

# Scandal in the 4<sup>th</sup> Dimension

by A. R. Long

**I**N BEHALF OF my roommate, Felix Graham, who has been unjustly accused of everything from lunacy to the attempted murder of Professor Lynn Boswell, and for love of our Alma Mater, about whose fair name senseless scandal has been circulating, I wish to set down a true account of all that took place in what the newspapers have termed "The Fourth Dimension Mystery." My account is that of an eyewitness; at least of those parts of it which are not were told to me by the principal actor, Felix himself. It all began with Felix's phenomenal ability in the field of mathematics; that and the professor's research work. That it nearly ended with the professor's losing his chair at the university and Felix's being expelled is merely incidental; at least on the professor's part.

From the first, Felix had been the professor's star student. So exceptional was he that he not only turned in perfect classwork, but he frequently went to the professor's home to work with him on special experiments in the realms of higher mathematics. Such application on the part of an undergrad was phenomenal, and it held sway as the class mystery until the night of the junior prom. Then Felix appeared with the professor's very attractive daughter, Betty; and the mystery was solved.

Professor Boswell's chief hobby was the fourth dimension. It was

his pet belief that objects in, or passing into, that dimension possessed invisibility.

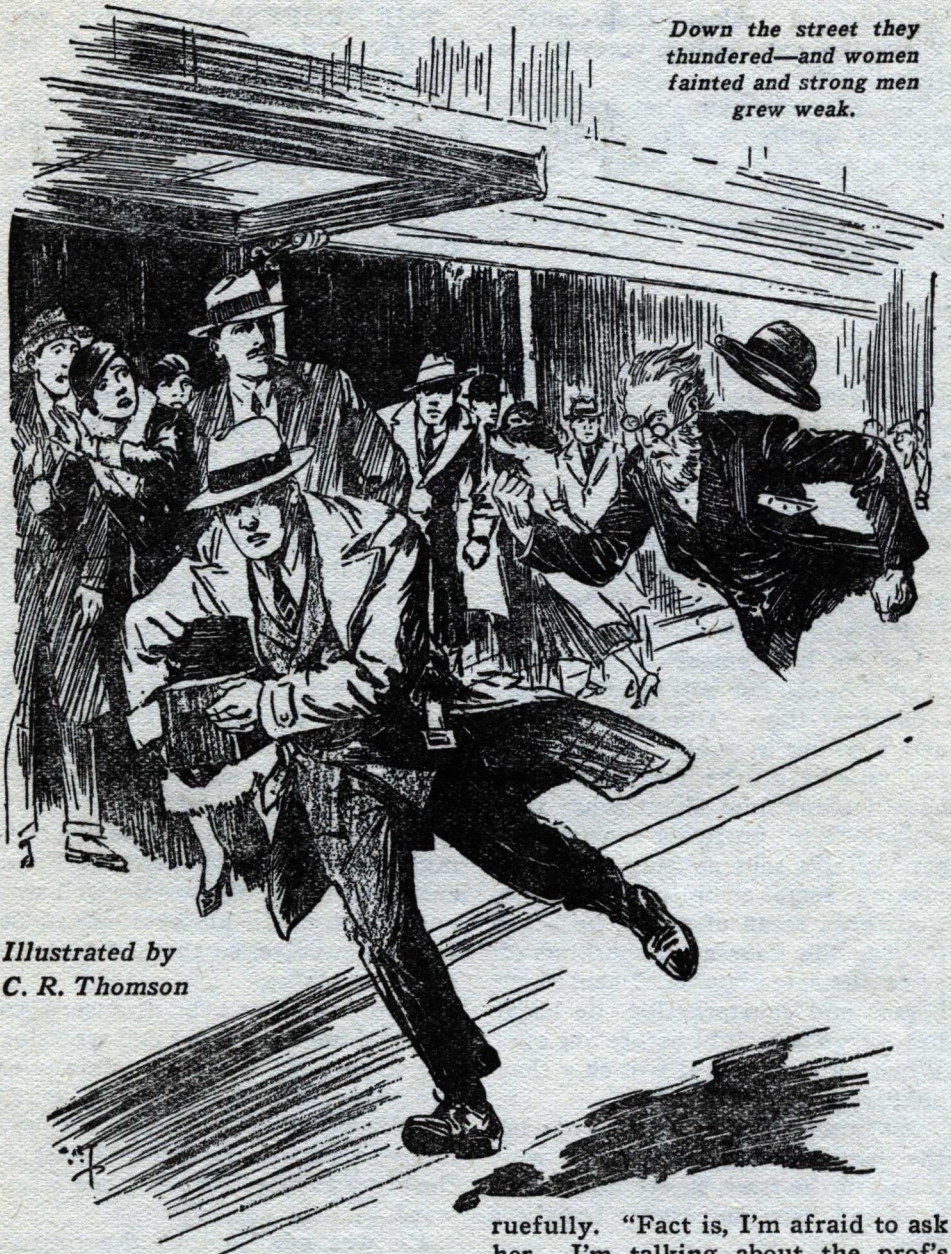
"Visibility flows in dimensional waves," he would argue. "Take the first dimension, that of length. We can see length only with relation to width, which at once throws our object into the second dimension. Take away width, and it becomes invisible, the same as if it had no dimension. Now let us take the second dimension, the plane. We cannot deny its visibility. The wave is rising. But now consider the third dimension, the cube. You may think you are seeing its three dimensions, but what you are really doing is combining two slightly different images or planes. The wave is declining. Notice that the dimensions have gone in two's; two invisible and two visible. And now we come to the fourth dimension." Here he would pause dramatically. "Can any one give me a reason why this should not conform to the rule of two?"

