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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:05,000

I've been around for a while.

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00:00:05,000 --> 00:00:07,000

I've met some interesting people.

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00:00:07,000 --> 00:00:09,000

Done some crazy things.

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00:00:09,000 --> 00:00:15,000

See, you just might think that there's not much that can take me by surprise.

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00:00:15,000 --> 00:00:18,000

You'd be wrong.

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

The world is full of stories,

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00:00:21,000 --> 00:00:25,000

science and things that amaze and confound.

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

Every single day, incredible mysteries that keep me awake at night,

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

some I can answer.

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00:00:31,000 --> 00:00:33,000

Oh, there's just...

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

stuff I logic.

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00:00:35,000 --> 00:00:43,000

Does the human body contain inexplicable mysteries beyond the reach of medical science?

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

In Arkansas, a skydiver plummets to the earth from over 11,000 feet.

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00:00:49,000 --> 00:00:54,000

And the skydiver is the only one that can be found.

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00:00:54,000 --> 00:00:57,000

And somehow survives.

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

How?

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00:01:00,000 --> 00:01:04,000

In New York, a man is vaporized as he lies in bed.

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00:01:04,000 --> 00:01:07,000

Can humans spontaneously combust?

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00:01:07,000 --> 00:01:13,000

I've been to fires before too, and I've never seen anything like that.

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00:01:13,000 --> 00:01:18,000

And in England, a young girl becomes supercharged with electricity.

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00:01:18,000 --> 00:01:21,000

Is she a walking power grid?

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00:01:21,000 --> 00:01:24,000

She wouldn't touch me if she was switching the light switch on

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00:01:24,000 --> 00:01:27,000

because a jolt of electricity would go through her.

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00:01:27,000 --> 00:01:30,000

Yeah.

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00:01:30,000 --> 00:01:33,000

It's a weird world, and I love it.

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00:01:33,000 --> 00:01:48,000

The Human Body

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00:01:48,000 --> 00:01:51,000

The human body.

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00:01:51,000 --> 00:01:53,000

Remarkable, isn't it?

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00:01:53,000 --> 00:01:59,000

Well, this one is anyway just a canted shot of me at the beach.

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

But this is what we all look like underneath.

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00:02:04,000 --> 00:02:07,000

Unless you believe reincarnation, we only get one of these.

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00:02:07,000 --> 00:02:12,000

But do we really appreciate just how incredible these things that carry us around are,

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00:02:12,000 --> 00:02:15,000

or do we take them for granted?

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00:02:15,000 --> 00:02:21,000

You see, many believe we're much more than just skin and bones.

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00:02:21,000 --> 00:02:27,000

That there's things going on inside us that modern medicine may never be able to explain.

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00:02:27,000 --> 00:02:29,000

Is it true?

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00:02:36,000 --> 00:02:39,000

Do you think they can help me with my indigestion?

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00:02:44,000 --> 00:02:47,000

October 9th, 2005.

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00:02:47,000 --> 00:02:50,000

Siloam Springs, Arkansas.

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00:02:54,000 --> 00:02:56,000

Hi, what's your name?

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00:02:57,000 --> 00:03:03,000

Adrenaline junkie, Shayna Richardson, is about to attempt her first solo skydive.

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

Alright, Shayna.

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00:03:08,000 --> 00:03:12,000

Shayna's husband, Rick West, was also her jump instructor.

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00:03:12,000 --> 00:03:16,000

I was very confident that she was well prepared for this.

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00:03:17,000 --> 00:03:21,000

Rick has a helmet camera to capture Shayna's jump.

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00:03:21,000 --> 00:03:28,000

Together, they will free fall from an altitude of 11,000 feet, more than two miles high.

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00:03:31,000 --> 00:03:34,000

At first, things go great.

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00:03:34,000 --> 00:03:39,000

We exited the plane well, and she did a perfect dive.

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00:03:41,000 --> 00:03:47,000

Rick and Shayna are plummeting to earth at terminal velocity, 120 miles per hour.

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00:03:51,000 --> 00:03:55,000

After 30 seconds of free fall, Shayna pulls the ripcord.

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00:03:56,000 --> 00:03:59,000

And as you see in the video, I say...

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00:04:05,000 --> 00:04:10,000

I had no idea at this time that she was in any kind of trouble until I look up.

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00:04:12,000 --> 00:04:15,000

What Rick sees fills him with horror.

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00:04:15,000 --> 00:04:20,000

On her very first jump, his wife's main parachute has failed.

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

Desperate, Shayna releases it and tries her reserve.

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

And then her reserve, it didn't work out so well.

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00:04:29,000 --> 00:04:35,000

Unable to help, Rick realizes he is watching what will be his wife's final moments.

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

Shayna is spinning out of control.

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00:04:40,000 --> 00:04:44,000

8,000 feet from the ground, Shayna's reserve parachute is tangled.

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00:04:44,000 --> 00:04:50,000

She is now plummeting uncontrollably towards the ground at over 70 feet per second.

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00:04:52,000 --> 00:04:54,000

Panic sets in.

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

She kept spinning and kept spinning and spinning.

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

And the closer and closer we get, I'm seeing cars, semis, the road, buildings.

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00:05:04,000 --> 00:05:06,000

She was heading right into you.

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00:05:09,000 --> 00:05:13,000

Helpless, Rick can only watch as Shayna spins towards certain death.

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00:05:15,000 --> 00:05:20,000

It was horrible for me. It was just a sickening feeling.

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00:05:25,000 --> 00:05:30,000

To Rick's horror, Shayna slams directly into a parking lot.

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00:05:34,000 --> 00:05:38,000

I was sure she was dead or gonna be dead real quick.

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00:05:39,000 --> 00:05:41,000

As soon as I landed, I turned the camera off.

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00:05:41,000 --> 00:05:46,000

I was just trying to get to her in time to tell her that I love her and I'm sorry.

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00:05:48,000 --> 00:05:51,000

She was lash-a-lan in a pool of blood.

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00:05:51,000 --> 00:05:58,000

Her bottom lip had been busted, peeled out, split above her nose, was wide open.

