

MARVEL



**CAPTAIN
MARVEL**

AN ORIGIN STORY

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A STUDIO PRESS BOOK

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MARVEL CAPTAIN MARVEL

Sharon Gosling

AN ORIGIN STORY

CHAPTER 1

DISASTER IN THE ARCTIC

'Girl, are you *seeing* this?'

Over the phone, Spider-Woman's voice somehow managed to sound both horrified and just a tiny bit excited, which was actually pretty standard for Captain Marvel's friend.

Carol – Captain Marvel – stared at the video footage on her TV screen.

'Yeah,' she said. 'I'm seeing it.'

Something extremely bad was happening in the Arctic. The news programme was showing live footage of what looked like a volcano erupting from deep beneath a

glacier. The ice was quaking with the force of a thousand bombs going off all at once, as something ripped its way up from far below the surface. Massive cracks began to appear in the ice, tearing jagged chunks out of the snow-covered landscape.

'There are people there,' said Spider-Woman. 'Look!'

The shaky footage was showing a ship caught amid the freezing waters, being thrown this way and that in the choppy ocean. As Captain Marvel watched, a huge cliff of ice sheared off from the quaking edge of the glacier and crashed into the water, sending an even larger wave towards the struggling ship.

'Have you got this?' asked Spider-Woman. 'I'm kind of tied up right now. You know I'd be there if I could, right? I'm not just leaving you to do this on your own because I hate the cold. I mean, I *do* hate the cold – snow, ugh, yadda yadda yadda – but that's beside the point.'

Carol grinned. 'Chill. Put your feet up. Have a snow cone.'

'Funny. You're just so *funny*, Carol, that's what I like about you.'

'Can't chat, stuff to do,' Captain Marvel told her friend, as she ran towards the open window of her apartment. 'I got this. Catch you later, Jess!'

She tossed her phone onto the couch and leapt up to her window ledge, pausing for a split second before throwing herself out the window.

The wind hit Carol in the face as she launched herself into the air, her heart beating a crazy rhythm in her chest. It didn't matter how many times she did this, flying just never grew old. How could it? She was flying! It was just the best feeling to be out here, to be free of gravity, to be free of everything, soaring away from the ground and into the sky.

Captain Marvel left New York City and North America behind, rising higher and

higher until the edge of the continent curved away from her. She headed north, flying as fast as she could. She had to find a way to stop what was happening before the ice cap collapsed completely. But first, she had to save the people on that ship.

As she reached the ship, Captain Marvel could see that it was in real trouble. It was simply too small to navigate the huge waves crashing into it. Massive chunks of the glacier kept breaking off, plunging into the ocean and sending yet more water washing over the bucking ship. It made Carol think about what would happen if the whole ice cap melted – cities all over the world would suffer a similar fate.

She could see people on the ship's deck desperately clinging to whatever they could. It was going to sink if she couldn't save it, and quickly.

'You're the strongest woman in the world,' Captain Marvel reminded herself. 'You can do this.'

Carol shot towards the ship faster than a bullet from a gun. She hovered at the ship's prow, just above the icy water, feeling it splash against her suit as she found her grip.

Then she began to lift. The effort made her muscles burn, but the ship began to rise out of the waves, saltwater streaming from the hull. As another gigantic wave burst across her back, Captain Marvel gasped. Still, she didn't let go.

Second by second she gained momentum, shoving the ship clear of the waves until she could set it down on smoother waters again. She let it go and hovered above the deck, letting the water trickle off her suit.

The people on the deck of the ship started to notice her. They looked like the crew of a research vessel – these weren't seasoned deep-sea sailors. Were they scientists? Then Carol saw the logo on their jackets. It belonged to a global oil company.

She turned to look at the disaster still happening beneath the ice, then back at the

people below her.

'Hey,' she said. 'Do you know what that is? Do you know what's happening out there?'

One of the men struggled to his feet, his face pale.

'We – we didn't know,' he stammered. 'We didn't know this would happen!'

Captain Marvel landed on deck, standing before him with her hands on her hips. 'You didn't know what would happen? What did you do?'

'We found something beneath the ice,' the man said. 'It must have been there for centuries, but with climate change, the ice has now melted enough for us to detect it.'

'What is it?' Carol demanded. 'What did you find?'

'We don't know. Some sort of machine. We thought – *I* thought – that if we could get it out, we might be able to use it to mine the oil that's below the surface. But something activated it before we could get it out.'

'Now it's destroying the entire ice cap,'

said a woman next to him. 'If that happens, these waves are going to look like droplets in comparison with what will come next. It will destroy *everything*. Earth will never be the same.'

'Not if I can stop it,' said the super hero. 'Get out of here. Get the ship as far away as you can. I'll deal with this – whatever it is.'

Captain Marvel flew into the air again, speeding back towards the rupturing mass of land and ice. A shape was visible now, a dark shadow was forcing its way towards the surface from beneath the splintering ice and snow.

Something punched its way free of the ice. It was a massive metal hand. It smashed down into the snow, clutching for grip as it hauled itself free of its icy prison.

'It's a robot,' Captain Marvel said aloud. 'It's a giant metal robot! Why is it *always* robots?'



CHAPTER 2 **A MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE**

Sometime after midnight on a cold, clear night, the silver-and-red toy robot that Carol had just got for her fifth birthday decided to wake her up and start talking.

'Robot Supreme to Carol Squirt Danvers,' it said, in a low voice that sounded a lot like her big brother Stevie. *'Directive from Robot Control says: Wake up! You're missing all the fun!'*

Carol blinked her bleary eyes and stared at the robot. It had snuck under the duvet she had pulled up over her head.

'What?' she asked.

'Not "what?,"' the robot corrected her

primly. *'Sorry!'*

Carol blinked again. 'Sorry, what?'

'Never mind,' said Stevie in a hushed voice, appearing from the side of the bed and dropping the robot on her pillow. 'Just wake up!'

Carol Danvers' childhood home was in a quiet suburb of Boston, where she lived with her mum Marie, her dad Joe and her two stepbrothers, Stevie and Joe Junior. Though her brothers were a few years older than her, they never minded their little sister hanging around with them. Like now, for instance, when Stevie had snuck into her room to wake her up to play, when she really should have been fast asleep.

'What's happening?' Carol mumbled, still sleepy.

'Ssh,' Stevie whispered. 'Come on, Squirt, we're going on an adventure.'

To five-year-old Carol, the idea of an adventure in the middle of the night was both exciting and scary. She sat up and rubbed her eyes. 'An adventure? Where? Are

Mom and Dad coming?'

'Nope, it's just us and Joe. You'd better hurry, or you'll miss it. Put on the warmest sweater and socks you've got.'