Nobody ever could, so the professor invariably won the day.

For some time he had been seeking a means whereby a three-dimensional object could demonstrate the fourth dimension. Felix, we knew, had been working with him; but whether this was due to a belief in the possibility of the project, or simply to be near Betty Boswell, it is hard to say.

One evening he returned from the Boswell home with a look on his

Down the street they  
thundered—and women  
fainted and strong men  
grew weak.



Illustrated by  
C. R. Thomson

face of mingled awe, triumph, and incredulity.

"Alec," he said solemnly, "it's happened."

"What has?" I asked. "Has Betty accepted you?"

"Not yet," he admitted, a trifle

ruefully. "Fact is, I'm afraid to ask her. I'm talking about the prof's experiment. He's found the fourth dimension, and it is the realm of invisibility."

"Tell that to the freshmen," I scoffed.

"But it's so; he disappeared right before my eyes."

"Felix," I asked suspiciously, "where were you before you went to Boswell's?"

"No, Alec; I've cut that stuff out." He was deadly serious. "When I say he disappeared, I mean it. By the application of certain mathematical formulas, a man can make himself——"

"Forget it and go to bed," I advised. "You'll feel better in the morning."

The next day Professor Boswell announced his discovery to the university. But when he attempted to explain it to his brother professors, he met with unexpected failure; none of them could grasp it. The only person able to comprehend it was Felix, who, to the professor's great delight, not only understood it, but was able to demonstrate it.

Let me here remark that I shall never forget—nor will several others—the first time Felix exercised his new learning in public. A group of the fellows at the frat house had been joshing him about what they called "The professor's vanishing act." Felix said nothing, but after making some complicated calculations on a scrap of paper, he began to pace the floor as if marking off some intricate diagram. Then, to our horror and consternation, he began to fade, go out, right before our eyes. When he returned, it was to a thoroughly chastened group.

No one ventured a comment; but the next morning three flasks were found in the trash barrel, and a chap who had been an atheist bought a Bible.

Shortly after this, Felix, having taken his fate in his hands, spoke to Betty Boswell of his feelings for her; and she, to his amazement and delight, was not displeased. In fact she gave him permission to speak to the professor upon the subject.

THE PROFESSOR, however, was not in accord with the proposal. He had no objections to Felix as a member of the human race, but as a son-in-law—well, that was different. He could not permit his daughter to marry a penniless student with no better prospects than an instructorship at the university. Felix became eloquent, and Betty became tearful; but to no purpose; the professor was serenely obdurate.

Had he grown violently angry, there might have been hope; but as it was, things looked pretty black. There is nothing more difficult to combat than a passive attitude. Felix realized this and began to go into a decline, mentally, physically, and morally.

A month passed, and things grew no better. Felix was now wearing his hair long, and was threatening to let his beard grow. I was beginning to wonder seriously if I could prevent his becoming violent before the end of the term, when matters came to an unexpected head.

