

Sunny Swift

'Flying should be fun'

PHILIPPE, SUNNY'S FRIEND, IS AN EXPERIENCED BALLOON PILOT. ALINE, HIS DAUGHTER, IS GETTING HER LICENCE. TODAY THEY ARE WATCHING BALLOONS FLY.

WOW, ARE THEY MAGNIFICENT!

DANG, WE'D BE FLYING NOW IF IT WERE NOT FOR MY ARM.

HOW DID THE ACCIDENT HAPPEN, PHILIPPE?

IT WAS A FLIGHT WITH 8 PASSENGERS. I WAS A BIT CONCERNED ABOUT THE WEATHER. THERE WERE GUSTS OF UP TO 15 KT IN THE AREA, AND STORMS IN THE FORECAST. BUT WE HAD ALREADY POSTPONED THIS FLIGHT TWICE.

WHERE ARE THE STORMS?

40 KM TO THE SOUTH-EAST. WITH TODAY'S NORTH-EAST WIND, IT WOULD BE VERY BAD LUCK TO GO TOWARDS THEM. OR WHAT DO YOU THINK?

IF YOU TAKE OFF NOW, YOU SHOULD LAND BEFORE THE STORMS FORM.

YES, THEN LET'S GET GOING!

I WAS RELUCTANT TO CANCEL THE FLIGHT – AND I HAVE TO SAY, CONFIDENT ABOUT MY SKILLS...

WE TOOK OFF. AT THE BEGINNING, THE PASSENGERS ENJOYED A LOW FLIGHT OVER THE COUNTRYSIDE. HOWEVER, WHEN WE WERE CROSSING THE RIVER DOUBS, THE WIND DIRECTION CHANGED, PUSHING US TOWARDS THE EAST.

WHOOSH WHOOSH

GUSTS STARTED HITTING US VERY HARD, EVEN DEFORMING THE ENVELOPE. I TRIED TO REASSURE THE PASSENGERS, ALTHOUGH I WAS QUITE WORRIED MYSELF. I REALISED WE WERE GOING STRAIGHT INTO THE STORM. BEFORE THINGS GOT WORSE, AND DESPITE THE VERY STRONG WIND, I DECIDED TO LAND.

THE LANDING WAS VERY HARD. IT HAD TO BE! AT THE SECOND REBOUND, I FELT MY ARM SNAP WITH GREAT PAIN. WE WERE DRAGGED FOR SOME 100 M AND STOPPED JUST BEFORE A FOREST. A PASSENGER SPRAINED HER ANKLE. SURELY THAT'S NOT WHAT THEY IMAGINED WHEN THEY BOOKED THE FLIGHT.

OH!

THE RIGHT DECISION WOULD HAVE BEEN TO POSTPONE THE FLIGHT, EVEN IF IT HAD BEEN INCONVENIENT FOR THE PASSENGERS, THE CREW OR WHOEVER. I HAD TO LEARN IT THE HARD WAY. AS FOR THUNDERSTORMS, EVEN IF THEY ARE FAR AWAY, THEY SUCK AIR FROM A LARGE AREA AROUND THEM.

I HAVE BEEN TAUGHT TO KEEP CLEAR OF THUNDERSTORMS WITH A RADIUS OF 80 KM. IN SUMMER, THEY CAN DEVELOP VERY QUICKLY...

THERE IS A SAYING IN BALLOONING: IT'S BETTER TO BE ON THE GROUND AND WISHING TO BE FLYING, THAN TO BE UP IN THE BASKET AND LONGING TO GET BACK IN THE ARMS OF MOTHER EARTH!

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU IN CHAMBLEY AT GEMAB THIS YEAR!

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- Weather references, and
- Balloon references

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