'Are we going very far?' Carol asked.

'Yes,' Stevie said. 'We're going into space. Hurry up!'

Carol rushed to do as her brother said and then followed him out of her room and down the hallway, treading on tiptoe past their parents' bedroom.

She held her breath as they crept down the stairs, avoiding the one that always creaked. Once they were downstairs, she looked around for her other brother.

'Where's Joe?'

'He's already started the adventure,' Stevie told her. 'We're late!'

Stevie took Carol's coat from the hook in the hallway and made her put it on, as he quietly opened the door. Then they went out into the garden. At first Carol couldn't see anything because it was so dark.

'Can't we use a flashlight?' she asked.

'No!' Stevie told her. 'There need to be as few lights as possible or your eyes won't adjust. Come on.'

He led Carol further into the garden.

'Hey, Squirt,' said a voice near Carol's left foot. 'You made it, then.'

It was her brother Joe. He was lying on his back on the grass, zipped inside a sleeping bag. There were two other sleeping bags laid out beside him.

'Quick, get in,' Stevie told her, as he sat down and began to get into his own bag.

Carol did as she was told. 'I thought you said we were going into space?' she asked, disappointed that they hadn't gone any further than their own backyard. She'd imagined a beautiful silver rocket carrying them up into the night sky.

'We are,' Stevie told her. 'Lie back and look at the stars.'

She did. Carol had never really paid attention to the stars properly before. The

more she stared into the darkness, the more pinpricks of light she could see. They were never-ending, and there was so much to take in that her eyes could barely manage it.

Joe's watch started beeping, a tiny sound muffled by all his layers of clothing.

'Okay,' her brother said, as he turned off the alarm. 'Showtime, people.'

'Watch really, really carefully,' Stevie whispered to Carol. 'You'll see something moving. It's going to come over the top of the house.'

All three of them were silent, but Carol didn't know what she was looking for.

'There!' said Joe. 'There it is!'

'I can't see it,' Carol cried. 'What does it look like?'

'Ssh,' Stevie said. 'Look again. It's a light, and it'll be moving.'

'A shooting star?'

'No, slower than that. Look carefully.'

Carol squinted. Then she saw it! A bright light, just like a star, but it was moving

through the night sky in an arc, right over their house.

'What is it?' she asked in wonder.

'It's the International Space Station,' Joe told her. 'You can't always see it from Boston, but tonight you can, just for as long as it takes to travel through our sky.'

Stevie nudged her. 'There are six astronauts up there right now, Squirt,' he said.

Carol watched the little light that was the ISS sail steadily over their heads. She tried to imagine what it would be like to be one of the astronauts inside. How would it feel to be out there, among all those stars, in space?

They watched the light move until it disappeared from view. Then they watched the stars a little longer.

'Right,' Stevie said after a while. 'We'd better get you back to bed, or we'll all be in trouble in the morning.'

Carol didn't move. She was too busy studying the stars.

Stevie nudged her again. 'Squirt?' he asked,

as Joe unzipped his sleeping bag and stood up. 'You fallen asleep?'

'No,' Carol told him, still looking up at the stars. 'Just thinking.'

'Oh? About what?'

'I'm going to go up there one day. I'm going to go to space.'

Her brothers both laughed, though Carol didn't think they were being mean.

'Good for you,' said Joe. 'Our little sister, the astronaut.'

* * *

The next day, Carol asked her mum to take her to the local library.

'I want to learn about space,' she said, over breakfast.

Her dad stopped eating his oatmeal. Her mum and dad shared a look that Carol didn't understand.

'Please, Mommy. If I'm going to be an astronaut, I need to know all about the stars.'

'You don't want to be an astronaut, honey,' said her dad. 'It's dangerous.'

'I do,' Carol said, stoutly.

'You could be an engineer instead,' her mum pointed out. 'You could build space shuttles. That would be cool, wouldn't it?'

'I want to be an astronaut,' Carol insisted.

'It can't hurt to look at some books, can it?' Carol's mum said to her dad.

He sighed. 'Well, if you think it's a good idea...'

They went to the local library and asked the librarian for books about space. The librarian seemed pleased to be asked and pulled out several volumes for Carol to borrow.

'Is this for a school project?' The woman asked.

Carol shook her head. 'No. I'm going to be an astronaut.'

The librarian grinned. 'That's a wonderful goal to have. Did you know that before you can be an astronaut, you need to know how to fly an aircraft? That's why one of the main

routes into the astronaut programme is to join the air force.'

'Oh,' said Carol. 'Then I guess I need to learn to fly.'

The librarian smiled and pulled a thick tome from a higher shelf.

'This is meant for adults really, but I think it'll be perfect for you. It's about one of my heroes. Her name is Helen Cobb. She's a pilot and she's broken all sorts of records. This is a book about her by a journalist called Tracey Burke. She followed Cobb around for a year, writing about her. I think you'll love it. It's got a lot of great photographs, too.'

Carol took the book – it was big and heavy – and looked at the cover. It showed a photograph of a smiling woman standing in front of a beautiful silver plane.

The plane reminded Carol of the rocket she'd imagined bursting out of their backyard.

She didn't hear anything else the librarian or her mum said that afternoon – she was too busy looking at photographs of her new hero.



CHAPTER 3 **HIGHER, FURTHER, FASTER**

Carol Danvers liked school. She particularly liked anything to do with science. Whenever she had to do a presentation to her classmates, it would be about space or flying.

Helen Cobb was Carol's absolute hero, and when it was her turn to choose what to play at break time, she would take her friends on amazing expeditions in her imaginary aircraft. They would burst through Earth's atmosphere and cross space itself, discovering new planets and exploring new landscapes. She ran everywhere as fast as she could, feeling the wind blast across her

cheeks and imagining what it would be like to travel faster than anyone else had ever gone before, to fly even faster than Helen Cobb.

Carol hadn't forgotten that to be a real astronaut she needed to learn to fly. She had never been in a plane before, though. One day when she was out shopping with her family, Carol saw a colourful poster for a tourist flight in a small aeroplane. The advertisement offered a half-an-hour flight over the bay in a Cessna 172, a tiny aircraft that had only four seats. It was white, not silver, but to Carol it looked like something straight out of one of her dreams.

'Mom, Dad!' she said, excited. She pulled her mum by the sleeve and pointed at the poster. 'Look! Can we go?'

Her dad read the poster with a frown. 'Of course we can't, don't be ridiculous.'

'Oh, please!' Carol begged. 'It's my birthday soon.'

'No,' said her dad. 'And that's final.'

Carol looked at her mum, pleading with her eyes. 'Mom, this is the only thing I want for my birthday. Please?'

Her mum looked at her dad. 'It couldn't do any harm, Joe. If it's really what she wants.'

