silver salt if you weren’t looking through a lens.

“So,” I started, “I know the stickers are sticky, but will the mini-bots stay stuck to them?”

“No, we’re going to use gallium,” Miriella replied confidently.

“Oh, of course... gallium”

She giggled, recognizing my utter confusion. “It’s a metallic element. It has a melting point of approximately 85.6 degrees Fahrenheit, so we can melt it with our hands. Then, we’ll put the mini-bots on the sticky side of the sticker and pour a small dot of liquid gallium on top before it hardens. After the gallium refreezes, we’ll be able to use the exposed sticky part to attach to the skin. When on a body, the gallium will melt again, but stay under the sticker, and the mini-bot will go

into the body through a pore. Then, we will send the mini-bot to collect information from the brain.”

“Wow, you are amazing Miriella! You thought of that so quickly.”

She smiled. This was going to be awesome. I didn’t need to see the future to know that.

We made ten stickers at first. The gallium worked just as planned and was extremely entertaining to play around with.

“Okay,” said Miriella. “We’ll try this first.” She applied one sticker to her wrist and I did the same.

“The gallium should be melted by now,” I stated about five minutes later. “Let’s see if we can predict something.” We looked around the room.

“All right,” said Miriella, “I’ll go grab a piece of jewelry next door and in three minutes I’ll come back wearing something.”

“Okay!” I smiled excitedly. I walked over to the balloon part of the machine and peered in after saying, “Three minutes, my room.” I viewed Miriella walking back in the room with a dragonfly necklace circling her neck. If this worked, we would be incredibly famous.

Three minutes passed and Miriella walked back in with the dragonfly necklace on. The blue of the slender, insect body accentuated Miriella's turquoise irises.

"Did it work?"

"Yes!" I shouted.

We were ecstatic, dancing and jumping around the room. Miriella looked at me. "This is award worthy!" She kissed me. My eyes widened showing my surprise. I'd never expect her to do that.

"I'm sorry, it just happened," she said. "I didn't even want to kiss you."

"You're fine," I replied, attempting to laugh off the tension.

"So what should we name this fantastic machine?" Miriella questioned.

"Oh, I've been thinking about this! We should call it 'The Diamond Parallax'," I said while doing goofy jazz hands. "The 'diamond' comes from the sticker designs and the 'parallax' sounds like parallel because it's like we are parallel to the future when we gaze into the balloon." I stared off into the distance to add effect.

“I like it,” Miriella grinned, “We’ve finally finished this project after three whole years!”

We gave our stickers to the whole high school, although we had to make more. We won the science fair towards the end of eleventh grade on the national level and world leaders wanted a part in the project, so we distributed stickers around the globe.

We predicted what Angelina Oliver would wear to school, what new songs would be on the radio, when we’d have pop quizzes, and much more. We even saw what the mystery meat was made out of in the cafeteria. You do not want to know what goes into that, or eat it for that matter.

The world loved us. We received millions of dollars and numerous awards, but it soon became apparent that something was wrong. I looked into the future one Saturday night and saw destruction within the next week. There would be disaster on the next Friday. Countries were bombing other countries. The United Kingdom was conquering the earth to be theirs.

I showed Miriella and we warned the president. He contacted the UK, but they said they had no plans to do any such thing, “We are strictly a no violence

zone, unless absolutely necessary,” and we knew it was true because the president was using a lie detecting hologram.

Other strange things were happening too. Miriella came to my door on Monday and said, “Oakley, I’m doing things I don’t want to do, but I can’t stop.”

“What are you addicted to?”

“No,” she laughed, “it’s not that. I’ve started ignoring my family altogether.”

“So, stop.” I was confused.

“I can’t. I think...” she paused.

“What?”

“You’re going to say that I’m crazy, but I think the Diamond Parallelex is starting to control the human race. It’s choosing a lot of our choices, not just predicting them. Soon, it might control all of our actions.”

My eyes went wide. “We might have just invented the end of the world,” I thought. With all the destruction that would happen on Friday, Miriella kissing me, and now ignoring her family, it did make sense. “Oh man!” I yelled.

Miriella ran inside to the machine and tried to jump on it, but she couldn't. "It won't let us destroy it! It's going to take over the world!" She was shouting uncontrollably by now. "It's interacted with our DNA! Why did we build this?!"

The United Kingdom was going to destroy us in less than a week and I didn't want to look into the future anymore; I was afraid of what I'd see. We ran DNA tests, but we couldn't conclude anything. Everyone we knew was being controlled by our machine.

"Oakley, if someone could destroy the Diamond Parallax, it would probably kill everyone connected with the mini-bots. Everybody that we gave a sticker to, would die." Miriella told me on Thursday as she sat, blankly staring at the wall with her hands wrapped around her knees.

"That's almost everyone." I replied.

"Or else a time lapse would occur and we'd go back in time to before we built this."

"That would be good!"

"But only the person who destroyed the Parallax would remember this future. We might just rebuild this monster."

I sighed. “You know, I always thought those robots-taking-over-movies were possible, but I imagined them torturing us and stuff, not mind controlling us.”

“I know, me too.”

We were doomed and only we knew it. The president had dismissed us right after the UK passed the lie detector test.

On Friday morning Miriella ran to my house and we sat in my room.

“Oakley, we’re going to die,” she sobbed as she hugged me, “and we are responsible for the deaths of almost everyone now!”

I thought harder than I ever had before. “Miriella...what if some people have different DNA sequences and aren’t affected?”

“Well, that would be a miracle, but we won’t find those unaffected people in time!” She was wailing.

I’d been thinking about this all night. It’s hard to sleep when you know your country is going to be attacked the following day. “We never tested my DNA and I haven’t made any choices I didn’t desire.”

She looked up at me with her damp, blue eyes. They looked bluer when tears coated her lashes. “You’re immune! Break it right now!”

“I can’t.”

“Why not? You can’t go back on this! We’re going to die.”

“Miriella, I might kill you, the president, our parents, and everyone else with mini-bots in their bodies. I can’t be a murderer.”

A distant explosion sounded.

“Please, we’re going to be bombed anyway. You’re the hero. It might just create a time lapse and save us all.” And she kissed me once more. “That kiss was my choice.” Apparently kisses make you feel stronger. I never realized that before.

I breathed in. “Okay.”

“You have to tell me about this if you go back to eighth grade.”

“Oh no, Miss Beckett again! That will be horrible!”

“Just go before I’m forced to kill you or something,” she laughed and cried simultaneously.

I nodded and jumped, popping the balloon and smashing the circuitry. Brilliant blue light surrounded me in the form of a tornado. It felt like I was in a giant storm cloud and light was emanating from the darkness, creating a type of thunder I had never experienced before.

Now, here I am, back in 2047. I am telling of the future as if it's my past. I'm going to tell Miriella about the future and she'll probably think I'm insane, but I promised in the past...I mean the future. We cannot repeat that future again.