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00:05:58,000 --> 00:06:00,000

You could almost see the bone.

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00:06:00,000 --> 00:06:04,000

But something miraculous has happened.

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00:06:04,000 --> 00:06:07,000

I really did firmly believe that I was going to die.

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00:06:09,000 --> 00:06:14,000

Despite smashing into asphalt from a height of two miles, Shayna is somehow alive.

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00:06:14,000 --> 00:06:18,000

My face hit a split second before the rest of my body did.

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00:06:18,000 --> 00:06:23,000

The doctors described my facial fractures as kind of an eggshell effect.

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00:06:25,000 --> 00:06:29,000

I broke pretty much every bone in my face, my ocular sockets, my sinus cavity.

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00:06:29,000 --> 00:06:34,000

I knocked out the five teeth in my mouth, so they had to completely rebuild my face.

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

I broke my pelvis in three places, I broke my right leg.

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

Shayna's doctors can't comprehend how she survived her fall, but then their jaws drop even lower.

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00:06:43,000 --> 00:06:46,000

Shayna's not the only survivor.

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00:06:46,000 --> 00:06:49,000

The very first thing I remember hearing from the doctors was about the baby.

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00:06:50,000 --> 00:06:53,000

Unknown to both Shayna and Rick, she's pregnant.

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00:06:53,000 --> 00:06:56,000

Miraculously, both mother and baby survive.

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00:06:56,000 --> 00:06:59,000

Their son Tanner is now five.

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00:06:59,000 --> 00:07:07,000

Somehow, this remarkable story has a happy ending, but the doctors are still trying to figure it out.

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00:07:08,000 --> 00:07:13,000

The doctors in that hospital just said, this is amazing, this is a miracle. I don't understand.

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00:07:15,000 --> 00:07:20,000

So how are Shayna and her unborn child able to survive such an unbelievable fall?

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00:07:20,000 --> 00:07:23,000

What had happened that saved their lives?

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00:07:24,000 --> 00:07:29,000

Dr. Cris Hart is an expert in aviation accident investigation.

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00:07:29,000 --> 00:07:35,000

He's extensively studied Shayna's accident and has reached a controversial conclusion.

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00:07:35,000 --> 00:07:40,000

I think the way she hit the ground is critically important for why she survived.

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00:07:40,000 --> 00:07:48,000

It's believed that Shayna face planted into the ground, but Hart disagrees.

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00:07:48,000 --> 00:07:51,000

Looking at the video, I don't believe she hit the ground face first.

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

Clearly, she's at about a 45 to 60 degree angle.

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00:07:55,000 --> 00:08:01,000

So when she finally makes contact with the ground, she contacts feet first, then legs, then side, and then finally head.

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00:08:01,000 --> 00:08:07,000

The injuries to her pelvis and to her legs are very common when someone lands feet first.

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00:08:07,000 --> 00:08:10,000

If it's a head first injury, you typically don't see those types of injuries.

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00:08:11,000 --> 00:08:16,000

Hart believes that the angle of Shayna's fall was critical to her survival,

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00:08:16,000 --> 00:08:22,000

as it enabled her to inadvertently perform a skydiving safety technique.

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00:08:22,000 --> 00:08:28,000

I think just the laws of physics dictated that the way her body hit was very similar to a parachute landing fall.

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00:08:29,000 --> 00:08:36,000

The parachute landing fall is a technique for improving the odds of surviving a hard landing without injury.

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00:08:36,000 --> 00:08:41,000

The technique is essentially to distribute the force of impact over five body points.

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00:08:41,000 --> 00:08:48,000

You start with contacting on the balls of the feet, and then the calves, then the thighs, then the hips, and then the side of the back.

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00:08:48,000 --> 00:08:52,000

You can think of the parachute landing fall as almost being like a bumper on a car.

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00:08:52,000 --> 00:08:56,000

The head is what you want to protect. The body acts as the shock absorber.

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00:08:57,000 --> 00:08:59,000

But what about the damage to Shayna's face?

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00:08:59,000 --> 00:09:05,000

How could a successful parachute landing fall have resulted in such horrific injuries?

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00:09:05,000 --> 00:09:10,000

Even though she didn't hit face first, her body was traveling at a very high rate of speed.

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00:09:10,000 --> 00:09:13,000

She sustained injuries to every part of her body that hit the ground.

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00:09:13,000 --> 00:09:19,000

Her face was probably the last thing that hit the ground, but it was still moving fast enough to cause some pretty serious injuries.

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00:09:20,000 --> 00:09:25,000

21-year-old Shayna Richardson experiences every skydiver's nightmare.

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00:09:25,000 --> 00:09:31,000

When her parachutes fail, she slams into the ground from 11,000 feet.

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00:09:31,000 --> 00:09:35,000

But amazingly, Shayna survives. How?

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00:09:35,000 --> 00:09:43,000

Sophie Burdell is an author. She believes Shayna's survival was quite literally a miracle.

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00:09:43,000 --> 00:09:51,000

To me, her survival is incomprehensible, except by divine intervention.

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00:09:51,000 --> 00:09:54,000

It had to be the hand of an angel.

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00:09:54,000 --> 00:09:58,000

Angels save people from possible death in any way that it can be done.

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00:09:58,000 --> 00:10:03,000

Sometimes it's by deflecting a bullet, and sometimes it's by preventing a car accident.

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00:10:03,000 --> 00:10:07,000

They can change all the physical laws of the universe.

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00:10:07,000 --> 00:10:12,000

No doubt they do good work, but how exactly did an angel save Shayna?

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00:10:12,000 --> 00:10:20,000

It is not difficult for me to believe that an angel carried Shayna down or broke her fall,

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00:10:20,000 --> 00:10:26,000

so that she would not fall as swiftly as she should have.

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00:10:26,000 --> 00:10:31,000

It's an interesting theory, but is it supported by scientific proof?

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00:10:31,000 --> 00:10:41,000

Lots of times miracles occur with scientific explanations and are just as miraculous.

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00:10:41,000 --> 00:10:47,000

I don't think that science and miracles are mutually exclusive.