We were in our room late one evening when the telephone rang. Felix answered it. Professor Boswell was on the wire. In his excitement, he raised his voice, so that I heard his every word:

"Can you come over at once, Graham? Something most embarrassing has happened. I can't explain over the phone. You'll come, won't you?"

Felix promised and, snatching my hat, was off. I now tell this part of the story as he related it to me afterward.

He was admitted to the professor's house by Betty. "Father's in his study," she whispered excitedly as he kissed her. "You'll see what's happened when you go in. And when you do, remember, Felix, it's our chance."

On entering the study, Felix

found the professor seated at his desk. Without rising, Boswell addressed him:

"It was good of you to come so promptly, Graham; I have great need of you. The fact is, I was in the act of passing into the fourth dimension when I—er—made a slight miscalculation just as I was midway. Unfortunately, it prevents my either going on or retracing my steps; so I must ask you to aid me in my difficulty by going over my calculations for me."

He rose and, with evident embarrassment, came around from behind the desk. As he did so, Felix was nearly petrified with amazement; for the professor's nether portions, from the waist down, were missing.

"You see my unhappy state," said Boswell. "Naturally I cannot appear in this condition before the public. Therefore, I must beg your indulgence——" He paused.

"You mean you need my assistance to get back to normal?" asked Felix.

"Precisely!" answered the professor. "It will take but a few minutes. You are the only person who understands my theory, or I would not have troubled you at this unseemly hour."

Felix was thinking fast. Betty's words, "Remember, Felix, it's our chance," returned to him with enlightening force.

"I shall be glad to help you, professor," he replied slowly. "But it is generally accepted that—er—the laborer is worthy of his hire."

Boswell frowned; then he smiled.

"Commercializing on your knowledge, eh?" he commented. "Not so bad, my boy; not so bad. After all, that is the main purpose of knowledge in this generation. What's your price?"

"Your daughter, Betty," answered Felix boldly.

"What?" The word was a hand grenade. Felix did not repeat his answer; he realized that the question was purely rhetorical.

"You have the impertinence to come to my own house and—and blackmail me?"

"No," returned Felix. "You sent for me and asked me the price of my services. If you think it is too high, you need not employ me."

"You—you——"

The sight of the professor's body swelling with anger and gesticulating fiercely while it apparently floated in mid-air was the most bizarre spectacle that Felix ever had witnessed. He decided that he had better leave before the professor either exploded or went soaring up to the ceiling.

Betty was waiting for him in the hall. "What happened?" she demanded.

"He wouldn't give in," said Felix, "but I'm holding out."

"Good!" she approved. "He can't go on indefinitely without any apparent means of support."

Capitulation, however, was furthest from the professor's thoughts. For practical purposes, his legs were as good as ever. If he could avoid attracting attention until he had discovered his miscalculation, he would be all right. The unfortunate part was that, being halfway in the fourth dimension, he was unable to start at the beginning of the process and search methodically for the error. It seemed insurmountable.

It was plain that difficulties were going to arise when he attempted to take charge of his classes. How was he to teach that all of its parts were essential to the whole and expect his students to believe him? He solved the problem at last by going early to the classroom and delivering his lectures while seated at his desk.

THIS SCHEME worked well enough for the first day, but the second day the professor's enthusiasm for his subject betrayed him. Forgetting his unusual state, he rose to illustrate a point on the blackboard. A startled snort from the men and a frightened squeal from the coeds apprised him that all was not well. Turning severely upon the class, he demanded an explanation. He got it from a terrified coed.

"Professor," she gasped, "You've forgotten your—your limbs!"

In confusion, Boswell muttered something about his eternal absent-mindedness and slid into his chair. But the mischief was done. When a little later he inadvertently stamped an invisible foot, three men were seized with cataleptic fits, two coeds fainted, and a third had to be carried out in hysterics.

Now events of this kind cannot go on even in a big university without reaching the ears of those in authority. Accordingly, Boswell received a summons to the office of the dean of his college.

He waited until classes were changing to make his way thither. His lack of legs would be less noticeable in a dense crowd where there were so many legs all scurrying in different directions. It was with a feeling of loss, however, that he found himself alone in the presence of the dean.

"Professor Boswell," began the dean, and stopped, at a loss how to go on. As a matter of fact, he was debating the etiquette of asking the professor to be seated, considering that the professor had apparently no means of doing so. So he changed it to "Please make yourself comfortable, Boswell," and pretended to be busy with some papers on his desk.

