An abductee's life

by Tom Rymer

I'm an abductee. This short essay is a description of some, certainly not all, of my experiences and general thoughts on the subject. My purpose here is simply to add my voice to the growing compendium commonly known today as alien encounters. I can't address every skeptical argument. It would be a uniquely bizarre essay if I tried. Nor is it my intention to say that skeptics are bad, narrow-minded folk. I can say without hesitation that abductees themselves tend to be more skeptical of their own experience than any researcher or writer could ever be.

I am not seeking personal attention from what I have to say. Who in his or her right mind would crave that sort of attention? For years I kept my opinion about what happened to me to myself, not even daring to share my feelings with the person I trust most, my wonderful and patient wife. Nor do I ask that the reader believe me. I can't ask for that. If the shoe was on the other foot, I don't think I could be open-minded enough to believe that such a thing was possible. What happened to me just happened, and these are my experiences and my thoughts and feelings about them. If there was anything I would ask the reader to believe, however, it is that I don't want this experience in my life. It has no place or purpose. What I've learned from this strange intervention into my life, I've learned in spite—not because—of it.

Finally, if what I report here is ultimately proven true, then what I and people like me are grappling with are the biggest mysteries mankind has ever faced. Forgive me if what I say and the way I say it is enormously understated and clumsy.

A savvy online friend of mine once likened abduction to a death in the family. Medical technology has reached a point where there is now time to say goodbye to a loved one, and after saying goodbye to my mother a few years ago, I can only wonder whether that extended time is a blessing or a curse. I knew when I left the hospital room for the last time that her death was something I'd never actually get over: It was instead an unwanted event with which I'd have to cope. Abduction is a similar experience, except that the death I experienced was my own. I was forced to say farewell to my old life and work through the grieving process while living a strange, new one. I didn't choose to live this new and sometimes horrific life, but as with the death of my mother, life simply served it up. I had no choice. And as with the death of my mother, I'll be coping with abduction for the rest of my life.

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Childhood

I grew up in the Midwest, my father a family lawyer, my mother a medical technologist. We lived in a 1,200-square-foot home in a lower-middle-class neighborhood. I have one brother, now an attorney and a judge in my hometown, and a sister, a speech pathologist. My parents considered themselves liberal Democrats, and my mom marched on Washington twice—once in support of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, once against the Vietnam War. I was raised with lots of love but also with that 1950s pragmatism all in my generation remember well. My father's advice when I told him I didn't want to go to college was, "This is America. You're free to be an idiot if you want to."

I am now 49 years old and a teacher.

Early experience

I went to bed one night as usual. Nothing out of the ordinary happened during the day. I suddenly became aware that I was very cold and wet. It had been raining when I'd gone to bed, and I felt my pajama legs saturated and glued to my ankles. I also realized I was unable to move. My back was against something cold and hard. I tried to look around me, but was unable to move my head. I believe my eyes were able to rotate, but I can't be certain of that. I was standing in a small, round shaft of some sort. The walls were dark and rough, and seemed earthen to me, as though I was underground in a tunnel of some sort. Wherever I was, it was dimly lit. I couldn't see the source of the light, but it was bright enough in the murk to be able to see my immediate surroundings. There was a smoky, misty substance in the air, and most of my peripheral vision was shrouded by the mist.

At the same moment I began to notice my surroundings, I became aware of three little figures waddling towards me—one figure in front, and two trailing figures, one on each

side. The figures were difficult to make out at first, and I was lost in concentration, not yet fearful. I suddenly heard a voice in my head saying something like, "Everything will be okay. You'll be all right."

The three figures were dressed in robes with hoods. The edges of the hoods were rather long, like cowls, hanging low in front, and masking much of the face. The little figure in front came right up close to me, and that's when I became terrified. It was, in every sense of the word in my eight-year-old experience, a monster. I first noticed the eyes. They were large and round—not the almond-shaped eyes you see depicted on many book covers these days. They were shiny, wet-looking, and black. The face itself was covered with three-inch dark-brown hair. I remember it matting away from the eyes. I remember some sort of mouth and nose, but it was difficult for me to look away from the eyes, and the little creature came close to me, no more than an inch or two away. We were eye to eye—nose to unnoticed nose. I have no memory of seeing feet beneath the robes. I also remember seeing the creature closest to me holding a short, silver stick, about six to eight inches long. I have no personal recollection concerning its function or use.

