

SUPERCAR:
"Forbidden Island"
By
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"Did you see that, Mike?" Ten-year-old Jimmy Gibson pointed toward the southern horizon.

"What is it, Jimmy?" Supercar pilot Mike Mercury raised his sunglasses from in front of his eyes and squinted in the general direction that the boy had indicated.

"I'm not sure," Jimmy muttered. "It looked like something floating on the water."

"Could be a fishing boat." But even as Mike said it, he knew it was unlikely. Thanks to Supercar's advanced navigation systems, they were not required to follow the normal air or sea routes and could travel in more or less a straight line directly to their destination. They were far from the commercial shipping lanes and even the most remote fishing areas.

Mike could easily understand if his young companion was beginning to imagine things. Even at the fantastic speed they were traveling, it was still turning out to be a very long trip back to their headquarters in Black Rock Nevada, USA. Since dropping off Dr. Beaker at his scientific conference in Malaysia there had been little to see out of Supercar's transparent canopy except miles and miles of ocean. Jimmy's pet monkey, Mitch, had long ago given up and gone to sleep in his specially built compartment behind the rear passenger seat. Mike at least had the piloting of Supercar to keep him occupied.

"It didn't look big enough for a—" Jimmy began. The boy's eyes went wide. "There!"

Mike tilted his head to one side and squinted again. Indeed, there was a tiny object bobbing on the waves below them. "By golly you're right, Jim! Let's switch on *Clear-View* and see if we can get a closer look." The television monitor in the center of the console flickered to life as Mike attempted to bring up an image of the object. "It's a raft!" he cried out when it finally came in to focus. "Looks like there's somebody on board, too! Reducing speed!" Mike quickly throttled back Supercar's engines. Their forward momentum ceased and they were now hovering directly over the raft. "Selecting vertical descent," Mike announced.

"Wow!" Jimmy said softly, "We're actually gonna rescue somebody!"

"We sure are, Jim," Mike said, grinning. "Whoever is down there has your sharp eyes to thank for it. I guess we're going to have to start calling you 'Eagle Eye' from now on."

"Why are you bringing us down so far away, Mike?"

"I don't want to risk the exhaust from Supercar's engines upsetting the raft."

Once they had settled into the surface of the water, Mike switched the engines to marine-mode and gently eased Supercar along side the tiny craft. It was crudely made from the trunks of several big palm trees, and was lashed together with ropes made out of braided vines. Sprawled across it was a single passenger.

"It's a girl!" gasped Jimmy. She looked to be about ten years old, the same age as Jimmy, with dark skin and long black hair. She was dressed in a simple wrap-around

sarong decorated with a pattern of colorful tropical flowers and wore a single white orchid behind her ear.

“She must be from one of the nearby islands. I wonder how she—Jimmy!” Before Mike could stop him, the boy had unbuckled his seatbelt, opened the canopy and climbed out of the cockpit. Mike held his breath, fearful that the boy’s added weight might be more than the little craft could handle, but much to his relief, the raft and its passengers remained afloat.

“Mike! She’s still breathing! She’s alive!” Jimmy awkwardly picked the girl up and struggled to carry her back to Supercar. As soon as he was close enough, Mike immediately grabbed her out of the boy’s arms and gently laid her out on the back seat.

“Is she gonna be okay, Mike,” Jimmy queried as the pilot examined their new passenger.

“She’ll be okay—” Mike wheeled around to face Jimmy, “—but you won’t be if you ever go charging off like that again, young man. You could have easily tipped that raft over and then I might have had to risk leaving Supercar unmanned in order to fish the both of you out of the water!”

The boy lowered his head, properly chastised. “I’m sorry, Mike.”

His anger spent, Mike smiled and tousled the boy’s red hair. “I know your heart was in the right place, Jim,” he tapped the top of the boy’s head with his finger, “but you’ve got to use your brain as well. There’s not much point in rescuing someone if you’re just going to dump them back into the drink again.”

“Supercar to base. Come in, Professor.”

“Base to Supercar,” Professor Rudolf Popkiss yawned into the microphone as he sat down at the control console in the team’s secret laboratory outside Black Rock, Nevada, USA. If anything, the gray-haired, roly-poly old professor’s European accent became even thicker when he was sleepy. “What’s the problem, Mike?”

“Sorry to wake you, Professor,” Mike apologized. “I know it’s the middle of the night back there, but we’ve got an emergency.”

“Are you having trouble with the turbine pressure again?” Still half asleep, the old man’s hands began fumbling across the cluttered desk, searching for the book of Supercar’s schematic drawings.

“It’s nothing mechanical, Professor,” Mike reassured him. “Supercar is fine. We’ve found a young castaway floating on a raft in the middle of the Pacific and we need the location of the nearest U.S. Naval base with a decent hospital.” Mike gave the professor their coordinates and within a few minutes, they were winging their way to a small American base on a tiny island known as Borna.

As soon as Supercar touched down on the main runway, a small army of medics quickly but gently loaded the girl onto a stretcher and hustled her off to the sick bay. Commander Jim “Buzz” Grissom, a tall, outgoing American with a friendly grin and a firm handshake, introduced himself and offered them the base’s hospitality. “I’ll show

you two to the V.I.P. quarters. If you like, you can clean up and get a bite to eat while you're waiting to hear something about your little friend."

"Thanks!" said Jimmy. "It feels as if we've been flying for days!"

Mitch the monkey grunted and squealed his agreement.

As they followed the Commander across the runway, Mike and Jimmy became aware of several sailors sweeping up palm branches and other bits of debris from the runway.

"Speaking of 'cleaning'" the Commander added, "you'll have to pardon the mess, but we're still cleaning up from Agnes."

"Agnes?" inquired Jimmy.

"She was no lady, that's for sure," remarked Mike. "You remember, Jimmy? That was the typhoon that passed through this area a couple of days ago. She was the reason we had to delay our return to Black Rock. I doubt even Supercar could tangle with a class four storm like that and live to tell about it."

"We were very lucky," Commander Grissom noted. "We only caught a glancing blow from her. We only just managed to get most of our big ships out to sea and out of harm's way. The worst that happened to us was that our communications were knocked out until just before you called. Some of the other islands in the area weren't so lucky. Now that we're up and running again, we can finally start sending out reconnaissance teams to assess the damage and see where help is needed."

"Judging by the floral pattern of her sarong," the Doctor mused as they settled down in the waiting room, "I'd say she was from one of a small chain of islands just northwest of here. It's a favorite design of their weavers."