When he looked up, the professor seemed to be balancing himself upon

one elbow planted upon a corner of the desk, while his torso floated some four or five inches above the seat of a chair.

"You—er—understand why I have sent for you?" began the dean when he was sure that he could be master of his voice.

"My physical condition, I suppose," replied Boswell timidly.

"Precisely!" The dean was relieved that the professor had taken the necessity for the offensive out of his hands. "My dear Boswell, don't you think that an explanation of your rather extraordinary state should be forthcoming?"

The professor blushed painfully. "It is due to a slight error in my experiments," he began, "an error which I shall correct eventually."

"I'm afraid it is necessary that you correct it immediately," said the dean dryly.

"But it will take time," Boswell protested. "It is a complicated process."

"Cannot young Graham help you? He understands these experiments of yours."

The professor's blush deepened. "Graham refuses to help me unless I pay his price," he admitted.

"And what is his price?" inquired the dean.

"That," replied Professor Boswell with dignity, "I must insist upon withholding, since it is a private matter of my own."

"Very well!" The dean was piqued, not so much by the professor's insubordination as by the rebuff to his curiosity. "In that case I can only ask you to make every effort to return to your ordinary state by to-morrow. Should you fail to do so, I shall feel obliged to put your case before the provost of the university."

Professor Boswell rose—or rather

his torso floated to a higher level—and left the office. He was a worried man.

Meanwhile the dean had summoned Felix.

"Graham," he said, "Professor Boswell has met with an accident in the course of his experiments. I believe that you could help him out."

"Has he sent for me, sir?" asked Felix eagerly, thinking that perhaps the professor had employed the dean as a mediator in a peace overture.

"No," admitted the dean; "he has not. Your aiding him is my idea."

"I am afraid, sir," said Felix, "that the professor would not accept my assistance."

"Why not?"

"He is better able to tell you that himself."

Baffled again! Did they think he was dean of this college for a joke? It was time somebody began to realize that he was in earnest.

"Graham," he said, "it is impossible for a school of the dignity of ours to permit Professor Boswell to go about in his present state. Unfortunately, you are the only person in a position to remedy matters. I shall give you until to-morrow to do so. If you do not, I shall feel obliged to remove your name from the rolls of the university."

**FELIX DEPARTED** in a very uncomfortable frame of mind. If he obeyed the dean, it would cost him Betty; if he did not, it would cost him the university. And without the university, Betty was out of the question. What under heaven was he going to do?

He was debating the question when Betty herself came upon him. She looked grave when he explained the situation to her.

"We must find some way of forcing father to accept your aid," she

said. "We must do something to make life in this state so miserable for him that he will consent to anything to get back to normal."

"Yes," agreed Felix; "but what? I have only until to-morrow to find and do it."

Betty looked thoughtful. Suddenly her attention was attracted by a newsboy shouting the afternoon extra, and her eyes brightened. "Felix," she asked, "have you any friends who are reporters?"

"Sure!" answered Felix. "There's Bill Jones on the *Ledger* and Ted Wilson on the *World*. Why?"

"Because," replied Betty, "they are going to help us out."

Later that afternoon Professor Boswell was visited by two young men—two of his students, probably; he never could remember all the freshmen—who asked innocent questions about mathematics while they used their eyes to good advantage. Then they thanked the professor and left.

That evening the *Ledger* brought out an extra with the startling headline:

UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR  
DISCOVERS DIMENSION  
OF INVISIBILITY.  
PUTS HIS FOOT IN IT.

And the *World* followed with:

NOTED PROFESSOR LEGLESS  
IN FOURTH DIMENSION,  
BUT STILL KICKING.

Betty would not tell Felix what the professor said when he saw these headlines, but Bill Jones told us that he called up the editor of the *Ledger* and used language that moved that expert to admiration.

The next morning a man with a little black box called to see the professor. Betty was not deceived by his story of being an instructor from

a neighboring college, but she showed him—and the little black box—into her father's study.

"Well," began Boswell ungraciously from behind the fortification of his desk, "what can I do for you?"

"A great deal, sir," replied the man, pressing the little box against the pit of his stomach. "I represent the Associated Press; and——"

"What!" The professor's visible portion shot into the air and sailed over the desk. "How dare——"

There was a click in the little black box. "Hold that; hold it just a minute!" begged the man. "I want to get another in case this one doesn't turn out well."