Part of my problem in describing the little monsters was this close proximity of the first creature. The other was my paralysis. It seemed impossible for me to look away, and the smoky substance in the air limited my peripheral vision. I screamed. I have no idea if sound came out of my mouth. My suspicions were that it didn't. I shrieked and kept on shrieking. A voice inside my head—a very difficult thing to describe—told me once again, "Everything would be all right."

I sensed activity beyond the little monster. There was movement. Each movement somehow seemed purposeful. I kept on silently screaming. At some point during what I supposed was a nightmare, I fully expected to wake up once again, this time warm in my bed. Yet this horrific experience continued. I remembered thinking that this was wrong. I was conscious of social roles at eight—no adult or authority figure would continue this if it terrified a child to this extent. When would this stop? When would it become understandable? It was all wrong. I suddenly came to the realization that this was real—that hairy little monsters were confronting me. This was not a dream. This was a horrible reality. My immediate reaction was to try to give them whatever they wanted just to be left alone. "Why me?" I screamed. "What do you want from me?" The response was, "You are chosen," or, "You are the chosen one."

All the while this madness went on, a movement continued just far enough out of my peripheral vision so that while I could tell it was occurring, I could not tell exactly what that purposeful movement was. It seemed planned to me, and even at eight I had the sense that this was a staged confrontation. Planned activities were being carried out.

I have no idea how long this experience lasted in real time, but at this point, my memory lapses into fragments or snippets of occurrences. I was lifted up and physically carried at one point. The material of the robes rubbed up against my face and eyes. I felt it and saw it clearly. In another snippet I saw a taller being standing near the other three. I sensed anger, as though the taller being was giving orders to the three and was angry that some were not being carried out correctly. I also had an overwhelming fear that some impending physical *something* was about to occur.

The next thing I knew, I awoke in my bed. My pajama legs were still damp, and there were grass and leaves in my bed. I felt exhausted. I quickly ran downstairs to tell my mother what had happened. She said, "You were dreaming, and drink your milk. And I keep telling you to empty the cuffs on your jeans before you play in the house or jump around on your bed." I don't know if I caught a hint of fear in her voice, but I knew she was wrong. It wasn't a dream like any I'd ever had. It was real—but how could it be real? Still, I put the experience out of my mind for over 30 years. I remember it as clearly today as I did that morning at the breakfast table.

On the road

By the summer of 1972 a friend and I had been saving money for a road trip for over a year. I graduated from high school that year, and with no draft or plans for the coming fall, we were free to plan a trip. We loosely charted a direction toward the northwest on an atlas and drove out of Wisconsin, into Minnesota, and up along the international border of Canada, dipping back down on occasion to catch the best of the national parks along the way. We spent our first evening in a rest stop, and then camped for a few days thereafter.

We'd just left Livingston, Montana, and were having fun running up and down the two-lane roads. I believe we were approaching foothills. It was just about dusk, the time of day when the light changes and the greens and browns of forested areas take on new hues. We were driving on a two-lane road, lined on both sides by trees. My friend was driving. I had the passenger side window down and my feet propped up on the dashboard.

Suddenly, out from behind the tree line on the right side of the road, a huge fireball the size of my fist on my outstretched hand rose up in full view of the open, passenger-side window. We both saw it emerge and both followed its entire trajectory before us. We looked at each other and said something in unison like, "What the hell is that?"

It made a perfect arc up and over the road, sort of lolled there, and then in the same arc, dipped behind the tree line on the left. We expected a crash but heard none—in fact, we heard no sound at all during the entire event. From the size and shape we both thought that the thing should have sounded like a freight train. The colors were striking. The top half of the orb was enveloped in orange flame and the bottom in green. It intermittently shot out sparks like a pitted piece of metal on a grinding wheel. It sputtered short showers of green and orange sparks, and

there was very little tail if any at all.

My friend slammed his feet on the brakes and we careened onto the slim shoulder. After debating whether to leave the car where it had come to a stop, beside the narrow shoulder on a winding mountain road, and go look for the crash site, we decided that with the approaching darkness it probably wasn't a good idea. In retrospect I have no idea why we didn't take it more seriously and look for it, marking the area before finding a place to camp, and then coming back the next day to search, but we didn't. We pulled out on the road, my buddy still driving, and traveled on.