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00:10:47,000 --> 00:10:56,000

And I think that there is a spiritual dimension that we live in as fish live in water.

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00:10:56,000 --> 00:11:01,000

I can't imagine what would have happened if an angel had not saved Shayna that day.

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00:11:01,000 --> 00:11:06,000

There would have been a horrible, horrible accident.

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00:11:06,000 --> 00:11:10,000

Wow, this is incredible.

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00:11:10,000 --> 00:11:15,000

Instead of being splattered all over the parking lot, Sophie thinks an angel swooped down at the last moment.

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00:11:15,000 --> 00:11:20,000

It's now taking hold of Shayna, breaking her fall. Could this really be possible?

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00:11:20,000 --> 00:11:26,000

Regardless of your beliefs, one has to admit that Shayna's story is, well, miraculous.

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00:11:26,000 --> 00:11:32,000

But could a guardian angel have slowed Shayna's fall, sparing her life for the life of her unborn son?

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00:11:32,000 --> 00:11:38,000

And if so, don't they deserve some thanks?

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00:11:38,000 --> 00:11:44,000

There is no evidence that guardian angels exist. There is no empirical evidence for it.

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00:11:44,000 --> 00:11:51,000

It's just people trying to put meaning onto things they don't understand.

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00:11:51,000 --> 00:11:55,000

It's the 21st century, for goodness sake. We need to move on.

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00:11:55,000 --> 00:12:00,000

John Leach is a survival psychologist with the Norwegian Armed Forces.

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

He believes the key to Shayna's survival lies in a theory that's far more downward.

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

If a person is falling without a parachute, after about 12 seconds they'll reach the maximum rate of descent.

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00:12:12,000 --> 00:12:16,000

And it doesn't matter how long they're falling for, they will stay at 120 miles an hour.

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00:12:16,000 --> 00:12:21,000

If Shayna had hit the ground at normal terminal velocity of 120 miles an hour,

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00:12:21,000 --> 00:12:26,000

she would have had a very small chance of surviving that, especially on the sort of ground that she hit.

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00:12:26,000 --> 00:12:31,000

Now, there are cases of people who have survived from terminal velocity,

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00:12:31,000 --> 00:12:38,000

but usually it's because they've gone into soft ground, they've gone into mud, they've gone into

snow, they've gone into trees.

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00:12:38,000 --> 00:12:43,000

So there's something that's actually decelerated their speed at the last minute.

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00:12:43,000 --> 00:12:50,000

But if her chances of surviving were so low, how is it that Shayna and Tanner are still with us?

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00:12:50,000 --> 00:12:57,000

You can see from the video that although the parachute was malfunctioning, it wasn't completely dysfunctional.

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00:12:57,000 --> 00:13:02,000

In other words, it was still acting as a sort of parachute and providing a degree of drag.

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00:13:02,000 --> 00:13:09,000

So instead of hitting the ground at 120 miles an hour, which is a terminal velocity for somebody travelling without a parachute,

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00:13:09,000 --> 00:13:13,000

she hit the ground at 50 miles an hour according to the records.

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00:13:15,000 --> 00:13:19,000

Was Shayna's survival connected to how fast she hit the ground?

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00:13:21,000 --> 00:13:24,000

Or did something else save her?

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00:13:24,000 --> 00:13:34,000

Age plays a role in survival for various reasons and a number of studies involving analysis of, for example, road traffic accidents at different speeds

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00:13:34,000 --> 00:13:43,000

shows that one of the best ages for surviving an impact of 50 miles an hour is Shayna's age, so somewhere between the late teens and early twenties.

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00:13:44,000 --> 00:13:54,000

For each the final factor in Shayna's survival is the angle of impact, though with a very different take to Dr. Chris Hart.

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00:13:54,000 --> 00:14:03,000

For an entity who should be deploying any parachute landing technique, the parachute was moving her into a more horizontal position

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00:14:03,000 --> 00:14:08,000

and the injuries that she sustained is consistent with that type of impact on the ground.

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00:14:08,000 --> 00:14:16,000

The fact that she hit the ground more or less horizontally rather than on her head or through her feet also increased her chances of survival.

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00:14:16,000 --> 00:14:27,000

For each, the combination of a partially affected parachute, Shayna's age, and landing almost flat to the ground is enough to leave her battered but still breathing.

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00:14:27,000 --> 00:14:35,000

All these factors together all contribute to her chances of surviving, so there's nothing miraculous about it, it's straightforward physics.

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00:14:36,000 --> 00:14:41,000

I did jump one more time. When Tanner was six weeks old, I went and jumped again. I did a tandem jump.

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00:14:41,000 --> 00:14:53,000

I landed, took my gear off, grabbed my son and I haven't been back up. I love the sport, I love the

thrill of it, but my kids give me a much greater thrill and I don't have them anymore. I can't do it.

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00:14:54,000 --> 00:15:09,000

Can Shayna's remarkable survival be explained by physics? Or did divine intervention play a part? Or she's saved by a higher power? Or did she just get lucky and deploy the parachute landing fall?

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00:15:09,000 --> 00:15:17,000

For now, it will remain a headscratcher that's most definitely weird. Oh, what?

169

00:15:23,000 --> 00:15:43,000

In upstate New York, a man is incinerated in his own bed. With no plausible explanation, investigators are left with a terrifying question. Can we spontaneously combust?

170

00:15:43,000 --> 00:15:49,000

When someone is cremated, there's probably more remains after that cremation than it was at this incident.

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00:15:49,000 --> 00:16:03,000

You know, fire is a wonderful thing. We've harnessed its power in so many ways we'd be lost without it. It does everything from keeping us warm to one of my favorites. Cooking up a storm.

172

00:16:03,000 --> 00:16:16,000

Well, that's, if you can get started, of course. Think about fire. As well as being our friend, it can be our worst enemy.

173

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

Does anyone smell anything that...

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00:16:21,000 --> 00:16:41,000

In 1986, college student Ray Harlan was visiting his father Jack, a coroner in New York State, when the phone rang. It would lead them on the most mysterious and bizarre journey of their lives.