'Marie, look at it,' he replied impatiently. 'It's only got four seats. It looks like a tin can. It'd be like flying in a deathtrap. No.'

Her mum sighed as her dad stalked away, then she smiled down at Carol before catching up with him. As Carol gazed at the poster she heard them talking.

'Why are you encouraging her?' her dad asked.

'It's just a pleasure flight, Joe, that's all. And she wants it so much.'

'It's too dangerous, and you know it.'

Carol wanted to ask why it was dangerous for her to fly when so many other people did it every day, but she didn't. She ended up getting a new bike for her eighth birthday instead. She smiled when she saw it wrapped up with a big red ribbon and bow, even

though it hadn't been exactly what she wanted.

'Wow, Squirt,' said Stevie. 'Looks like you'll be giving Joe and me a run for our money on the ramps, eh?'

Carol grinned. The ramps! She'd been so caught up with wanting to go in the aeroplane that she'd forgotten all about them. On an abandoned lot at the end of their road, Stevie, Joe and a load of their friends had built a series of obstacles to jump over. She couldn't borrow either of her brothers' bikes because they were too big for her. Now she could join in.

For the next few weeks, Carol spent as much time as she could on the obstacle course. Whenever she wasn't at school, that's where she and her friends would be. Some of the ramps were scary at first, and even Stevie was worried about her jumping over them.

'You don't have anything to prove, Squirt,' he said. 'Having a bike is supposed to be fun. Don't do it if you're afraid.'

'I'm not afraid,' Carol said. 'I can't be afraid.'

'What do you mean?' her brother asked.

'I'm going to be an astronaut,' Carol reminded him. 'I'm going to go into space. I can't be afraid of going higher or faster. That's what people who go into space do, isn't it? They don't stop because they're scared.'

Stevie shook his head with a smile and ruffled her hair. 'You, kid sister, are one of a kind.'

Still, Carol *was* scared when she rode over the big ramp for the first time. It looked as if she was going to launch herself straight into the air. She sat on her bike, one foot on the ground and the other on her pedal as she bit her lip and tried to prepare.

She looked up at the blue sky overhead and thought about Helen Cobb. How was Carol going to break any records if she was afraid to ride her bike? She had to do this. She had to.

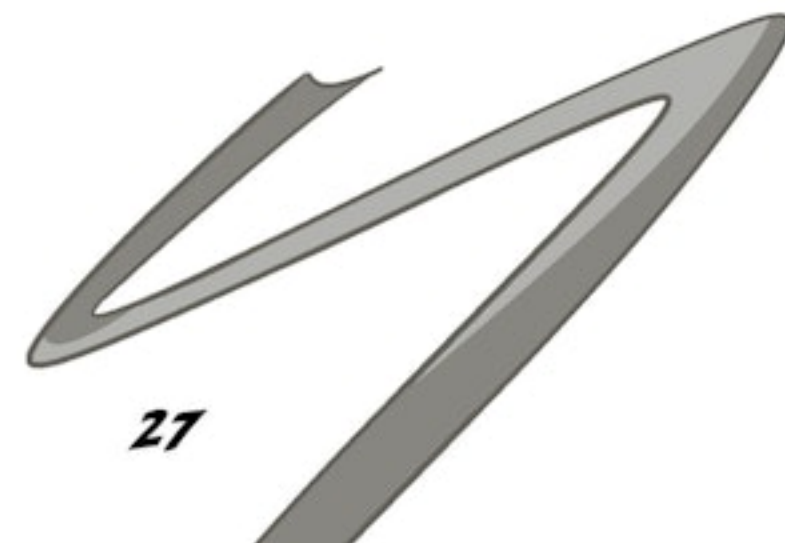
Carol pushed off and pedalled hard down the short hill that led to the jump. When she got to the ramp, she stopped pedalling and just gripped the handlebars. At the last minute she almost stopped herself by slamming down her feet, but she thought about those astronauts up there in the International Space Station, gritted her teeth and hunkered down.

The bike flew off the end of the ramp and the air hit her in the face and, just for an instant, just for a few seconds, Carol felt what it would be like to fly. She laughed and wanted it to go on forever, wanted to soar straight up into the sky and carry on flying, but the laws of gravity and her bike had other ideas.

Carol saw the ground coming up at her too quickly. She tried to brace herself for the impact, tried to land the way her brother Joe had told her to, but it was no good. The bike's front wheel jinked left and Carol flew to the right, crashing to the ground with a *thump!*

She felt a sharp, horrible pain in her wrist and screamed. The pain went on and on, but after a while, Carol didn't care. Not even when her dad got angry at her for doing something so dangerous. Not even when she ended up having to wear a cast for six weeks.

She didn't care because she knew what flying was like now. It was the best feeling in the world, just like she'd always known it would be.



CHAPTER 4 ***SUMMER*** ***SURPRISE***

Every summer, Carol and her family went on holiday to Harpswell Sound in Maine. They had a little house near the water, where Uncle Richie – her dad's brother – kept a fishing boat. Carol had been going there since she was a baby, and she always loved it. The whole family would be together for the summer, and the days seemed endless, filled with sunshine, blue skies and fun.

The year that Carol turned ten, the Danvers family were in Harpswell Sound as usual. Their friend Louis was there too – his family also had a holiday home in the same

area, and Carol and Louis always met up over the summer.

'So, have you seen the poster?' Louis asked Carol, as they sat on the Danvers' porch on the first day of the vacation.

'What poster?' Carol asked.

Louis stood up. 'Come on. Let's go into town and I'll show you. I haven't had a Brain Freezer yet!'

Brain Freezers were a tradition for them. Carol and Louis would compete with each other to see who could eat the biggest chunk of the frozen ice pop without getting a brain freeze. Carol always won, mainly because she never let on that she had a headache from the ice pop, even when she did.

Carol went into the house and shouted for her mum. 'Mom! Can I have some money to get a Brain Freezer with Louis?'

'Take ten dollars out of my purse,' Marie called back.

They got on their bikes and cycled all the way to the store, laughing and joking, glad

that it was summer. After they'd chosen their favourite flavours, Louis led Carol over the road and pointed to a poster that had been pasted on the wall opposite.

'See?' he said, his mouth full of ice pop.

Carol stared at the poster – her own lolly forgotten. The poster was for The Great State of Maine Air Show, which was being held at the airport at Brunswick, only thirty minutes' drive away. What really caught Carol's eye, though, was the picture of a smiling woman standing in front of a gleaming silver plane.

SPECIAL GUEST! proclaimed a banner across the middle of the poster. *RECORD-BREAKING PILOT HELEN COBB IN HER FAMOUS T-6 AEROPLANE!*

'It's her, isn't it?' Louis asked. 'The pilot you're always talking about?'