I do remember that I abruptly fell asleep. I awoke hours later and asked what was going on. My friend strangely replied, "I don't know."

"What do you mean you don't know?" I asked. "It's obvious you've been driving."

"I guess so."

"What do you mean you guess so?"

"I really don't know," he said. "I guess I've been driving."

I decided to drop it, chalking up the weird feeling and an odd conversation to road weariness. We put the conversation and the entire event out of our minds for nearly 25 years.

Discovery

This is without exception the most difficult thing I've ever written. There is simply no sane way to describe a wildly bizarre phenomenon. While I have firmly come to believe in the reality of abduction, putting it into words is terribly hard, and for the literally hundreds of accounts I've read and shared online since my initial discovery, I've never seen anyone else do a particularly good job of it either. All the tales, all the rationale, all the accounts of not believing and then coming to believe—they're all lacking to varying degree. Even as I write this, I realize most people will see it as my personal roadmap into madness. Those who've had the experience, however, will smile knowingly.

About seven years ago I was new to the web. Lots of people were. The computer was a huge toy, the Internet a constant video game—simply fun to see color pictures and read email streaming into my home from a world away. I'd moved from the Midwest to the South, took a teaching job on a lark, found I enjoyed it, and had pursued the profession. I'd married and within a year my wife was pregnant. I was, of course, excited about the prospects of this, the birth of my only child. I read everything I could get my hands on and encouraged my wife to take natural-birth courses. We had the baby when I turned 40. The baby was often sick with a seemingly endless string of ear infections, and I slept little for her first two years.

I thank the immediacy of my child's needs for pulling me back into reality and keeping my life on course. Without her and my extreme good luck in contacting the people I did, I suspect I'd have been in even worse emotional shape than I was. But it was the Internet that became the medium for my discovery, and ironically, an important part of my solace as well.

One evening I surfed to the UFO sites. I remembered my sighting on the mountain road at 18 and thought I'd try to find out what it was. I read countless stories of similar fireballs, meteors, and bolides. I read of a rare meteor that skipped in and out of Earth's atmosphere during the summer of 1972, and many people in three mountain states sighted it. But I never came upon any picture that accurately reflected what my friend and I had seen on the road.

Deeper into the unknown

I began reading an abduction site. I have no idea why. I never connected my experience with alien abduction and didn't at that time either. I had no reason to make any connection. I'd seen only the lurid images in grocery-store tabloids, considered them a joke, or worse, the sad stories of lonely, sick, destitute people in need of social and psychological attention. I remember the 1975 Betty and Barney Hill TV special that my parents wouldn't let us watch, but I had no idea it concerned abduction.

One site in particular drew my attention. The author asked the reader to submit his or her own abduction tale. I remembered the odd dream of my childhood. I was curious enough to see what the author would say about my story. I treated it and thought of it exactly as I'd treat a fortuneteller at a carnival, in other words as entertainment. I withheld the best remembered and most explicit details of my "dream" and wrote a brief outline of what happened to me. (Many computer crashes later, I wonder what became of that initial letter.) To my surprise, I got an almost immediate response. The webmaster directed me toward a few pieces of UFO literature of the period; I believe I read Raymond E. Fowler's first account of the Betty Andreasson DeLuca abduction.

The webmaster remained communicative and available online. I asked questions about the experiences of others as I finished a book or an article. But this never became personal until I once again brought up my own experience. In contrast to what skeptics say about being led by abduction researchers and support groups, I never felt as though the webmaster was taking me in any particular direction. I remember that on many occasions he did his best to tell me that any decision I made on the reality of the abduction experience was entirely my own.

As I continued to read, my list of questions grew, and so did my feelings of unease at the similarities of the abduction narratives in the literature. I was always careful not to divulge to the webmaster what I considered to be confirmatory details of the event, and the webmaster was also careful not to tip his hand. It's important to note that up until this point I hadn't read any abduction accounts. Details like paralysis, telepathic communication, the metal object, close proximity of the beings, the hooded robes, and the physical description and behavior of the beings themselves were all

unknown to me outside my own experience. As I said earlier, there is no way I could ever objectively prove this point—I simply know it to be true. I was reading some shockingly similar detail in the accounts of others, but they made no impact on me. I remained fairly detached from any emotional connection with the reality of abduction. That was to change.