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00:16:41,000 --> 00:16:51,000

My dad owns a local funeral home, and he was also at the county coroner. They just said that there was an unattended death, and one of us always went with him to help him with removals.

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00:16:54,000 --> 00:17:05,000

The deceased is a 58-year-old retired fireman, George Mott. When Ray and Jack arrive at Mott's house, everything seems normal.

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00:17:05,000 --> 00:17:10,000

It was just a typical home in the back roads of the Adirondacks.

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00:17:10,000 --> 00:17:15,000

But nothing has prepared the Harlons for what they find inside.

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00:17:15,000 --> 00:17:22,000

The first words out of the state trooper's mouth to my dad was, I don't think you're going to need your stretcher for this one.

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00:17:22,000 --> 00:17:29,000

Entering the house, Ray and Jack notice something that tells them this is no ordinary death.

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00:17:29,000 --> 00:17:40,000

There was a thin black film covering everything. It was like a dust powder. It was strange because it looked like there was a fire, but there was nothing really charred.

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00:17:40,000 --> 00:17:48,000

Where is George Mott? As they move deeper into the house, they're about to make a shocking discovery.

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00:17:48,000 --> 00:17:52,000

When we walked into the bedroom, we could see where Mr. Mott was laying.

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00:17:53,000 --> 00:18:00,000

In my lifetime growing up in the funeral home, I've probably seen over 1,000 bodies in various conditions.

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00:18:00,000 --> 00:18:04,000

I've been to fires before too, and there's nothing like that.

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00:18:04,000 --> 00:18:08,000

It was a perfect outline of his body burned into mattress.

187

00:18:08,000 --> 00:18:16,000

And the only thing that was left of him was his head, a few ribs in his right foot. Everything else was gone.

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00:18:16,000 --> 00:18:26,000

What happened to George Mott? The charred remains suggest he died in a fire, but this was no ordinary blaze.

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00:18:26,000 --> 00:18:30,000

Using the fire instead of the whole body remains, you never see parts of the body missing.

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00:18:30,000 --> 00:18:42,000

To put it in perspective, when someone is cremated for five to six, sometimes seven hours, there's probably more remains after that cremation than there was at his prison.

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00:18:43,000 --> 00:18:46,000

It's a baffling and gruesome mystery.

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00:18:46,000 --> 00:18:58,000

George Mott has been incinerated to a fine powder, but somehow the objects around him are not even singed, including a canister of matches only inches away.

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00:18:58,000 --> 00:19:00,000

But how?

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00:19:00,000 --> 00:19:08,000

Remarkably, all over Mott's house, there is evidence that this was a fire unlike any other.

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00:19:08,000 --> 00:19:16,000

Everything plastic was melted. The casing of the TV was distorted, and the telephone was melted to a ball plastic.

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00:19:16,000 --> 00:19:24,000

It's an incredible puzzle. What sort of heat or fire could vaporize a man and melt plastic but not burn the house down?

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00:19:26,000 --> 00:19:33,000

The fireman thought it was a gas leak underneath his bed, but if it was a gas leak and it was fire, there would have been a lot more burning. They'd never found a gas leak.

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00:19:33,000 --> 00:19:37,000

It's left to Ray to offer a theory.

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00:19:37,000 --> 00:19:42,000

I mentioned human spontaneous combustion, and everybody looked at me like I was crazy.

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00:19:43,000 --> 00:19:54,000

Spontaneous human combustion, or SHC, is a bizarre and weird phenomenon in which a person instantly bursts into flames for no apparent reason.

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00:19:54,000 --> 00:20:02,000

Amazingly, there have been 40 other cases of SHC documented in the last century.

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00:20:02,000 --> 00:20:10,000

To that point, I don't think anybody in that room has heard of it, and everybody almost had the same reaction. What is spontaneous combustion? What is that?

203

00:20:10,000 --> 00:20:19,000

This is weird or what. I mean, we know heavy metal rock domers spontaneously combust all the time.

204

00:20:19,000 --> 00:20:30,000

A reminiscent, harmless man minding his own business in bed, and then, poof, he goes up in smoke. I mean, what's going on here? Are any of us safe? Oh no, not again!

205

00:20:33,000 --> 00:20:45,000

Larry Arnold is a writer. He's dedicated himself to the study of SHC. He came to the scene of the George Mott Conflagration.

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00:20:45,000 --> 00:20:53,000

To me, at the scene of one of these remarkably rare and phenomenal events is eerie. It's unearthly.

207

00:20:53,000 --> 00:21:02,000

We look at the person who used to be there, and we're looking at something burned more completely than after several hours at several thousand degrees Fahrenheit.

208

00:21:02,000 --> 00:21:11,000

Something burned up Mr. Mott more completely than can be accomplished in a crematorium. His body burned through his bed, actually pushed the mattress springs into a bee,

209

00:21:11,000 --> 00:21:19,000

burned through the boarding underneath the mattress, burned through the floorboards, and into a crawlspace below.

210

00:21:20,000 --> 00:21:30,000

There is no heater flame damage directly above the point of combustion that consumed Mr. Mott. We could touch the ceiling. It was about seven and a half feet high.

211

00:21:30,000 --> 00:21:42,000

Not a scorch mark of any kind on the ceiling directly above the point of combustion. In most fires, heat rises. We would expect to see a lot of heat and flame damage above the bed. Zero.

212

00:21:42,000 --> 00:21:52,000

But if Mott self-immolated, how did it happen? Our name believes the answer could be found in something so tiny we can't even see it.

213

00:21:52,000 --> 00:22:02,000

We wondered how much energy it takes to cremate someone like George Mott in the natural conditions, and if there could be a particle that would have that amount of energy contained within it.

214

00:22:02,000 --> 00:22:15,000

So we pulled up a theory from quantum physics, crunched the numbers. You come up with a particle that is incredibly small, much smaller than an atom, but it has an energy level of which is humongous.

215

00:22:15,000 --> 00:22:25,000

Arnold calls these subatomic particles, pyrotrons. He believes they may be tiny, but they back a bunch.

216

00:22:26,000 --> 00:22:33,000

It's so small that it can pass through three-dimensional matter almost unimpeded, perhaps through galaxies without ever striking something.

