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CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE CREDIBLE KIND

Investigations into 99% of UFO sightings have resulted in rational and very Earthly explanations. But then there are those few that simply have no explanation. Here are three cases that still have the experts baffled.

STRANGE BALL

In 1783 a London, England, man named Tiberius Cavallo, Fellow of the Royal Society, witnessed something that was unlike anything he'd ever seen before. "Northeast of the Terrace," he wrote in his memoirs, "in clear sky and warm weather, I saw appear suddenly an oblong cloud nearly parallel to the horizon. Below the cloud was seen a luminous body, brightly lit up and almost stationary." Cavallo described the object as a "strange ball" that was faint blue when he first saw it but then grew brighter and brighter. At one point, it flew high up into the air, then back down, and flew low across the horizon. After a few minutes, "it changed shape to oblong, acquired a tail, and seemed to split up into two bodies of small size." The object then disappeared over the horizon in a flash, and the last thing Cavallo heard from it was a "loud rumble like an explosion." Thinking the object may have crashed, Cavallo and other witnesses searched the area, but couldn't find a craft or an impact crater. One possible explanation: The "explosion" may have been a sonic boom, created when an object goes faster than the speed of sound...but this happened more than 150 years before humans had invented any type of vehicle that could break the sound barrier.

STS 48

While stationed in Earth orbit in September 1991, the Space Shuttle *Columbia's* aft-mounted TV camera recorded video of several unidentified objects that seemed to be "swimming around." The camera was focused on an experimental tether 44 miles away, and beyond that was the horizon of the Earth. The glowing white objects intermittently

...human race could fit into an area about the size of a sugar cube.



entered the frame, and then turned and swam around, like microbes swimming in a petri dish. After a few minutes, a white flash appeared in the bottom left corner of the screen and suddenly, as if on cue, the little white objects all turned in unison and zoomed out of the frame. A few seconds later, a streak of light entered the frame and seemed to pause. Then, inexplicably, the camera rotated down toward the cargo bay, which was completely out of focus, then rotated back up...and the lights were gone.

NASA has dismissed the objects as “normal ice and debris” that sometimes float around ships in orbit. But these weren’t floating; they were moving independently of each other and changing direction. And the occasional “debris” NASA referred to is usually found close to the ship. The camera was focused miles away on the long tether, and some of the objects appeared to fly *behind* the tether. So what were these things? No one knows for sure. They are truly unidentified flying objects.

FLAMING ARROW

On the night of June 30, 2002, a UFO was sighted across nearly all of central China. It was first seen over the eastern province of Jiangsu, then moved west, over Henan province, then Xiapi province, and then Sichuan. “At 10:30 p.m., an object resembling a flaming arrow appeared in the night sky,” wrote Henan’s *City Morning Post* the next day. “Then the tail of the fiery arrow opened up like a fan, which emitted bright light. The light-emitting section then changed into a crescent. A fireball on top of the crescent glowed brilliantly. Five minutes later, the UFO disappeared.”

Dozens of other newspapers reported the event, based on thousands of eyewitness accounts. The government had no explanation, except to say that it was definitely not a Chinese craft. Wang Sichao, a well-respected astronomer at Nanjing’s Zijinshan Astronomy Center, studied the reports and photographs, and offered this conclusion: “It is a dimensional flying machine. But whether it is of human origin or extraterrestrial, whether it is controlled inside or remotely, are still unknown. Maybe we will not be able to uncover the truth for many years, but human curiosity will never let us stop searching.”

The name of toymaker Hasbro is short for Hassenfeld Brothers.