



And This Is Laura by Ellen Conford

Subjects: Clairvoyance; Family

Book List: Grade 6

Props: White lab coat, green tie, papers



Laura Hoffmann's family is full of important people. Her mother is a talented and well-known writer. Her father is a famous scientist. And whenever her parents introduce their children to strangers, they begin with, "This is my son, Douglas. He is a gifted pianist. And this is my oldest daughter Jill, who has had the lead in every school play. And this is the baby—Dennis—who can recite every TV commercial he has ever seen. And oh—this—is Laura . . . she's 12."

Laura is convinced that she is a hopeless failure, completely average and uninteresting, until the day she discovers that she has "the gift." It starts out like any other day. There Laura is, just eating lunch with Dennis and her mom, when suddenly she can't hear them talking anymore. Then the scene just sort of fades out and a new scene begins to come into her head. Now Laura sees a room filled with glass jars and beakers. (*Put on white lab coat and green tie*) And there is her father, dressed in his white lab coat. Suddenly another man, wearing a similar lab coat and a green tie, runs into the lab, waving a sheet of paper over his head. (*Wave sheets of paper*) He shows it to Mr. Hoffmann and the two men begin jumping up and down excitedly. Then the scene melts away again. And there Laura is, watching her brother eating a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. What was that all about, she wonders? Well, that afternoon her father comes home from work early, with some very exciting news. His supervisor, Mr. Hacker, had run into the lab earlier today to tell Mr. Hoffmann that he had just made a very important scientific discovery—one that would surely earn them both a prestigious award. Laura is afraid to ask, but she does. "What was Mr. Hacker wearing?"

Her father just stares at her. "A white lab coat and a green tie," he answers. (*Take off lab coat and tie*)

Laura knows now that she has "the gift." The gift of second sight—or ESP. And it doesn't take long for her friend Beth to spread the word around school that Laura is a fortune teller. Pretty soon, everyone in school wants a "reading," and Beth comes up with the idea of charging them money. After all, she says, you can't just give it away! So they set up headquarters in Laura's room. Unfortunately, there is a knock on the door about a week later. It's a policeman—here to inform Laura's parents that what she is doing is illegal, without a business license. Mr. and Mrs. Hoffmann are horrified, of course. And they forbid her to have any more of her "visions." Or else.

So Laura's life goes back to being normal. And boring. And uninteresting. Then one day, her little brother Dennis disappears. One moment he is in the living room watching TV, and the next he is just GONE. Her family calls all the neighbors, and everyone combs the block, but they can't find him anywhere. Finally, in desperation, Laura's mom comes to her. "I know I told you to stop all your fortune telling and your visions, but we need your help this time. Try to find Dennis, Laura, please! Tell us where he is!"

So Laura goes upstairs to her room. She stretches out on her bed and closes her eyes. But this time . . . nothing comes. She can't see anything but the four walls of her own room . . . (*Hold up book*) *And This Is Laura* by Ellen Conford.