Carol dropped her Brain Freezer and cycled all the way back to the summer house. When she got there, she yelled for her mum and dad. Her dad came running, a worried look on his face.

'What is it?' he shouted, grabbing her shoulders. 'What's happened?'

'It's Helen Cobb!' Carol cried. 'She's going to be here! In Maine! She's going to be at the air show next weekend! Can we go? Can we?'

Carol's dad let her go and stepped back, his expression turning angry. 'Is that all? I thought something bad had happened!'

'Please say we can go, Dad!' Carol begged. 'Please! I'm never going to get this chance again. She's going to be in her T-6!'

Carol's dad turned to Marie. 'This is your fault,' he told her. 'I said we shouldn't encourage her.' He stalked away, leaving Carol confused.

'What did I do?' Carol asked, trying not to cry. 'I just want to go to the air show, that's all. I just want to see Helen Cobb.'

Her mum hugged her and stroked her hair. 'I know, honey. You didn't do anything wrong. Your dad just worries about you, that's all.'

Carol sniffed, bunching her hands into fists. 'Why me? Why doesn't he worry about

Stevie and Joe? Stevie says he wants to join the army, and Dad doesn't care about that!

'It's not that he doesn't care,' her mum told her. 'Of course he cares. He just worries about you more, that's all.'

'But *why*?'

Her mum shook her head. 'It's difficult to explain, Carol. Look, you go out and play with Louis and the boys. I'll see what I can do about us all going to the air show.'

Whatever her mum said, it worked, because on Saturday morning, all five of the Danvers were on their way to Brunswick. Carol was so excited she could barely breathe. She pressed her nose up against the car window as they drove into the busy airport car park.

Hundreds of people were attending and aeroplanes were already taking off. An announcer was explaining what the spectators were seeing, over a loudspeaker.

Cobb wouldn't be flying for a while, so the family wandered around, looking at the

exhibits. Through the crowds, Carol spotted a recruitment stall for the US Air Force.

'Can we go and look?' Carol asked her mum. 'I can ask them about space programmes.'

'You're too young,' her dad said. 'Come on, let's get a hot dog before we watch your pilot.'

Carol reluctantly let herself be led away.

But she had insisted that they leave home early, so they got a good spot for watching Helen Cobb and her plane. When the pilot taxied out onto the runway, Cobb kept her cockpit open and waved to the spectators. Carol stood and cheered, waving back.

Then the pilot slid the cockpit shut and the silver T-6 picked up speed, lifting off and into the air with a roar of its single engine. The aeroplane flew higher and higher into a massive backwards arc overhead.

Carol watched, mesmerised, as Cobb traced figures of eight in the sky and looped-the-loop, the silver of her aircraft catching the sun and gleaming like a miniature star.

When the performance was over, Cobb brought the T-6 down to land smoothly on the runway and opened her cockpit again to wave at the crowds. Carol tried to imagine what it must feel like, to know that you could take off at any moment and soar into the air.

Later, Carol used the cover of the crowds to slip away from her family and make her way to the pilot's backstage area.

'Hey,' said one of the men guarding the entrance. 'You can't come in here unless you've got a backstage pass.'

'But I just want to meet Helen Cobb,' Carol said. 'I'm going to be a pilot just like her one day. I just want to ask her—'

The guard crossed his arms, his eyes hidden behind dark sunglasses. 'Sorry, kid. Like I said.'

'But—'

'Where are your parents?' he interrupted. 'What's your name?'

'I'm Carol Danvers. I just want to—'

The guard nodded at his partner, who went over to a tannoy system. A second later Carol heard her name being announced over the loudspeaker.

'Would the parents of Carol Danvers please come to the backstage gate immediately.'

Carol's heart sank.

Her dad was so mad that she had wandered off alone that he decided they would leave immediately.

'I can't trust you, can I?' he said angrily, as he marched Carol back to the car. 'I knew coming here was a mistake. We've got to get all this nonsense about flying out of your head.'

'It's not nonsense,' Carol shouted, yanking her hand out of his and stopping dead. 'I'm going to be a pilot, Dad. I'm going to go to space. Why don't you want me to do that? Why can't you just be on my side?'

'I'm your father,' he said. 'It's my job to keep you safe. That's the side I'm on!'

'But—'

Carol's mum put her hand on her daughter's shoulder. 'That's enough for now,' she said. 'Let's just go home.'

Carol got into the car and sat fuming in the back. She didn't speak to her dad for the rest of the journey. Halfway home, Stevie nudged her and then glanced at their father to make sure he wasn't looking. He carefully pushed something towards Carol, and then winked at her.

It was a brochure all about how to get into the United States Air Force. Stevie must have heard what she'd said to their dad!

Carol snuck a look inside. There was a lot that she didn't understand, but she didn't care. It seemed as if Stevie was on her side, even if her dad wasn't.

CHAPTER 5 **CAPTAIN SHOOTING STAR**

'I'm sorry,' Carol's dad said over breakfast the next morning. 'I'm sorry for getting angry. I just worry about you, that's all.'

'I know, Dad,' Carol replied, staring at her bowl of cereal – even though she didn't know, not really. She didn't understand. She'd said as much to her mum the night before, but Marie Danvers had told Carol that all she really needed to know was that her dad loved her very much.

'But what if he never understands that I really am going to be an astronaut?' Carol had asked.

'I know that's what you want now,' her mum said. 'But that might change, Carol. You don't know.'

'I do know,' Carol insisted. 'I don't care how hard it is or how much Dad is against it. It's what I'm going to do.'

Her mum had just hugged her, hard, and sighed.

Now Carol was sitting at the breakfast table pretending she didn't mind that her dad didn't want her to follow her dreams.

'Look,' he said. 'I'm going to make it up to you. Uncle Richie's lent me his fishing boat for the day so that I can take you out in it.'

Carol brightened up at that. She loved being out on the boat. With the wind in her face, if they were going fast enough, she could pretend she was flying.

'Thanks, Dad!'

'Why don't you see if Louis wants to come? Tell him to bring his fishing rod if he does.'

Marie came too, but Stevie and Joe had plans with some other summer friends and

decided to stay behind.

'We'll see you later, Squirt,' said Joe. 'Don't fall overboard, all right?'

It was a bright, sunny day, and Carol was happy and excited as her dad piloted the boat out of the harbour. The seabirds were wheeling around the cliffs, screeching their high-pitched calls as they dipped and swooped. The ocean was calm, with only a slight wind. The boat picked up pace as they cleared the bay and headed out onto the sound, cutting smoothly through the waves.

'Well,' Carol's dad shouted to her over the boat's motor. 'I think today it might be time that you take the helm. What do you say?'