He did not get it. Instead, he got the experience of leaving the house with the assistance of an invisible boot.

Muttering unprintable things, the professor turned to his morning mail. His wild roar as he read the first letter brought Betty on the run.

"Listen to this!" he bellowed. "A vile, sniveling motion-picture company has the nerve to offer me ten thousand dollars for my fourth dimension 'invention' to use in their fool trick photography."

He thumped down the letter and opened another. Again he roared.

"A damned vaudeville company has the audacity to ask me to travel with them—in their disgusting act of sawing a man in half!"

Savagely he tore the letter across and reached for a third. This time he turned purple and choked and sputtered for fully five minutes before articulate speech came to him.

"This is the worst!" he managed at last. "It's—it's from a circus!"

His progress through the rest of his mail resembled a machine gun in action. Betty said nothing when he had finished; there was nothing left to say.

Later in the morning a second visitor called. Since he claimed to be a United States census taker, he had to be admitted. The professor answered his questions civilly, but with the air of a bulldog straining at a leash.

At last the man rose to go; but at the door he turned.

"Just one question about your clothing, professor," he said. "Does it become visible when you take it off at night and invisible when you put it on in the morning, or does it stay——"

He never finished his sentence. As to what stopped him, testimony differs. Some of the neighbors claimed that there was a slight earthquake; others, that some one had thrown an infernal machine into the study.

Witnesses in the street claimed that they saw the door of the professor's house suddenly burst open, and a man, wild-eyed and disheveled, flee through it as if for his life, while after him shot half a man waving frantic arms and emitting a stream of such sulphurous profanity that the atmosphere about him threatened to burst into flame. Down the street the two charged, while women fainted, and strong men grew weak at the sight.

A traffic officer, stunned by what he beheld, confused the semaphore lights, and in half a minute traffic was congested for blocks around. Some one, possibly inspired by the professor's language, sent in a fire alarm, and the clang of the city fire department was added to the commotion.

People came running from all directions. The press of humanity was becoming so great that human life was endangered, and a riot call was sent in. Presently a cordon of police forced its way through the

surging human sea to a telegraph pole at its center, halfway up which a man was clinging desperately, while at its foot ranted the upper half of another man, swearing horribly.

In a few minutes it was all over. One policeman, gripping the upper half of the professor, and another, apparently empty-handed but going through all the antics of a man trying to hold a bucking broncho, climbed into the patrol wagon. The doors were slammed shut, and amid screams of "Felix Graham is responsible for this; I'll kill him!" from inside, the wagon drove off.

FELIX AND I had just returned from morning classes when the dormitory telephone operator, who was talking to a policeman, nodded in our direction.

The policeman came up to us. "Which of you is Felix Graham?" he demanded.

"I am," admitted Felix, "but I don't own a car."

"That's all right," said the policeman. "I'm not here to give you a ticket. What I want to know is, do you know an old guy named Lynn Boswell, that says he's a professor at this college?"

"Professor Boswell of the mathematics department?" asked Felix. "Yes; I know him."

"Well," continued the policeman, "he's down at the station, charged with disturbin' the peace, and wants to see you. Come down and have a look at him. But you'd better not let him get his hands on you, or the

charge might have to be changed to first-degree murder."

Arrived at the jail, Felix was taken to the cell in which sat the professor, at last thoroughly subdued.

"Good morning, sir," said Felix respectfully, diplomatically ignoring the unusual circumstances of their meeting. "You sent for me?"

"Er—yes, Graham; I did," answered Boswell. "As you doubtless remember, I made a slight miscalculation in my fourth-dimensional calculations, which has placed me in—er—a somewhat embarrassing position. While I could find a way out of my difficulty if given proper time, the dean is anxious that matters be remedied at once. Accordingly, I shall require your help. I shall, of course—um—er—recompense you in whatever way you may see fit to demand."

It was unconditional surrender. Felix accepted it like a general and set to work. In a quarter of an hour, under his direction, the professor had become as other men. However, it was not until the dean, to whom Betty went with the whole story, had interceded in his behalf that the charge against him was removed, and he was dismissed with a reprimand.

Betty and Felix announced their engagement the following week. As for the professor, he has turned his attention to the writing of a book in which he is attempting to explain his fourth-dimension theory. He will, however, indulge in no further demonstrations.