

“The Craft” (2017) by Monira Al Qadiri
16 minutes, color, sound

English script with timestamps:

[1:07 – 1:25]

My father is riding a Mercedes car in Senegal in 1982, a year before I was born. While looking at the quiet beautiful streets of Dakar, you start to notice something's not quite right here. Everything is not as it seems.

[1:40 – 1:56]

You start to question reality, the world as a whole. Are we really where we think we are? Are we really there? Are we really us?

[2:06 – 2:36]

He's heading towards the Kuwait embassy where he works. Only the embassy wasn't really an embassy. It was an elaborate shell, hiding something completely different. Completely otherworldly. Who could have even imagined what was going on in there. That there were strange malevolent creatures from another world doing their dealings behind those doors, shattering the reality we know and trust to be true.

[2:56 – 3:04]

In fact, the embassy was an alien space craft, concealing the biggest conspiracy known to man.

[3:14 – 3:20]

A global plot to subsume the human race.
An intergalactic communion of agents.

[3:24 – 3:44]

Perfectly hidden from view, this other universe was concealed behind the guise of international diplomacy, where embassy buildings were actually extraterrestrial spaceships and landing pods.

We only found out the truth much later. Much much later.

[4:47 – 5:27]

It was the summer of 1988. I was five years old, my sister seven. My mother was constantly working, always out, leaving me and my sister at home alone. That night, our little world was about to change forever, but we weren't given

the slightest warning. We were just playing and drawing at home and thinking about how much we missed our mother. We were innocent. She and my father had kept this secret from us for so long, but it was finally going to be exposed tonight.

[5:42 – 6:01]

My mother wasn't supposed to leave the house that night. She told us she was going to some party at an embassy, but we refused to let go of her. We held on tight, but she pulled away and walked out of the house.

[6:15 – 6:20]

We ran after her calling her name. Outside, we saw something hovering above.

[6:26 – 6:31]

The nanny tried to stop us from following her, but my sister broke free of her grip.

[6:42 – 6:48]

She ran after my mother, up the stairs, into the craft. I was crying violently.

[6:55 – 6:58]

After that, black out...

[7:10 – 8:24]

Suddenly, we both woke up, crying. Was it reality or a dream we had just experienced? The tears rolled down our cheeks and we stared at each other. "You saw it too, right?" "Yes" she said. Our stories were identical, what we saw was real. But why, why did they hide it from us? I couldn't say. My sister described to me in detail what had happened to her. After she followed my mother into the craft, she saw the inside of the ship. It was in fact, designed like an American diner. Each table had salt and pepper shakers, ketchup and mustard on them. The aliens were casually conversing with the humans, as though they had developed long relationships over time. They ate hamburgers and drank coke. To them, everything was normal. My mother noticed my sister behind her and scolded her "what are you doing here!?" she grabbed her by the arm and escorted her out. She doesn't have a memory beyond that point.

[8:53 – 9:37]

After the incident, I started fantasizing about the beautiful diner, and the aliens. What did they look like? Were they green and blue, or more human like? Or were they monsters, with white skin and sharp pointed teeth. I so regretted not being able to see the inside of that space ship, not bearing witness to the diner. I drew and drew, everything I could imagine to have been there. The lingering suspicion towards my parents never subsided. It was never going to go away. Things were never going to be the same again.

[10:16 – 10:48]

Even the war in 1990, we knew it wasn't as they told us it was. All those flashing green lights in the sky were definitely alien space ships flying around us. They tried desperately to make it look like human conflict, but it was too late, we already knew it was part of the alien invasion. We knew those soldiers weren't 'human'. They were so terrifying, and had big fake looking moustaches, like they were wearing costumes.

[10:54 – 11:08]

I tried imagining one soldier squashed inside a hamburger. Maybe if we poured mustard and ketchup on him, he would show us his real face. I dreamt of all these different scenarios to beat the alien invaders.

[11:19 – 11:34]

After the war, my family was interviewed by a local TV station. I'm trying to act normal, but I'm dying to tell him what happened. I want to tell him all about the aliens, my parents, and the space craft that we saw.

[11:36 – 11:57]

I try to show him my drawings of the aliens. He refers to them wrongly as monsters. I want to correct him, when my father quickly whispers in my ear say they are enemy soldiers. Afraid to disobey him, I comply.

[11:57 – 12:18]

ENGLISH SUBTITLES (burnt-in):

- What are these?
- They're all aliens.
- Who are these aliens?
- Iraqi soldiers.
- They are Iraqi soldiers.
- Which ones?
- All of them.
- All of them? Even this tree?

- So when you go outside and see them, what do you feel?
- I feel like they will take me far away from here.

[12:22 – 12:28]

Next time, I'll have my way.

I'll tell them all about the space craft, the aliens, and the conspiracy.

[12:53 – 14:33]

Twenty years later, it was 2011 and I was cruising around Beirut. I was staring out of the car window and there it was! It was just lying there in the middle of the city, completely unnoticed. The alien craft managed to conceal itself by pretending to be an old war ruin, but I instantly recognized it. I immediately ran out of the car, and headed towards the entrance. My excitement peaked at the thought that I'm finally going to be able to see the diner, and the aliens. The truth is going to finally reveal itself to me.

I ran and opened the door, when a cloud of dirt and dust blew into my eyes.

Through the dust though, I could see the contours of the diner, but barely.

It was all a shambles, lying in ruin, a shadow of its former self.

In the distance, I noticed a figure sitting down and smoking a shisha, alone.

It was the alien. I asked him what had happened: why wasn't the spaceship flying anymore? Why is the diner empty? Where are the others? Where is the conspiracy?

He puffed the smoke and stared at me with his old wrinkled face and dead eyes, he gave me this look of disdain, as if life had taken its toll on him and he's had enough. He feebly replied:

"Its all over now. Were out of business. The plan failed. Go away."