

A Dingo Ate Her Baby

The Story of Lindy Chamberlain



A wild animal ate her baby girl, but Lindy Chamberlain was charged with the child's murder and spent three years in jail for a crime she didn't commit. Sounds like something right out of a movie, right? Well, you wouldn't be wrong—Hollywood thought the story was so sensational that they made a movie about it in 1988 called *A Cry in the Dark*.

The year was 1980 and Lindy Chamberlain's day started ordinarily enough. The Australian family was on vacation, camping in Uluru at a popular camping ground. Lindy was with her husband Michael, a minister, her two sons, and her 2-month-old daughter Azaria. The family was busy making a campfire, cooking food, and enjoying the great outdoors. On the eve of her disappearance, little Azaria was asleep in one of the Chamberlain's tents. Suddenly, Lindy caught a glimpse of a dingo leaving her daughter's tent and when she went to check on her daughter, she discovered that the baby was gone.

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Dingoes are wild dogs that are native to Australia and although they look like a friendly pet, they are just as wild and deadly as wolves. Like wolves, dingoes are extremely clever and resourceful hunters. Sometimes they hunt in packs, and other times they hunt alone. Dingoes hunt everything from very small animals to prey as large as gray kangaroos. Dingoes are not known for attacking humans, but that doesn't mean they won't.



Uluru is also known as Ayers Rock

Two years before the Chamberlain family camped there, Derek Roff, an Uluru park ranger, began writing to the government asking for help in controlling the growing dingo population, warning that the dingo population had gotten too big and that if nothing was done to control it, it would lead to a human tragedy. Nothing, however, was done and the dingo population continued to increase rapidly and with dire consequences.

When Lindy Chamberlain told authorities what happened to her baby, they didn't believe her. Authorities launched a massive search around the Uluru area. Baby Azaria's body was never found, but they did find the jumpsuit she was wearing when she was

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taken. There was blood around the neck of the jump suit, which indicated that the cause of her death was a violent one. One important piece of evidence that wasn't found at the time was the cardigan that the baby was wearing over her jumpsuit. It was this cardigan that would eventually exonerate Lindy, proving that she wasn't guilty and that she was right about the dingo all along.

Authorities launched an investigation and charged Lindy Chamberlain with the murder of her infant child. The case sparked so much public interest that Lindy's trial was televised all across Australia—something that had never been done before. Televising her trial was very hard on Lindy and her family. She had just lost her baby in a terrible accident and now all of Australia tuned in to see if she was guilty of murder.

Public opinion—what the public thought of Lindy—may have made matters worse. People watching the trial said that Lindy was too unemotional, that she looked too calm for a woman whose baby was eaten by wild animals. Lindy's calm and controlled demeanor convinced many Australians that Lindy was guilty.

In October of 1982, Lindy Chamberlain was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. This meant that she would not be able to be with her surviving children as they grew up—it was a horrible tragedy.

During her three years in prison, Lindy appealed many times for a new trial to review the existing evidence and look for more evidence. A lot of the evidence used to convict Lindy was circumstantial, meaning it wasn't solid evidence that proved Lindy's guilt one way or another. The evidence only proved that Lindy was near her baby when she disappeared—not that Lindy killed her.

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In 1986, new evidence was found that helped prove Lindy's dingo story. Someone found the cardigan that the Chamberlain's claimed that Azaria was wearing at the time of her disappearance. Until now, many people didn't believe such a cardigan even existed. The cardigan was half-buried next to a dingo lair in an isolated area of Uluru. The cardigan had Azaria's blood on it and the fact that it was buried near a dingo lair was proof enough to get Lindy released from jail. But it wasn't until 2012 that authorities finally resolved the case and changed Azaria's death certificate to say that the baby died as a result of a dingo attack.

Even though Lindy was released from prison in 1986, it took another 32 years for the courts to officially rule that Lindy was not guilty of her daughter's death. After such a long time, Lindy felt relieved. "No longer will Australia be able to say that dingoes are not dangerous and will only attack if provoked," Lindy said in an Australian newspaper interview. "We live in a beautiful country, but it is dangerous."