I ultimately grew bored reading others' accounts, and I finally began asking challenging questions about my own experience. I suppose my intent was to stop devoting time to this ridiculous subject and begin spending more time with my work and family. I threw out a challenge to the webmaster: "If abduction stories are so similar, tell me a detail I experienced that I haven't told you about."

In a hesitant response he divulged two details. He told me that the material of the fabric was a "brown, burlappy type [of] material" and that he suspected one of the little beings held a metallic wand or stick. I was floored. I had been reading accounts similar to mine for months, but for whatever reason, none struck me personally until these two details were mentioned. I went cold. I panicked. I was suddenly confronted with a new and terrifying reality.

As I have mentioned, my then two-year-old began suffering from constant ear infections. I was up with her nearly every night. The antibiotic would wear off, the incubation period for the new infection would mature, and then we'd be up all night together with her shrieking in agony on my lap. I credit my little girl with forcing me to hold my emotional life together during this period. Nothing drags one back to the here and now like projectile vomiting and hour upon hour of high-pitched screaming. I shut off the computer and didn't turn it back on again for two weeks. At that point, memories of events covering my entire life of abduction were coming back to me. Countless details and snippets of experiences flooded my waking moments. I was particularly shocked by a memory of what I would later read about as a "smart baby" encounter described in the pages of a David Jacobs book. I returned to the web, joined email lists, and read literally hundreds of stories like mine.

Over time, I was able to settle down a bit. I now concentrate less on the phenomenon and abduction research and more on watching my little girl grow. Still, my life will never be the same. As the webmaster once said, "Welcome to the club to which nobody wants to belong." I have learned to deal with this aspect of my life, I suppose; yet there are some moments of sheer terror from which I'll never be able to insulate myself. Those moments occur when I think about my daughter's potential involvement.

One morning I walked into my daughter's room to retrieve something. I found her lying on her back, flat on the floor. She'd arranged five or six of her dolls in the same way. They were all side by side, staring up at the ceiling.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I'm not really here, Daddy."

"Oh, yeah? Well, where are you?"

"Okay, I'm here now, but I wasn't last night."

"Where were you?"

"The little monsters took me up on their airplane. And the little monster doctor put a stick on my tummy—right here."

I didn't look. I told her I had to go to the bathroom. I locked the door and stayed there until I could get the horrified look off my face. Later that evening I found a triangular-shaped mark (what looked like a puncture wound) on her as she bathed. That one-sided conversation has haunted me since. It is extremely difficult to even write about. To this date, my daughter and I have never had a conversation about aliens or abduction. I don't plan on doing so. I suppose that at some distant point in time, say, after she's 40 and I've also given her permission to go on her first date, I may.

A friend of mine read part of this account and asked me why I came to believe in abduction. He also stated that abduction suffers the lethal combination of the wildly bizarre and utterly unprovable. I agree, to some extent. So why do I believe I'm an abductee? I suppose the quick answer to my friend's initial question is that abduction provides the most viable, best-fit answer to all the strange, inexplicable occurrences, memories, and experiences I've had throughout my life. Perhaps the best way to explain myself is to list the commonly cited prosaic explanations that don't apply to me.

My hairy-dwarf experience occurred long before I'd seen any similar representation of these things in film or in books. But for a very few books and movies that typified my generation's interests, I was never a science-fiction fan. I read Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* in high school. In my mind William Shatner currently plays a much more interesting television character as the despicable attorney Denny Crane than he ever did as Captain Kirk. I didn't directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, borrow my experience from books, stories, or movies available to me when I was a child. I would sincerely prefer it if that were to be the case. My life revolved around baseball, TV cowboys, and endless games of kick-the-can.

What I am not

I have never undergone hypnosis. My memories are consciously recalled. I don't believe fantasy proneness is an issue. Although I've never been tested for fantasy proneness per se, my MMPI places me well within a normal range. I have never been "led" by an investigator—therefore, no "inaccurate retrieval cues." I have never been the victim of aggressive therapy for a traumatic event, or a member of a "support group" for abduction. I have never suffered from severe nightmares or night terror as a child either prior to or after my Hairy Being confrontation. I have never been sexually molested by my father, mother, friend, foe, or family member.