Carol couldn't believe it. She'd never been allowed to take the wheel before. 'Really?'

'Sure,' said her dad, waving her over. 'Come over here and I'll show you what to do.'

Within minutes, Carol was in control of Uncle Richie's boat. It was an amazing feeling. 'Can I go faster?' she asked her dad.

He smiled. 'All right. Just a little.' He touched a handle to her right. 'Push that forward. Carefully – take it steady.'

Carol let out a whoop as the boat zoomed over the waves, faster and faster. Louis laughed at her excitement, even though he was just as excited himself.

'We'll have to give you a new name,' he said, shouting over the noise of the wind and the boat. 'How about... Captain Shooting Star?'

Carol laughed. 'I like it!'

They stayed out on the boat for hours. For lunch, Carol's dad barbecued the fish they caught, right there on the deck. Afterwards, Carol and Louis lay on their stomachs on the prow, looking out at the water.

When they got back into harbour, they found Stevie and Joe waiting for them, both pink from having caught the sun.

'We're off to get doughnuts,' said Stevie, to Carol and Louis. 'Want to come?'

'Yes!' They both shouted, together.

'All right,' said Carol's dad. 'But be sensible. All of you. All right?'

The four of them bought doughnuts, but Stevie surprised Carol by buying a kite as well.

'We can fly it from the dock,' he pointed out. 'Not quite like having your own plane, I know, but until you do...'

'Ah, forget that,' Joe said. 'Let's see who can jump the furthest off the jetty.'

'Dad told us to be sensible,' Carol pointed out. 'That doesn't sound very sensible to me.'

Joe sensed an opportunity to tease his sister. 'Oh? Sounds like you're... scared.'

Carol puffed out her chest. 'I'm not scared!'

Joe began strutting around making chicken noises as the others laughed. '*Pwak-pwak-pwak!* My little sister's a chicken!'

'I am NOT!'

To prove it, Carol took a flying leap off the end of the jetty, without even stopping

to take off her shoes. She heard the boys shouting as she splashed into the cool water. Then she kicked hard, swimming back to the surface to find them all struggling out of their shoes, eager to prove they could jump even further.

They stayed there all afternoon. Carol always jumped the furthest.

'I think it's because you're completely fearless, Squirt,' Stevie said. 'You're just not afraid of anything.'

'I'm afraid of plenty of things,' she told him, taking a huge bite out of a doughnut, liking the way the sugar stuck to her lips. 'I just don't let that stop me trying, that's all.'

By the time they'd eaten all the doughnuts they were excited from the rush of sugar. Stevie suggested they fly the kite, so they raced each other up the path to the cliff, unfurling it right at the top and watching it fly in the wind, dipping and swooping as wildly as a seabird.



CHAPTER 6 **METEOR SHOWER**

Two nights later, after Carol had gone to bed, she was looking at her USAF Academy brochure with her pocket flashlight under the covers. She had done this every night since Stevie had picked up the brochure, learning about the air force's requirements for new recruits. There was a lot she would have to learn if she wanted to get a place when she was older.

There was a sound at her window. Carol switched off her torch and stuck her head out from beneath the covers. After a moment, it came again – three little taps, then a pause,

then another tap. She grinned to herself and climbed out of bed, creeping across the floor without a sound.

Joe was crouching outside on the roof. Carol unlatched the window and he helped her lift it.

'Come on,' he whispered. 'We've got blankets.'

Carol followed him and together they made their way to where Stevie was already sitting. The three of them did this every now and then. Between Carol's window and the window of the room her two brothers shared there was a flat ledge, perfect for stargazing.

'What are we looking for?' Carol asked, settling herself between the boys.

'Nothing in particular,' Stevie told her. 'Just felt like getting out of the house for a while, that's all.'

Carol said nothing to that. Stevie and their dad had been arguing lately. She looked up at the stars. Here in Harpswell Sound there was far less light pollution than back home, and

the night sky was so clear that she could see the wide, ghostly smudge of the Milky Way right above them.

'Look,' Joe said, pointing into the distance. 'No, too late, you've missed it – it was a shooting star.'

'There's another,' Stevie said a moment later. 'And another!'

Carol began to see them too – not just a single shooting star, but several bright lights streaking across the sky, one after the other.

'It's a meteor shower!' she said, amazed.

'Whoa,' said Stevie. 'I've never seen anything like this before.'

The more they looked, the more they saw. It seemed as if the entire night sky was full of meteors, all skimming off the surface of Earth's atmosphere. Then Carol's attention was taken by one that seemed to be coming lower and lower. She pointed it out.

'That's a meteorite,' she said. 'That's what it's called when a piece of space rock makes it through the atmosphere. It hasn't burned

worse every time you use your powers.'

'Yup,' said Spider-Woman, crossing her arms. 'It's about time you learned to put your feet up for a change.'

'How am I going to do that?' Carol said. 'I can't just not help if someone needs me!'

'Well, as far as I can see you're not the only super hero around here,' Spider-Woman pointed out. 'I think the rest of us can take up some of the slack while the doctors figure out how to fix you.'

'If they can,' Carol muttered.

'Don't be a pessimist,' Tracey told her. 'Buck up. We'll beat this – but Jessica's right. Leave the big stuff to someone else for a change. Just for a while.'

Carol tried to do as they suggested, but it was impossible. She'd hear a cry for help and go rushing off without even thinking about it – and every time she did, more of her memories would vanish.

Then someone started to deliberately target Captain Marvel and her closest friends.

Strange things began to happen – enemies she'd fought years ago when she was still Ms Marvel would appear, goading her to fight them in a way that she just couldn't ignore. It was as if someone out there knew about the lesion and was doing everything they could to make it worse.

Things reached a head when Captain Marvel ended up battling a group of ex-wrestlers-turned-super villains who called themselves the Grapplers.

'I don't understand where they came from,' Captain Marvel shouted to Spider-Woman, as they tried to defeat the faintly ridiculous Battle Axe and her partner in crime, Pound Cakes. 'I stopped these guys years ago! I thought they'd given up their lives of crime!'

'You're just too popular for your own good!' Spider-Woman shouted back.

The Grapplers were no match for the combined might of Captain Marvel and Spider-Woman. They soon accepted defeat.

'Why are you here?' Captain Marvel asked the puffed-out villains, as she tied them up. 'What made you decide to attack today?'

Battle Axe shrugged. 'Seemed like a good idea at the time.'

Spider-Woman snorted a laugh. 'Well, have fun in lock-up.' She looked over at Captain Marvel. 'Come on, let's go. That's more than enough hard work for one day.'

As they were passing Central Park, though, they heard people screaming and running, clearly terrified by something behind them.

