

Cambridge English Readers

Level 2

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Superbird

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People in the story

Radio Announcer: announcer for Radio News Today programme

Mary Mount: astronaut on Superbird

Sam Bridges: astronaut on Superbird

June: Mary's friend

Sheila: June's daughter

Captain Lake: Captain of Superbird 2

Major Jones: Captain of Big Bird

Part 1

Chapter 1 *Superbird crashes in the desert*

Good morning. Welcome to Radio NewsToday. Twenty years ago today Superbird crashed into a hill in the middle of a desert. Well, we all know that, don't we? We all read the news in the Daily Star that said five people died: Ford, Stone, Sands, Bridges and Mount.

But now I can tell you the good news. Only four people died! That's right! Mary Mount came back from the journey to that strange land on Superbird. She's sixty years old now. This morning they let me visit Mary Mount. This is the first time she has ever spoken about the journey and the crash in the desert. Here is a recording of our conversation:

Hello Mary. It's nice to meet you. How are you?

I'm OK. I'm feeling a little old, but I'm happy to be here. It's nice to talk to somebody new.

Today Mary, is July 4th, twenty years since the crash in the desert.

Is it really? Twenty years ago today? I knew it was a special day today.

Would you tell us about that journey twenty years ago?

Well, it's strange. I've been quiet all this time. Then they said I can speak to you. So, yes, I think I can remember. What would you like to know?'

Well, could you tell us about that night in the desert?
What happened exactly?

Ah, that night. Yes, I can remember that night. We were flying over this strange new place. We were taking photos of lights. First, there were lots of lights below us, lots of lights all together. Cities of lights. Then there were no lights. Just dark. And then there was a very loud noise, thunder, and something hit Superbird very hard.

What was it?

I don't know what it was. We tried the radio. Nothing. Then the lights in the ship went out. There was another loud noise, more thunder, and then lightning in the sky. Then it became very quiet. Superbird's engines just stopped.

Is that when you crashed into a hill?

Well, Bill Ford tried to land Superbird on the sand first. In the desert. There was soft sand everywhere. We landed on the sand. But then Superbird bounced just like a ball. Once, twice, three times. That's when we hit the hill.

And that's when all the men died?

No. No. Not then. Not straightaway. Bill Ford and Steve Stone died when we hit the hill, yes. Alan Sands was hurt. He couldn't move. But Sam Bridges and I were OK.

I looked out of the window of Superbird, but I couldn't see anything. No lights; just darkness. Everything was black. Sam and I were afraid. We held hands.

'Let's go outside,' Sam said. 'Let's get away from the ship before they come.'

Who was he talking about?

I didn't know. I couldn't see anybody outside. I said, 'What about Alan?' Alan heard me and he said, 'You must go. Now. Go now before they come.'

Did you leave Alan Sands on Superbird?

Yes. We had to choose. We gave Alan a drink and then we left him on the floor. We opened the door of Superbird and went outside. We walked down the hill.

Then we saw lights on the road coming towards us fast. There were lots of bright lights and a very loud noise.

What were they?

Cars and trucks. We could only see the lights. We stayed close to the ground. We were hoping the lights would go on past us. But they stopped near the hill. Then there were lots of people and lots of noise, people shouting at each other. They put a light on Superbird. I could see Alan inside Superbird. He was looking out of the window.

Did they see you?

No. We were in the dark and they were all looking at Superbird.

Then somebody shouted and a lot of them ran up the hill. Some of them went inside Superbird. I could hear guns. They shot Alan. I could hear him shouting, screaming. He couldn't escape. They shot him three times; three shots. Then everything was quiet.

What about you? Did you have guns?

No. We had nothing. We stayed near the ground in the sand and watched from the dark. Then they came out of Superbird. They were carrying bags. Three bags. Ford, Stone and Sands. Then some of the lights went away, along the road, taking the bags. But some of them stayed on the hill. They were watching Superbird. But they couldn't see us.