217

00:22:33,000 --> 00:22:41,000

But according to Arnold, when the pyrotron does connect with something physical, the results are catastrophic.

218

00:22:41,000 --> 00:22:52,000

On rare occasion, what runs out, happen, stands, happens, and in those conditions when the pyrotron, with it, it's incredibly high energy impacts something inside a human being.

219

00:22:52,000 --> 00:23:01,000

We posit the end result is spontaneous human combustion. In essence, a human Hiroshima effect, a

thermonuclear explosion, if you will, in the body.

220

00:23:01,000 --> 00:23:09,000

Is spontaneous human combustion the result of a pyrotron colliding with a particle inside the human body?

221

00:23:09,000 --> 00:23:15,000

Did George Montt die from a freak collision of physics?

222

00:23:15,000 --> 00:23:24,000

Joe Nicol is an investigator of the paranormal and a firm believer that spontaneous human combustion is a myth with a rational explanation.

223

00:23:24,000 --> 00:23:37,000

I looked at 30 historical cases from the 18th century throughout the 20th century, and in every case I could find a plausible source for the ignition.

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00:23:37,000 --> 00:23:50,000

The most logical explanation for the George Montt fire was a canister of matches sitting on of all places, his oxygen and richry unit.

225

00:23:50,000 --> 00:23:58,000

He had either been somewhere to light a stove or something, and a spark could have gotten onto his clothes.

226

00:23:58,000 --> 00:24:05,000

But how could a spark or a cigarette burn a human body to the extent seen in SHC cases?

227

00:24:05,000 --> 00:24:16,000

In the forensic literature is something known as the WIC effect, and that is, if you think of a WIC in a candle, the WIC is not doing much burning.

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00:24:16,000 --> 00:24:26,000

The WIC is simply a conduit. Now if you think of the human body as sort of a candle inside out, the body has a lot of fat. It's very flammable.

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00:24:26,000 --> 00:24:31,000

Sounds horrific. I can summon become a human candle.

230

00:24:31,000 --> 00:24:52,000

The clothing acts as a kind of WIC in which once the body begins to burn, that body fat can be absorbed by clothing, mattress, and that begins the cyclical process in which the body burns releasing more body fat to destroy still more of the body to release more.

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00:24:52,000 --> 00:25:02,000

It's the WIC effect that's helping this burn in a very efficient way. There's never a big fire when the body burns in this way. It's not a huge inferno.

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00:25:02,000 --> 00:25:14,000

The results afterwards may look like that's what happened, but what actually happened is just that the body burned very slowly and very efficiently where the body fat was in the torso, the upper thighs.

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00:25:14,000 --> 00:25:27,000

You'll often find limbs or body parts that are not burned for pretty obvious reasons. They don't have as much body fat. Even a lean person has a significant amount of body fat.

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00:25:27,000 --> 00:25:43,000

So this, well this isn't an explanation for all burning deaths. It's a relevant factor in some of the unusual cases because it can explain why over a period of several hours a fire is progressing and attacking and burning a body

235

00:25:43,000 --> 00:25:48,000

which is actually supplying fuel for its own destruction.

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00:25:48,000 --> 00:25:55,000

Nickel believes that his theory can explain the almost complete lack of fire damage around the body.

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00:25:55,000 --> 00:26:09,000

Since there's never a big fire here, nearby objects are not going to be burned. Just as you can sit just inches away from a campfire and toast a marshmallow and not be burned, the same is true with this WIC effect.

238

00:26:09,000 --> 00:26:14,000

But does this explain the other objects that were melted throughout George's house?

239

00:26:14,000 --> 00:26:25,000

The heat of course is gathering and rising. Objects above a certain line will be melted because the heat is accumulated there. And in my case, there was soot all over.

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00:26:25,000 --> 00:26:30,000

There's usually a sooty deposit if there's a lot of organic material being burned.

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00:26:30,000 --> 00:26:33,000

For Nickel, the answer is clear.

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00:26:34,000 --> 00:26:39,000

If science knows anything about spontaneous human combustion, it is that it doesn't exist.

243

00:26:39,000 --> 00:26:46,000

The George Mott case was a mystery. I would consider it basically a mystery solved.

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00:26:46,000 --> 00:26:55,000

Does Nickel's theory prove that SHC does not exist? Can these horrific deaths be explained by the WIC effect?

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00:26:55,000 --> 00:27:00,000

We've tried to conduct those experiments ourselves. We know others in the forensics field who have done so.

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00:27:00,000 --> 00:27:11,000

They can't replicate these fire scenes under controlled scientific conditions. It doesn't work for us, and it did not work for the local investigators in Essex County.

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00:27:11,000 --> 00:27:18,000

So is spontaneous human combustion real? It's a debate that will continue to rage.

248

00:27:18,000 --> 00:27:24,000

One thing we do know for certain though, it's definitely weird. Or what?

249

00:27:35,000 --> 00:27:42,000

A British woman reports an ability that defies science. Can she harness electrical power?

250

00:27:42,000 --> 00:27:48,000

The possibilities of things going wrong are just mind-blowingly frightening.

251

00:28:13,000 --> 00:28:15,000

For what?

252

00:28:16,000 --> 00:28:20,000

Growing up in London, England, Debbie Wolfe thought she was a normal child.

253

00:28:21,000 --> 00:28:28,000

I think when you were small child, you don't realize you're different from anyone else. But my mum got it pretty quickly, I think.

254

00:28:29,000 --> 00:28:36,000

Shortly after Debbie turned four, her mother noticed there was something rather unusual about her daughter.

255

00:28:37,000 --> 00:28:49,000

My mum noticed hot spots of problems. It was just the era of everyone had walkmans and I drained the batteries and light bulbs seemed to be quite vulnerable.

256

00:28:49,000 --> 00:28:55,000

My mum wouldn't touch me if she was switching the light switch on because a jolt of electricity would go through her.

257

00:28:56,000 --> 00:29:01,000

Incredibly, it seems this tiny girl had somehow become supercharged with electricity.

