

**STEP**<sup>TM</sup>  
**into Reading**

A Step 3 Book  
Grades 2-3



# AMAZING RESCUES



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A large, multi-engine airplane, a DC-4, is parked on a tarmac. A large crowd of people, many wearing colorful jumpsuits and helmets, is gathered around the plane, boarding it. The scene is set in a desert-like environment with mountains in the background. The sky is blue with some clouds. The overall atmosphere is one of excitement and anticipation for a skydiving event.

## Amazing Rescue in the Air

Arizona, 1987.

A big group of skydivers is boarding an old DC-4 airplane. Everyone is excited. Today the divers will jump in teams, and there are some thrilling dives planned.

Each team will free-fall together. Some will form circles; some, snowflakes and other patterns. At the last moment, the divers will open their parachutes and float safely to the ground.

But skydiving is a dangerous sport. Accidents can happen.

The plane takes off. At 13,500 feet, the hatch is opened, and divers start jumping out.

A diver named Gregory stands near the hatch. It is his job to see that everyone jumps safely. He will jump last.

Gregory has made more than 1,500 jumps. He is one of the best skydivers in the United States.



It's the last team's turn. The six divers are going to make a circle in the air.

Four of the divers hold hands and jump out of the plane together. The other two—Alex and Debbie—jump next. Alex goes down to join the group.

So far, everything is going as planned.

But suddenly things start to go wrong.

A blast of air blows one diver—Guy—right out of the circle.

At the same moment, Alex joins the three divers who are still together. But Alex is falling too fast. He makes the group fall faster.

Now it is Debbie's turn to join the circle. And Guy has to get back too.

They both tuck their heads in for a fast fall.

But there is a big problem. Debbie can't see Guy. And Guy can't see Debbie. And they are zooming toward each other!

Gregory—the last to dive—sees the whole thing.

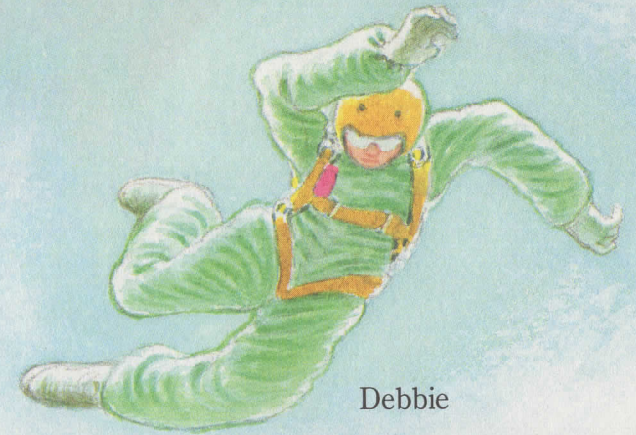


A second later, it happens.

Debbie smashes into Guy's backpack.  
Then her body snaps around. Again she  
bangs into Guy very hard.



