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More than 90% of all reported alien abductees are American.

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It's a statistic that skeptics use to argue that the abduction phenomenon is simply a product of our own pop culture and pop psychology.

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Abduction experts counter that the numbers are skewed because abductees in other countries don't always feel free to come forward.

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That was certainly the case for an Australian family who were forced underground after their experience was ridiculed in the press.

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On the afternoon of January 20, 1988, Fay Knowles and her three sons set out from Perth in Western Australia to visit relatives several hundred miles away.

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At dusk they were crossing the Nullarbor Plain, a desolate stretch of road through the Australian desert.

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It was here, as day turned to night, that the Knowles encountered something terrifying that remains unexplained to this day.

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We drove on and this object kept me falling on us and somehow, I don't know how to tell it, but it wasn't actually flying, it was just hovering.

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00:01:06,000 --> 00:01:09,000

It didn't have wings or anything like that, it was just hovering.

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00:01:09,000 --> 00:01:12,000

We nearly died, we thought we were dying.

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00:01:12,000 --> 00:01:15,000

And the faster we went, the faster this object went.

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00:01:16,000 --> 00:01:21,000

The Knowles had experienced abject fear at the hands of an unnatural force.

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00:01:21,000 --> 00:01:30,000

Police offered no explanation and when the family turned to the media for help in finding an answer, the media turned on them.

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00:01:30,000 --> 00:01:36,000

Would you please welcome a couple of people who've seen the life, Fay and Patrick Knowles. What was your first reaction?

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00:01:36,000 --> 00:01:38,000

I thought we were going to die, you know.

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00:01:38,000 --> 00:01:39,000

Did you know what it was?

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00:01:39,000 --> 00:01:40,000

I didn't know.

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00:01:40,000 --> 00:01:42,000

It didn't look like anything you'd ever seen before.

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00:01:42,000 --> 00:01:43,000

No, that's right.

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00:01:43,000 --> 00:01:49,000

The object picked the carer up and mum wound in her window and put her hand out in the roof.

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00:01:49,000 --> 00:01:57,000

So you've been picked up by an alien craft and you've wound down the window, Fay, and put your hand on the roof.

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00:01:57,000 --> 00:01:59,000

I was curious to see what was happening.

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00:02:02,000 --> 00:02:08,000

So you're way off the ground, you've got the alien spacecraft picking you up and you've virtually patted it, haven't you?

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00:02:09,000 --> 00:02:17,000

As this was going on, it was like a really loud sound on top of the inside of the car and it was like a material.

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00:02:17,000 --> 00:02:22,000

It was like a fog that was coming into the car and when the material came in...

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00:02:22,000 --> 00:02:24,000

It was like mum's skin burning.

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00:02:25,000 --> 00:02:33,000

And the media treating the Knowles family was ruthless.

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00:02:33,000 --> 00:02:46,000

I don't think one person honestly asked sensible questions and tried to console these people and seeing the state of anxiety that they were in.

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People would say, you know, you saw things, you're making it up.

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00:02:50,000 --> 00:02:51,000

That's not true.

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00:02:51,000 --> 00:03:01,000

A lot of the interviewers I find and have found make a bit of a joke of it and don't really approach it seriously.

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00:03:01,000 --> 00:03:05,000

Some staining due to soot from outer space, others staining due to terrified passengers.

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00:03:05,000 --> 00:03:13,000

The impression I got on the Knowles case that it was a serious and definite event that happened, experience that they had.

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Here for the first time outside of Australia and without reprisal or ridiculed is the story of what happened on that January night in 1988 as told by the Knowles in their own words.

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I was next to Sean, he was sitting in front driving and I was asleep in the passenger side and Sean goes, wake up, look at this.

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00:03:34,000 --> 00:03:38,000

And he goes, what's the matter? He goes, it looks like a earphone.

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00:03:38,000 --> 00:03:40,000

I said, can't you drive up to it and approach it.

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00:03:40,000 --> 00:03:48,000

And this thing was, at first it was just stopped in the road and we approached it.

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00:03:48,000 --> 00:03:56,000

Yeah, it was more like an egg shape and it had like a yellow center.

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00:03:56,000 --> 00:04:02,000

Next to it, you know, this object appeared back behind us and I said to Sean, come put your foot down, let's get going.

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00:04:02,000 --> 00:04:08,000

And that's when I decided to put my foot down and it just caught up within a matter of seconds.

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00:04:08,000 --> 00:04:14,000

This box hit the back tire like something was trying to blow out the tire like the object behind us.

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00:04:14,000 --> 00:04:16,000

It blew the tire out with like a beam of light.

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00:04:16,000 --> 00:04:20,000

Before we knew it, she just went clunk on the roof of the car.

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00:04:20,000 --> 00:04:24,000

It jumped on the roof of the car and took us up near like that.

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00:04:24,000 --> 00:04:27,000

And as it picked the car up, the car lit up like a microwave.

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00:04:27,000 --> 00:04:30,000

It lit up really bright inside.

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00:04:30,000 --> 00:04:33,000

We heard this great big enormous sound like a motor or something.