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00:29:02,000 --> 00:29:13,000

Incredibly, when Debbie interacts with anything electrical, Havoc ensues. She fries appliances, drains batteries and explodes light bulbs.

259

00:29:13,000 --> 00:29:17,000

And as she gets older, the condition gets worse.

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00:29:17,000 --> 00:29:24,000

There's one particular occasion that I remember. I can't have been more than about six.

261

00:29:24,000 --> 00:29:33,000

We went to this shop, one of my mum's favorite shops, and as we went past each streetlight, it went off and on and off and on as we passed them.

262

00:29:34,000 --> 00:29:38,000

Remarkably, Debbie's electrical power grows with every step.

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00:29:40,000 --> 00:29:44,000

By the time they arrive at the shop, things are getting out of control.

264

00:29:44,000 --> 00:29:51,000

They had these metal rails where the clothes were displayed and for some reason that seemed to spark me.

265

00:29:51,000 --> 00:29:56,000

So much so that I could touch it and you'd see sparks and hear the crack of the spark.

266

00:29:56,000 --> 00:29:59,000

So my mum tried to herd me away from that.

267

00:29:59,000 --> 00:30:01,000

But her mum doesn't act fast enough.

268

00:30:06,000 --> 00:30:12,000

Debbie's touch electrifies the entire store, blowing the fuses and plunging it into complete darkness.

269

00:30:15,000 --> 00:30:19,000

Terrified of a young child's weird power, Debbie's mum rushes her from the shop.

270

00:30:20,000 --> 00:30:26,000

My mum made rules about what I was allowed to do and not allowed to do because it was disruptive.

271

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

What happened to Debbie Wolfe?

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00:30:32,000 --> 00:30:35,000

Could she be cured by medicine or did she need an electrician?

273

00:30:36,000 --> 00:30:39,000

Sadly, her condition hasn't gone away.

274

00:30:39,000 --> 00:30:42,000

Over three decades later, she is still suffering.

275

00:30:43,000 --> 00:30:45,000

I affected everything.

276

00:30:45,000 --> 00:30:51,000

I lost a job in a nightclub because every time I walked past the DJ box, the music would go off.

277

00:30:52,000 --> 00:30:58,000

I get through an extraordinary amount of kettles and toasters and TVs.

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00:30:59,000 --> 00:31:01,000

So I tend to buy secondhand TVs.

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00:31:01,000 --> 00:31:05,000

The thing I hate most to do, but I have to do it anyway, is flying.

280

00:31:05,000 --> 00:31:07,000

I just hate flying.

281

00:31:08,000 --> 00:31:12,000

The fear of being able to stop a plane in the day, having it drop out of the sky.

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00:31:12,000 --> 00:31:18,000

No, no, no. Because the possibilities of things going wrong are just mind-blowingly frightening.

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00:31:22,000 --> 00:31:25,000

Is Debbie somehow generating lethal amounts of electricity?

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00:31:25,000 --> 00:31:27,000

If so, how and why?

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00:31:28,000 --> 00:31:32,000

Incredibly, she isn't the only one suffering from this bizarre affliction.

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00:31:33,000 --> 00:31:36,000

Thousands of others have it too and it's even been given a name.

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00:31:37,000 --> 00:31:39,000

Street Light Interference Syndrome.

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00:31:39,000 --> 00:31:42,000

Those who have it are called sliders.

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00:31:47,000 --> 00:31:50,000

What are sliders and where do they get the super-judge powers?

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00:31:50,000 --> 00:31:53,000

Are they a threat to themselves or even us?

291

00:31:54,000 --> 00:31:57,000

Bill Beattie is an electrical engineer.

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00:31:57,000 --> 00:31:59,000

He thinks he can explain sliders.

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00:32:00,000 --> 00:32:06,000

I first heard about this in the 80s and I started wondering,

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00:32:06,000 --> 00:32:09,000

are they some kind of electric generator?

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00:32:10,000 --> 00:32:14,000

Good sliders like Debbie actually be generating their own electricity?

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00:32:15,000 --> 00:32:17,000

How could she do it?

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00:32:17,000 --> 00:32:22,000

Beattie thinks her power could be an extension of something we've all experienced.

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00:32:22,000 --> 00:32:27,000

If you scuff on the rug and touch your doorknob and hear that little click, that's static electricity.

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00:32:27,000 --> 00:32:29,000

The effect is caused by your body being charged.

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00:32:30,000 --> 00:32:33,000

Rubbing your feet steals negatively charged electrons from the carbon.

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00:32:33,000 --> 00:32:38,000

With each step, you steal more electrons and develop more of a negative charge.

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00:32:39,000 --> 00:32:42,000

Something easily detected with a voltmeter.

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00:32:43,000 --> 00:32:45,000

If I scuff on the rug, watch what happens.

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00:32:45,000 --> 00:32:50,000

I'm scuffing my shoe and they're all turning on and off.

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00:32:50,000 --> 00:32:53,000

This is me moving my shoe up and down on the carpet.

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00:32:54,000 --> 00:32:56,000

There's the more over there.

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00:32:57,000 --> 00:33:00,000

So a science fair project for kids, a little transistor,

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00:33:00,000 --> 00:33:01,000

voltage detector.

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00:33:02,000 --> 00:33:06,000

So if you were an electric human, you wouldn't have to scuff on the carpet.

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00:33:07,000 --> 00:33:11,000

So if I could stand perfectly still and wait for long enough for my charge to go away,

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00:33:11,000 --> 00:33:12,000

oh, it's gone again.

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00:33:13,000 --> 00:33:15,000

So it had already leaked away here.

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00:33:16,000 --> 00:33:20,000

I would be turning the light on and off if my body charged up by itself.

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00:33:21,000 --> 00:33:23,000

So I'm not an electric human.

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00:33:24,000 --> 00:33:25,000

Oh well.

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00:33:25,000 --> 00:33:29,000

But could this build up enough charge to affect a street light?

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00:33:29,000 --> 00:33:35,000

BD believes sliders could generate large amounts of static electricity in another way.

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00:33:36,000 --> 00:33:43,000

Well, there's one thing that humans do which might explain this and that's breathing.