I am not a hoaxer. I have no financial or emotional stake

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in the validity of the abduction experience. In fact, if my beliefs were well known to my employers, I'd immediately lose my job. If Budd Hopkins and David Jacobs are correct about the multigenerational feature of abduction, my little daughter's well-being (or at least my control over it) is at risk—and that alone is difficult for me to contemplate. I do not want fame or notoriety because of my claim, nor do I want to turn my experience into some sort of cash-raising enterprise. After I learned that many people had similar experiences, I simply wanted to find out the truth as it concerned my own life, knowing first and last that the answers wouldn't matter to anyone but me. In short, there is no personal or monetary advantage for me to believe in the abduction experience.

Nor am I consciously aware of any escape-from-self tendencies or masochistic fantasies. I don't believe I'm stupid, particularly clumsy, or unlovable. I'm a teacher, and although this might qualify me as something of a glutton for punishment, I don't fantasize about being naked and strapped to a table in front of my students. I neither hallucinate nor suffer from delusions. I have never undergone any diagnostic treatment for sleep disorder, but then again, I don't suffer any of the symptoms.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS

The other night I went to see the Martin Scorsese film *The Aviator*. On my way out of the theater, I listened as two persons in front of me discussed what they had just seen. Their thoughts, impressions, and attention to details depicted in the movie differed, but one could tell immediately—in fact, there wasn't any question—that they were talking about the same show. I think this is much like the hundreds of abduction experiences I've read since, mine included. People have had remarkably similar things happen, and those experiences are colored and vary by cultural and perceptual differences from person to person.

When I was 25 years old I incurred spinal injuries and associated nerve damage. After years of unsuccessful remedies and treatments, a doctor prescribed Bextra, a Cox-2 pain inhibitor in the same family of drugs as Mercks' Vioxx (now being litigated as a potential cause of 100,000 or more heart-related fatalities). Although Bextra had given me the first real pain relief I'd had in years, I became suspicious of it when Vioxx was pulled from drugstore shelves. I called my doctor, who immediately assured me that she had in turn been assured that Bextra was not related in any way to the dangers presented by Vioxx. If I were to believe science and the FDA, I had nothing whatever to worry about. Not being an idiot, however, I stopped taking it the moment I hung up the phone.

Three weeks later, Bextra was named by Merck's whistleblower as one of the five specifically dangerous drugs under investigation. I checked with friends on similar medication. We'd all quit taking them. All of us had quit taking them because we knew better. It took an ethical whistleblower and science three weeks to catch up with what had already become apparent to many of us.

Similarly, abductees will have to suffer until science and honest inquiry catch up. I don't know if my particular path to discovery is possible any longer. Countless movies, books, and television programs have borrowed heavily from the lists to which I belonged. They've changed the landscape utterly and forever by pumping abduction elements into the mainstream culture. But I contend there is a valid core of the abduction experience, and it isn't being taken seriously. All the while, those of us having this experience know better.

I'd like to say something on behalf of the researchers and writers I've met on my personal path of discovery. The great majority are sincere, dedicated, and bright. At no time did I feel I was being led, influenced, or in any way taken advantage of. To the contrary, I was continually challenged about my memories and subsequent beliefs. These researchers, I learned, are not at all as (negatively) portrayed in mainstream media.

Being an abductee is lonely, uncomfortable, and sometimes terrifying. If I were to offer advice to someone contemplating looking more deeply into his or her own experiences, I'd urge caution. However sincerely you devote yourself, there is no solution—no bottom or end to it. I urge you to leave the potential terror alone. Enjoy the simple pleasure of being alive. Don't surrender it to those beings who already seem to take so much. ✦

RECENT IFO REPORT

April 1. Western Australia. Perth Observatory suspects that an unidentified object seen in the skies of Western Australia and the Northern Territory was space junk. Astronomer Peter Birch said the object was tracked from the south coast of Western Australia to north of Alice Springs, and has been tentatively identified as part of a Russian spacecraft launched in 1970.

"That of a large burning object in the sky, flaring getting bright, then getting dim, then getting bright again, with a tail out behind it, which is a fairly common meteor type description, but the thing that is a bit different from a meteor description is that it's been seen over such a large area and for such a long time," he said.

Alice Springs police say they received more than 20 reports of the UFO tracking across central Australian skies. Resident Fiona Higgins witnessed the rare event: "I saw what I thought was fireworks and I thought, that's strange because I didn't hear any bang like you would with fireworks and it was going horizontal not vertical and it was the most phenomenal thing with all the pretty colours," she said.—*Australian Broadcasting Corporation, April 2, 2005.*