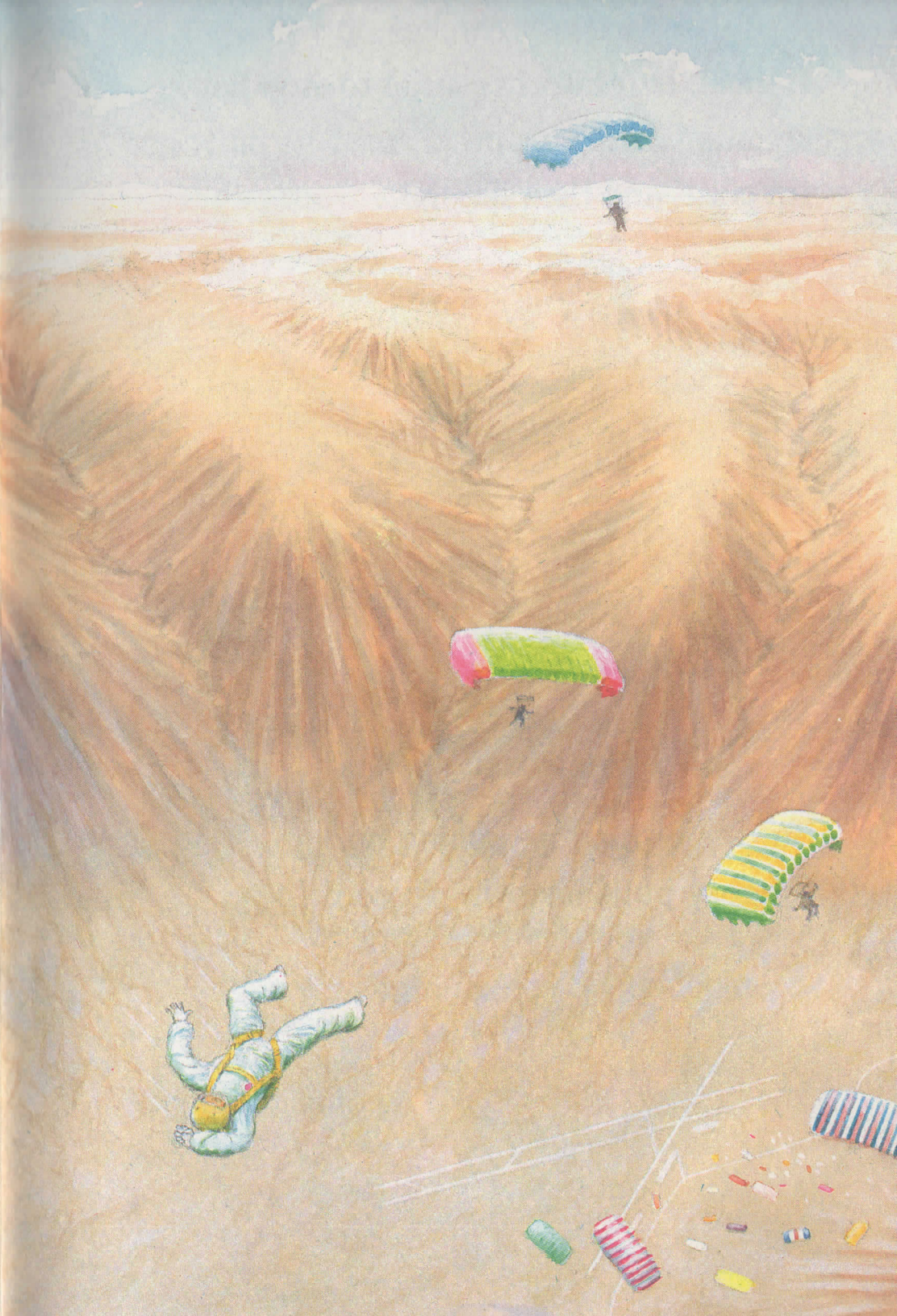
Gregory



Debbie

Gregory can tell that Guy is still  
conscious. Even though he is hurt, Guy  
will be able to open his chute and land  
safely.

But Debbie looks like a rag doll  
spinning in space. Gregory can see she is  
unconscious. Her chute won't open unless  
she pulls the rip cord. And she won't  
come to in time.



Instantly, Gregory goes into a fast dive. Head tucked. Arms at his sides. Legs together. Toes pointed.

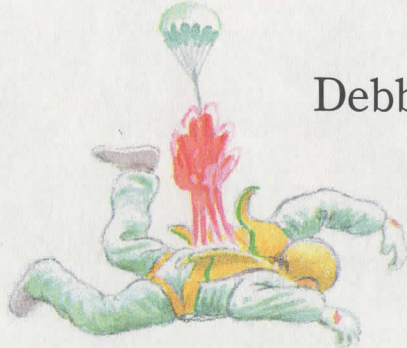
He looks like Superman, diving through the sky. In fifteen seconds he drops more than 3,000 feet.

He has only twelve seconds left before he and Debbie hit the ground.

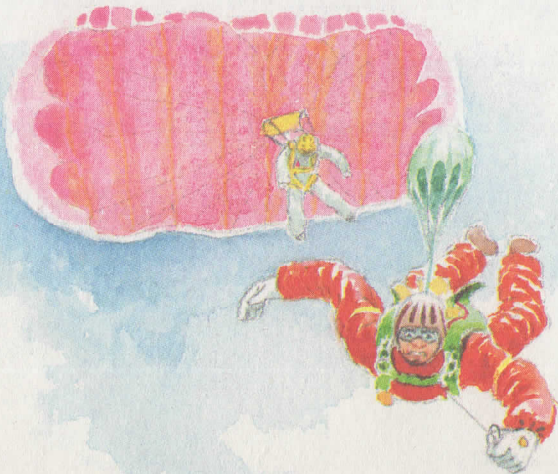
When Gregory catches up with Debbie, he grabs her strap to stop her spinning. With his other hand he pulls her rip cord, and then lets go.



Debbie's chute opens.



But the ground is rushing up.  
Gregory pulls his own rip cord.



Gregory's chute opens. Seconds later,  
he lands.

The rescue has taken only twenty-five  
seconds!

Debbie hits the ground, still unconscious. But she is alive!

A helicopter takes her to a hospital. She has many injuries, including nine broken ribs. But she is going to be all right.

People call Gregory "Superman," but he is a real-life hero without superhuman powers. He saw what had to be done to save somebody's life. And he did it!