319

00:33:45,000 --> 00:33:48,000

Every day, humans take over 25,000 breaths.

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00:33:48,000 --> 00:33:54,000

Remarkably, BD thinks it's possible we can steal a few electrons from the air each time we breathe in

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00:33:54,000 --> 00:33:57,000

and eventually supercharge our bodies.

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00:33:59,000 --> 00:34:05,000

If you can charge your body up by breathing, you have this invisible field of voltage around your body

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00:34:05,000 --> 00:34:09,000

that can affect electronic devices even from a few feet away.

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00:34:11,000 --> 00:34:15,000

But if everyone breathes air, why would only a few people like Debbie

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00:34:15,000 --> 00:34:17,000

turn into human lightning?

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00:34:19,000 --> 00:34:22,000

There's a chance that it could be a virus that hasn't been discovered yet.

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00:34:23,000 --> 00:34:27,000

There are a few viruses that they're not like the flu or colds.

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00:34:27,000 --> 00:34:33,000

Instead, when you catch it, there's almost no change and then your body easily fights it off.

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00:34:34,000 --> 00:34:40,000

If it's communicable, then you'd think that there'd be lots of electric humans

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00:34:40,000 --> 00:34:43,000

or you'd get it for a while and then it would be gone.

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00:34:43,000 --> 00:34:48,000

But this sounds more like it might be something that's like a symbiotic thing

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00:34:48,000 --> 00:34:52,000

that maybe you're born with it and you can't give it to other people.

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00:34:52,000 --> 00:34:57,000

Could some yet to be discovered virus alter the lungs of sliders just enough

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00:34:57,000 --> 00:35:01,000

to strip electrons from the air and turn them into supercharged humans

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00:35:01,000 --> 00:35:04,000

or is BD's theory a few connections short of a circuit?

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00:35:04,000 --> 00:35:06,000

I was attracted to it because it's weird,

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00:35:06,000 --> 00:35:12,000

but the vast, unstudied collection of blood and blood is a very rare thing.

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00:35:13,000 --> 00:35:17,000

Some of those are real and those are Nobel Prize discoveries.

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00:35:18,000 --> 00:35:20,000

So let me get this right.

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00:35:20,000 --> 00:35:25,000

Sliders have an innate ability to wreak havoc on electrical goods,

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00:35:25,000 --> 00:35:27,000

especially street lights, right?

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00:35:27,000 --> 00:35:31,000

And one guy thinks the reason they can do this is there's a virus going around

343

00:35:31,000 --> 00:35:33,000

that can supercharge your body as you breathe.

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00:35:37,000 --> 00:35:38,000

Nothing.

345

00:35:44,000 --> 00:35:47,000

Can we come up with a better explanation?

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00:35:47,000 --> 00:35:50,000

I mean, when it comes to electrical faults,

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00:35:50,000 --> 00:35:55,000

isn't it just a matter of some dummy doing something stupid?

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00:35:57,000 --> 00:36:01,000

So do sliders really have the power to generate electricity?

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00:36:01,000 --> 00:36:04,000

The phenomenon to me is not real phenomena at all.

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00:36:04,000 --> 00:36:07,000

Around the world, hundreds of people known as sliders

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00:36:07,000 --> 00:36:11,000

claim to have the ability to interfere with electricity.

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00:36:11,000 --> 00:36:15,000

Do they have the science baffling superpower?

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00:36:17,000 --> 00:36:20,000

Lee Colville has studied sliders for five years.

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00:36:20,000 --> 00:36:24,000

He thinks he's found another way to explain the phenomenon.

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00:36:25,000 --> 00:36:28,000

It's probably improbable that anyone could generate enough electricity

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00:36:28,000 --> 00:36:29,000

to affect a street lamp.

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00:36:29,000 --> 00:36:32,000

We're talking about millions of volts here, as with a lightning bolt,

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00:36:32,000 --> 00:36:35,000

and obviously a very high current flow.

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00:36:35,000 --> 00:36:38,000

I mean, basically, if anyone could generate that amount of electricity,

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00:36:38,000 --> 00:36:39,000

they would kill them.

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00:36:39,000 --> 00:36:42,000

The current flow, the self would kill them and probably fry them,

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00:36:42,000 --> 00:36:45,000

and they'd be blowing cars up in all sorts all over the place.

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00:36:45,000 --> 00:36:48,000

You don't see that, so therefore it's very un-nikely.

364

00:36:48,000 --> 00:36:53,000

The most plausible explanation to me is basically pure coincidence.

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00:36:54,000 --> 00:36:59,000

But who could pure chance explain the incredible effects sliders have

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00:36:59,000 --> 00:37:02,000

over electrical devices like street lamps?

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00:37:02,000 --> 00:37:05,000

Most people are not aware of how the street light works

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00:37:05,000 --> 00:37:08,000

or what happens when there's street light malfunctions.

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00:37:08,000 --> 00:37:10,000

Here we have a common example of a street lamp,

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00:37:10,000 --> 00:37:12,000

which is a high-pressure sodium lamp.

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00:37:13,000 --> 00:37:17,000

Many street lights use powerful sodium light bulbs.

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00:37:18,000 --> 00:37:23,000

When they get open, they don't just burn out or inflict like fluorescent bulbs.

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00:37:23,000 --> 00:37:27,000

Instead, they begin a process called cycling.

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00:37:28,000 --> 00:37:30,000

It will turn off.

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00:37:30,000 --> 00:37:33,000

When it cools down, it will basically come on again.

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00:37:33,000 --> 00:37:35,000

Obviously, it will get too hot, then it will cool down again,

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00:37:35,000 --> 00:37:39,000

come back on again, cycling on and off periodically.

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00:37:40,000 --> 00:37:44,000

If someone walked under a cycling street lamp at just the right moment,

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00:37:44,000 --> 00:37:46,000

they could think they turned it off.

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00:37:48,000 --> 00:37:50,000

But what about Debbie Wolfe?

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00:37:50,000 --> 00:37:52,000

She made a whole street go here.

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00:37:53,000 --> 00:37:55,000

A row of lamps that was probably installed at the same time,

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00:37:55,000 --> 00:37:57,000

so the chances are that if one is faulty,

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00:37:57,000 --> 00:38:00,000

you can find another one that's faulty along the same route.