'We can't just ignore it,' said Captain Marvel, as she began to run. 'We've got to see what's going on!'

Whatever they were expecting to see, it wasn't two huge T-Rexs battling each other in the duck pond.



CHAPTER 19 **OLD FOES, NEW DANGERS**

'What is going on?' Spider-Woman cried, as she and Captain Marvel stared at the fighting creatures. 'Have I fallen into a parallel universe or something?'

'Come on!' Captain Marvel shouted, launching into the air. 'We've got to stop them before they kill someone!'

The prehistoric monsters were crashing around, destroying Central Park with their huge tails as they tried to tear each other apart. Captain Marvel tried to grab one so that she could haul them apart. It shook her off and turned with a roar to snap at her with

its massive jaws – so she punched it right in the snout. The T-Rex collapsed, completely knocked out.

'Did you just punch a dinosaur?' Spider-Woman asked.

'A girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do,' said Captain Marvel.

'Fair enough. One down...'

'... one to go,' Captain Marvel agreed, as they both squared up to the second T-Rex. 'Ready?'

'Oh yeah. Let's do this!'

Together they rushed at the thrashing monster. It came down with a massive splash, right in the centre of the duck pond. Several ducks quacked as they skittered out of the way of the collapsing dinosaur.

It was Captain Marvel who landed the blow to knock it out, straddling its neck and putting all her power into one final punch. Then she clambered down and waded through the water towards her friend, who was standing on the edge of the pond with

her hands on her hips.

'Well,' said Spider-Woman, looking at the two unconscious creatures. 'Central Park Zoo is going to have to build a bigger fence, am I right?'

'I just don't understand it,' Carol said, as they walked back to her apartment block. 'What's happening? It's as if someone or something is deliberately sending stuff my way that they know I can't ignore just to make me use my powers.'

When they got back to Carol's apartment, though, there was more bad news waiting for them. The door had been forced open.

'This is weird,' said Jessica with a frown, once they had cautiously gone inside. 'It doesn't actually look as if you've been robbed.'

As Carol looked around, something strange caught her eye. There was a line of objects arranged on the coffee table that hadn't been there when she went out. She looked closer. There was a snow globe she'd bought from the Natural History Museum which had

two T-Rex models fighting each other inside the glass. There was also a poster from one of the Grapplers' shows, as well as some of their toy models.

'That's super strange,' said Jessica. 'Did the thief leave them here?'

'They're mine,' Carol said. 'Various souvenirs I've collected. But I'd put them out of the way, with—' Her heart sank into her toes as she realised something. 'Oh no!'

Carol rushed to check. A panel had been ripped from the wall in her living room. A bag that had been hidden away inside lay discarded on the floor – empty. Carol dropped to her knees.

'What?' Jessica asked. 'What's missing?'

'It's Helen's fragment of the Psyche-Magnitron,' Carol said. 'It was a powerful Kree device that had the ability to conjure anything within Kree science into being. What I had was only a fragment, but it still had power and is incredibly dangerous. If it falls into the wrong hands... if someone tries

to harness that power... I don't know what might happen.'

'Can you think of anyone who would have taken it?' Jessica asked. 'Who would have known about the Psyche-Magnitron? Who would want to do this?'

Carol stood up. 'I can only think of one person,' she said. 'Yon-Rogg! He was the Kree trying to activate the Psyche-Magnitron when it exploded. Mar-Vell – the first Captain Marvel – was trying to stop him.'

'But – wasn't he destroyed back then?' Jessica asked.

'I thought he was – everyone thought he was – but who else would know about this?' Carol said. 'He must have some plan that needs the power of the Magnitron.'

'But if he just wanted the bit of the machine, what were all the weird attackers about?'

'I don't know,' Carol said. 'But I've got to find out before he puts whatever plan he has into action.'

'Wait!' Jessica shouted, as Carol donned her Captain Marvel costume. 'You can't go up against him – it's going to make you forget even more!'

'It doesn't matter,' Carol said. 'All that matters is that I stop him. Whatever Yon-Rogg's planning – if he wins, the whole planet will suffer!'

She leapt out of the window and flew straight up. The renegade Kree wasn't the sort to hide, and she had a hunch he wanted her to know he was there. That's what all the games had been about, all the goading. Captain Marvel had defeated him once. Now Yon-Rogg wanted to prove that it couldn't happen again.

There, squatting heavily over New York was a huge and thunderous cloud, as if a thousand storms had converged right above the city. Hovering beneath it, his arms outstretched, was Yon-Rogg himself.

'Whatever it is you're doing,' Captain Marvel shouted, 'stop it, right now!'

The alien spun slowly to look at her, an evil grin spreading across his face. 'Aha. I've been expecting you. You can't stop this, Captain Marvel.'

She felt a sharp pain stab through her head. Yon-Rogg must have seen her wince, because he laughed.

'You can feel it, can't you? That little bit of me inside your mind?'

'What?' Captain Marvel asked, trying to focus around the pain.

'Haven't you figured it out yet? When the Psyche-Magnitron exploded, a part of me embedded itself into your brain. It's been growing there ever since. Now we're connected, and I can see everything inside you – all your memories, everything you ever wanted. I can make any of them appear, thanks to the power of the Psyche-Magnitron.'

Captain Marvel's head was throbbing. 'We're... connected?' she realised. 'My disappearing memories... is *that* what's causing it?'

'Oh yes,' Yon-Rogg crowed. 'And with the addition of your Kree brain power and the capabilities of the Psyche-Magnitron, I shall be able to conjure exactly what I want.'

He spun away and raised his hands again. The clouds roiled and billowed. Captain Marvel could barely focus for the pain, but in the midst of them, she saw something emerging. There was an immense city being built before her eyes, huge and mighty.

'Behold,' declared Yon-Rogg, 'the lost city of Kree-Lar! It will smash New York and take its place, and I shall be declared King over all! You stole everything from me, Carol Danvers, and now you will help me take it back – whether you like it or not.'

'Hey, girl!' The voice was coming from her earpiece – it was Spider-Woman!

Captain Marvel frowned, trying to concentrate on her friend's words despite the pain in her head.

'Listen, I don't know what he's doing, but there's something happening all over the world.'

People are reporting these huge robot things... They must have been buried for who-knows how long! They're smashing their way up to the surface – and they're all flying your way!'

'My sentries,' declared Yon-Rogg, as Carol saw a huge metal robot blasting towards them. He looked at Captain Marvel again. 'Your puny human brain does not have enough power, but once the sentries assemble, the part of you that is Kree will be amplified to match mine. Then Kree-Lar will live again!'

'Captain,' Spider-Woman said. 'How do we stop him?'