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00:04:33,000 --> 00:04:35,000

I don't know what the kids had really had to describe.

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00:04:35,000 --> 00:04:38,000

Like it made us feel like our heads were going to explode.

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00:04:38,000 --> 00:04:44,000

Yeah, we're frying and like our brains been sucked out.

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00:04:44,000 --> 00:04:46,000

Yeah, it was hot.

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00:04:46,000 --> 00:04:55,000

All this junk come inside the car and you know, and at that time it was hard to explain

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00:04:55,000 --> 00:04:58,000

because I kind of barbed length out.

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00:04:58,000 --> 00:05:03,000

As the car was dropping through this object, object slipped off the car.

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00:05:03,000 --> 00:05:06,000

Not long after, you know, it dropped the car.

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00:05:06,000 --> 00:05:13,000

That's when I come out of it and I took off from the car and told them all to jump out.

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00:05:13,000 --> 00:05:18,000

We jumped out the car, ran out to bushes, hit into bushes.

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00:05:18,000 --> 00:05:21,000

And you could see the sting. It was still looking for us.

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00:05:22,000 --> 00:05:25,000

And at the same time, I turned the lights off in the car.

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00:05:25,000 --> 00:05:29,000

And somehow it could not focus on that car.

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00:05:29,000 --> 00:05:33,000

Somehow it was working with our lights.

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00:05:33,000 --> 00:05:37,000

Soon as I turned those lights off, it just could not find us.

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00:05:37,000 --> 00:05:42,000

According to the Knowles family, it was at this point that they experienced

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00:05:42,000 --> 00:05:45,000

what ufologists referred to as missing time.

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00:05:45,000 --> 00:05:50,000

I think we lost about an hour and a half in time.

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00:05:50,000 --> 00:05:56,000

And it's really hard to explain, you know, how long it did take.

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00:05:56,000 --> 00:06:01,000

Local police investigated the incident and found several eyewitnesses

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00:06:01,000 --> 00:06:06,000

who corroborated the strange events on the Nullarbor Plain that night.

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00:06:06,000 --> 00:06:08,000

They were travelling along the road.

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00:06:08,000 --> 00:06:10,000

A bright light appeared in front of the car.

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00:06:10,000 --> 00:06:13,000

Shortly after, the lights appeared behind the car.

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00:06:13,000 --> 00:06:17,000

The car was picked up, on the road, shaken violently.

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00:06:17,000 --> 00:06:19,000

The car was covered in ash.

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00:06:19,000 --> 00:06:21,000

Black ash.

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00:06:21,000 --> 00:06:23,000

What about the people? Were they harmed at all?

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00:06:23,000 --> 00:06:26,000

They weren't harmed, but visibly shaken up.

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00:06:26,000 --> 00:06:30,000

Many people witnessed the Knowles event.

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00:06:30,000 --> 00:06:34,000

And they were from all professions and walks of life.

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00:06:34,000 --> 00:06:37,000

And then they were travelling in different vehicles.

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00:06:37,000 --> 00:06:43,000

So we had people in spotter planes for the tuna boat people.

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00:06:43,000 --> 00:06:49,000

We had the tuna boat people experiencing the urethral light above them.

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00:06:49,000 --> 00:06:52,000

Police investigators and scientists examined the car

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00:06:52,000 --> 00:06:55,000

and analysed the sooty residue found inside.

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00:06:55,000 --> 00:06:58,000

Although their findings were inconclusive,

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00:06:58,000 --> 00:07:01,000

most of the investigators insisted the damage to the vehicle

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00:07:01,000 --> 00:07:06,000

and the tires was caused by some unexplained but natural causes.

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00:07:06,000 --> 00:07:12,000

A lot of the powers that be put it down to the rising sun or Jupiter

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00:07:12,000 --> 00:07:20,000

or these other things which they think ordinary people mistake these things for.

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00:07:20,000 --> 00:07:26,000

But it's their way of getting around it and not having to do anything about it, I think.

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00:07:26,000 --> 00:07:29,000

We just want people to know what happened to us now.

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00:07:29,000 --> 00:07:31,000

We weren't after anything, you know.

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00:07:31,000 --> 00:07:34,000

We just thought it was amazing ourselves.

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00:07:34,000 --> 00:07:37,000

We thought we'd like people to know what happened because it's...

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00:07:37,000 --> 00:07:40,000

To us, you know, it was exciting, plus very frightening.

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00:07:40,000 --> 00:07:46,000

You can't really explain what it's like unless it's actually happened to you like people say.

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00:07:46,000 --> 00:07:51,000

People used to laugh before they made a joke, but now they don't.

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00:07:51,000 --> 00:07:55,000

Since the Knolls experience in 1988 there have been many anonymous reports

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00:07:55,000 --> 00:07:58,000

of mysterious lights hovering over the Knollarber plane.

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00:07:58,000 --> 00:08:03,000

But so far, no one since the Knolls family has been willing to come forward

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00:08:03,000 --> 00:08:05,000

and tell their story publicly.