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00:38:01,000 --> 00:38:04,000

Do faulty street lights explain this mystery?

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00:38:04,000 --> 00:38:10,000

What about all the other electrical gadgets that sliders like Deborah destroy?

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00:38:11,000 --> 00:38:14,000

Static electricity, it's mundane as that.

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00:38:14,000 --> 00:38:16,000

If you've got someone with very dry skin,

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00:38:16,000 --> 00:38:18,000

you could build up quite a large voltage.

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00:38:18,000 --> 00:38:20,000

And by touching any electrical appliance,

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00:38:20,000 --> 00:38:24,000

it could discharge and cause damage to sensitive components.

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00:38:25,000 --> 00:38:28,000

Are sliders just mistaking static electricity

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00:38:28,000 --> 00:38:31,000

and coincidence for superpowers?

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00:38:31,000 --> 00:38:34,000

There's no reason to be frightened of spending time around a ledged slider

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00:38:34,000 --> 00:38:37,000

because the phenomena, to me, is not a real phenomena at all.

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

So, is this the end of the mystery?

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00:38:41,000 --> 00:38:42,000

Maybe that.

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00:38:43,000 --> 00:38:48,000

Suan Jasek is a mechanical engineer who was intrigued by Debbie's story.

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00:38:49,000 --> 00:38:53,000

A person being able to produce energy or harness energy is much like the X-Men,

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00:38:53,000 --> 00:38:55,000

so it kind of provoked my interest.

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00:38:55,000 --> 00:38:59,000

He's come up with a remarkable new theory to explain what is happening.

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00:38:59,000 --> 00:39:03,000

I'm a bit skeptical that the body alone can generate enough energy

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00:39:03,000 --> 00:39:05,000

to knock off electrical street lights,

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00:39:05,000 --> 00:39:09,000

but Debbie's body could absorb energy from around us

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00:39:09,000 --> 00:39:12,000

and release it in the form of an electrical pulse.

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00:39:13,000 --> 00:39:15,000

Instead of creating electrical energy,

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00:39:15,000 --> 00:39:19,000

could Debbie actually be sucking it up from the world around her?

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00:39:20,000 --> 00:39:24,000

Electricity plays quite an important role in our human body.

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00:39:24,000 --> 00:39:29,000

Theoretically, one could possess the ability to store electricity through their bodies

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00:39:29,000 --> 00:39:31,000

just like a capacitor.

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00:39:32,000 --> 00:39:35,000

Capacitors are common in all electronics.

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00:39:37,000 --> 00:39:40,000

They are used to gradually soak up excess electricity

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00:39:40,000 --> 00:39:42,000

and then discharge it in a flash.

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00:39:45,000 --> 00:39:48,000

Could Debbie be a human capacitor?

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00:39:48,000 --> 00:39:54,000

Her body may possess molecules that are able to harness this power.

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00:39:56,000 --> 00:39:59,000

To prove his theory, Jasek has conducted tests

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00:39:59,000 --> 00:40:03,000

designed to try and stimulate Debbie into releasing an electrical charge.

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00:40:04,000 --> 00:40:07,000

Using an oscilloscope, an instrument which measures voltage,

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00:40:07,000 --> 00:40:11,000

he compares her output to someone with a normal charge.

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00:40:12,000 --> 00:40:15,000

And what I'm going to do is I'm going to show you some images

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00:40:15,000 --> 00:40:19,000

and see whether we are able to simulate some electricity.

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00:40:23,000 --> 00:40:27,000

Debbie seems to become most electric when she's excited or stressed.

423

00:40:28,000 --> 00:40:32,000

Jasek uses images he hopes will recreate those feelings.

424

00:40:33,000 --> 00:40:37,000

Although not conclusive, some of Jasek's experiments

425

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

have produced surprising results.

426

00:40:40,000 --> 00:40:43,000

With Debbie, we noticed that there was voltage

427

00:40:43,000 --> 00:40:47,000

that was being measured from her body that was different

428

00:40:47,000 --> 00:40:50,000

to what could be measured from ours.

429

00:40:50,000 --> 00:40:53,000

So the slide of phenomenon does exist.

430

00:40:53,000 --> 00:40:58,000

But this phenomenon isn't something Debbie can turn on and off at will.

431

00:40:59,000 --> 00:41:06,000

It's very hard to bring myself to a place where I'm going to be electric, I suppose.

432

00:41:06,000 --> 00:41:10,000

I mean, I'd be a much richer person if I could do circuits and I can't.

433

00:41:10,000 --> 00:41:12,000

It just happens.

434

00:41:14,000 --> 00:41:18,000

Are Debbie and thousands like her really able to store electricity

435

00:41:18,000 --> 00:41:20,000

and release it in a flash?

436

00:41:21,000 --> 00:41:25,000

Could a rare virus have turned them into human generators?

437

00:41:25,000 --> 00:41:29,000

Or could it all be just a series of shocking coincidences?

438

00:41:31,000 --> 00:41:35,000

Whatever the answer, it's most definitely weird.

439

00:41:35,000 --> 00:41:37,000

But what?

440

00:41:40,000 --> 00:41:42,000

What?

441

00:41:51,000 --> 00:41:53,000

So there we have it.

442

00:41:54,000 --> 00:41:56,000

Three bizarre medical mysteries.

443

00:41:57,000 --> 00:42:03,000

An Arkansas woman baffles medical professionals by surviving a horrific skydiving accident.

444

00:42:04,000 --> 00:42:08,000

In upstate New York, a man vaporized in a fire leaves investigators asking,

445

00:42:08,000 --> 00:42:12,000

can humans spontaneously combust?

446

00:42:15,000 --> 00:42:19,000

And a group of people report being able to interfere with electricity.

447

00:42:19,000 --> 00:42:23,000

Do they have an inexplicable superpower?

448

00:42:27,000 --> 00:42:29,000

You decide.

449

00:42:29,000 --> 00:42:35,000

Join me again next time for more stories that will undoubtedly be weird or...