Captain Marvel stared at the alien, who was once again laughing with glee. 'You can't,' she said. 'But I can. Tell Kit she'll be a great super hero one day. Whatever she decides to do.'

'What?' Spider-Woman said. 'What do you mean? What are you going to—'

Captain Marvel flew straight up, away from Yon-Rogg, away from the emerging city

of Kree-Lar, away from New York and all her friends. She flew as fast as she could, the throbbing pain in her head growing worse and worse.

If I can't remember anything, he can't use me, she thought, as she began to push through the stratosphere. And without me, he can't win.

She heard Yon-Rogg's ear-splitting scream of frustration as she shot out into the stars. Captain Marvel flew and flew, the pain growing worse and worse in her head, until—

—nothing.

CHAPTER 20 **HOME AGAIN**

'She's awake! She's awake!'

'Kit, ssh...'

'But look, she's got her eyes open! Captain Marvel! Are you OK?'

Carol stared at the ceiling overhead. She didn't recognise it. Then again, she didn't know who the little girl sitting beside her on the bed was either, or the three women standing beside it, looking at her with anxious eyes.

'Carol,' one of them said, reaching out to take one of her hands. 'Do you remember me, girl?'

Carol shook her head and closed her eyes. Then something flashed at her from the darkness of her mind and she snapped her eyes open again.

'Y-Yon-Rogg,' she managed. 'Is he...?'

'Gone,' said the woman who still held her hand. 'And so is Kree-Lar. Vanished when you... when you...'

Carol didn't hear any more. She'd gone back to sleep.

Captain Marvel couldn't remember anything in the wake of her battle with Yon-Rogg. For months afterwards, it was as if her mind had been wiped clean of who she was. Her friends were patient with her, trying to help her reconstruct her memories. Kit spent hours with Carol every day, showing her what she had written about the life of Captain Marvel in the book she had made when Carol first started losing her memories.

'It's all right,' Kit would say every time Carol couldn't remember something. 'That's what I'm here for. Tomorrow will be better.'

Eventually memories did begin to resurface, but they weren't of Carol as Captain Marvel. She kept thinking of a little girl running along a jetty and jumping from the end, soaring through the air as if she were flying before splashing down into very cold water. She could remember cliffs, and a bike, and a boat, and a man who always seemed to be angry with her, although she could never work out why.

'What about my dad?' she asked one day. 'I think I can remember him a little.'

It was Tracey who answered. 'You've never talked much about your family,' she said. 'I always got the impression thinking about your childhood was a little difficult, so I never asked too many questions.'

'I need to go home,' Carol decided. 'It might help me remember more of who I am.'

'You know that your dad died a long time ago, don't you?' Marina said, gently.

Carol nodded. It wasn't that she remembered, exactly, but she knew the

information was there in the background somewhere, just waiting for her to find it again.

Her mother had moved to the Harpswell Sound summer house permanently not long after her dad had passed away, and so that's where Carol went. Flying into town brought back so many memories of summers long gone. She even bumped into her old friend Louis, although this time they didn't go for Brain Freezers.

'I'm back here to try to un-freeze my brain, not freeze it,' Carol pointed out, as he laughed.

Her mum hugged her, hard, and told Carol that everything was going to be all right. But Carol kept thinking about her father.

'What did I do?' she asked her mother. 'What was it about me that made him hate me?'

Marie Danvers sighed. 'He never hated you, Carol – he loved you, so much. I can't... I can't explain. He was afraid for you, that's

all. He just didn't express it very well.'

'What was he afraid of, exactly?' Carol asked, but Marie just shook her head and wouldn't say anything more.

Then one day, hidden in the bottom of a wardrobe, Carol found a tin box. Inside were old photographs and a small sheaf of letters. When she picked up the letters, Carol saw something else beneath them – a strange-looking device, a bit like a remote control. She pressed the button on it, but nothing happened, so she put it down and looked at the letters instead.

They were in her dad's handwriting. Carol was reading them when her mum came in. She saw what Carol was doing and then the device that Carol had thought was some sort of remote. All the blood drained from her face as she bent to pick it up.

'Where did you find this?'

Carol scrambled to her feet. 'It was just in this box, with some of dad's things. I'm sorry, I was just—'

'This wasn't his. It was mine.'

'What is it?'

Marie Danvers didn't answer. 'How long has it been activated?' she whispered.

'It isn't—' Carol began, but then she realised that yes, the remote was making a sound. As she listened it gave off a low beep. She'd just been so engrossed in her dad's letters that she hadn't noticed.

'Mom, I'm sorry—'

Her mum didn't listen, going to the window and looking out at the sky instead.

'Mom, what's the matter?'

'You need to go, Carol,' said Marie Danvers. 'Go back to New York, now.'

'What? But—'

A noise echoed into the room. Carol recognised it as a sonic boom, like the sort a jet would cause as it broke the speed of sound.

'What was that?' she asked.

'Nothing for you to worry about,' her mum said, her voice sounding strange.

Carol went to the window. She could see a plume of smoke rising out of what looked like a crater that had been torn into one of the fields not far from their house. 'Is that a meteorite?'

Her mother pulled her away from the window. 'Carol – you have to go.'

'Mom, tell me! What's going on?'

From the distance came the sound of a car alarm going off. Then another started up, then another, each a little closer than the one before, as if a shock wave was moving towards their house.

Carol ran downstairs and out onto the deck, her mother close behind her. Something was coming towards them. No, not something, *someone*.

It was a huge woman with blue skin. Her arms and legs were as big as tree trunks and she looked as if she were ready to tear the world apart. She was heading straight for Carol.

An instant later, Carol was in her Captain

Marvel costume. 'Mom,' she said, 'Go inside. Or better yet, go get Uncle Richie to take you out in the boat. Get as far away from here as possible. I don't know what this is, but she's here for *me*.'

'No,' said her mother, from behind her. 'She's not.'

'Mom, please—' Carol turned and gasped. Marie Danvers was dressed in a white-and-green flight suit with a crown-like helmet. It looked a lot like something Carol had seen before, only then, the alien Mar-Vell had been wearing it.

'Mom, what are you—'
'She's not here for you, Carol,' her mum told her. 'She's here for me.'

CHAPTER 21 **THE TRUTH AT LAST**

'Mom, what are you *doing*?' Carol asked, utterly shocked.

The blue woman reached the garden, stamping flat a flower bed that her mother had planted only the day before.

'TRAITOR TO THE KREE EMPIRE,' the blue woman bellowed. 'YOU WILL BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE.'

Marie Danvers turned to her daughter. 'That thing is a Kree cleaner,' she said, her voice calm and clear, as if she were just reading out a shopping list. 'It's here for me.'

'But...' Carol spluttered. 'That's means

that you're – that *I'm*—'

'You are Car-Ell, daughter of Mari-Ell, Captain First of the Supreme Protectorate, Champion of the Kree Empire, Daughter of Hala by Bloodright and Starlight.'

Carol thought she might laugh. Either that or she was going to cry. 'Mom, stop it! This is crazy! You made pancakes for breakfast. You're just *Mom*—'

'Traitor!' bellowed the blue woman, again. 'Face me!'

'Yes,' Mari-Ell said to Carol. 'I am your mother.' She lifted into the air, flying just as easily as Carol herself did. 'But I am also a Kree warrior. Now go,' she said. 'Get to safety. This isn't your fight.'

Carol was so stunned she couldn't move. Then the blue monster lunged and Mari-Ell flew up to meet it. The two aliens met in mid-air. Carol's mother threw a mighty punch that knocked the Kree hunter back.

'Stay away from my daughter!' she cried. The blue woman roared and fired a blast

straight for Carol. She leapt out of the way as the deck exploded into splinters.

Her mother roared with anger and charged straight at the Kree. The two figures struggled as Mari-Ell dragged the monster out over the bay. Carol was still trying to pick herself up as there came a huge boom and a burst of blinding yellow light.

'Mom!'

Carol shot out over the water, towards the light. Mari-Ell and the Kree assassin were locked in battle, struggling with each other.

'Get back!' Mari-Ell ordered her daughter.

'You can't do this on your own!'

'First I will eliminate you, Kree traitor!' yelled the assassin, 'and then I will crush your offspring spawn.'

'I'll never let you touch her!' yelled Mari-Ell. 'Never!'

'Mom—'

A blast strong enough to flatten a building punched straight into Mari-Ell. Carol was horrified as her mother was thrown backwards.

'MOM!'

She grabbed her mother to stop her from plunging into the ocean. Mari-Ell struggled in Carol's arms.

'Carol – go! You must—'

'No,' Carol said. 'I won't leave you. You can't defeat her on your own. We have to do this *together*. We have to combine powers.'

Mari-Ell grasped Carol's hands. 'All right,' she said. 'Together, then.'

The blue woman charged at them with a roar.

Carol focused all her energy on where her hand joined with her mother's. The power coursed through her, up through her core, the strongest she had ever felt.

The blast that exploded from their hands shot out like a white-hot laser. It smashed into the Kree assassin like a speeding train, throwing it backwards and out over the water in another huge explosion.

Something came flying towards them, straight out of the blast. The Kree soldier had

thrown a spear straight at Mari-Ell.

'No!' cried Carol.

She caught her mother as she fell.

'MISSION COMPLETE,' the assassin declared. A moment later it had self-destructed, disintegrating into a cloud of molecules, as if it had never existed.

'Mom!'

Carol flew back to the house with her mother in her arms. She set her down on the ruined deck and knelt beside her.

'Mom... What can I do?'

Mari-Ell smiled gently. 'Nothing, my darling. This is the end of my path on Earth.'

'But there must be—'

'Ssh,' her mother soothed. 'Listen to me. I want to explain. I want to tell you everything. I want you to...' She coughed a little, '... understand.'

Carol nodded, tears in her eyes.

'I had always planned to tell you, somehow, in my own time,' Mari-Ell began. 'That time just never came. I was raised

as a daughter of Hala – a warrior, first and foremost, trained for war from the moment I was born. For my first mission I was sent here, to Earth. I was supposed to monitor the planet and report back.

'Well, the first person I met was your father. He fished me out of the Sound when I splashed down.'

Marie Danvers looked out at the sun glinting on her garden and smiled, as if remembering that time, long ago.

'He was kind. He was a widower with two small boys to look after – a good man. For the first time in my life I wanted to do something more than fight. When I had to report back to the Kree, I told them your father was just a cover, and they believed me. But he quickly became more than that.'

'But – did he ever know?' Carol asked. 'About where you really came from? About what you could *do*?'

'At first I tried to hide it, as I had been taught in my training. But the truth has a

way of coming out. Joe said he didn't care. We married, and the day that we did, I decided that I would never be Mari-Ell again. From that moment I was Mrs Danvers. I thought if I hid my true self away, that I could protect us all from the Kree.'

'Well, it kind of worked,' Carol pointed out. 'Until now, anyway.'

Mari-Ell smiled sadly. 'But hiding who you really are from those who love you causes its own problems. At first, when you came along, we were so happy. I remember your dad holding you in the hospital when I gave you your Kree name. Car-Ell. It means "Champion". And do you know what your dad said? He stroked your cheek and swore he'd keep you safe. "I'm going to protect her now, Marie. She's my daughter. I'm not going to let them touch her. I'm not going to let anything happen to her. That's on me."'

Carol tried to imagine her dad holding that tiny version of her. Then she remembered all those times he had been angry at her as she

was growing up – every time she had crashed her bike or jumped off the jetty. Every time she had said she wanted to be an astronaut, every time she had talked about going into space.

It was because he knew, she thought. He knew what was out there, waiting for me.

'For all Joe's worrying,' her mother went on, 'I knew that I was the only one who could protect you from the Kree. But I was also the one who would bring them right to you. Because sooner or later, they would come looking for me. So I turned off my tracker – the device you found – and made Joe hide it away. I hid everything away, Car-Ell, do you understand? Everything that made me Kree. Everything that made me the person your dad had fallen in love with.

'I did it to keep you safe, but it meant I wasn't the whole person I had been before. And soon, neither was your father. He saw Kree threats everywhere. He was always afraid that something would happen to you,

and he missed the real me. That was what made him angry, Carol. It made him angry, and then it made him mean.'

Carol stared up into the sky. 'That was why he wouldn't pay for me to go to college? Because he didn't want me to go to space. He didn't want me to find that part of myself – that part of *you*. And when the Psyche-Magnitron exploded... that wasn't what gave me my powers, was it?'

Her mother reached out and squeezed her hand with a faint smile. 'No. You already had them, Car-Ell. That accident just activated them. You've always been a daughter of Hala. Those powers have always been yours.'



EPILOGUE: **TO THE STARS**

Captain Marvel blinked. Her breath came out as steam in the cold air as she remembered where she was – high above the Arctic circle, watching a huge metal robot tear its way out of the ice. But she knew what it was now – she'd come up against a Kree sentry like this before. There was no way this one was going to get the better of her now.

Robots, she thought. It's always robots.

Carol blasted down through the cold air, flying straight towards the massive machine. It must have been another one left on Earth long ago, just like that one she'd first seen

back when she was assigned to security at the Kennedy Center.

The robot had almost smashed its way free of the glacier now and was standing, tall as a building, shaking the remaining shards of ice from its arms, only one leg still trapped in the ice. It was huge, its metal torso gleaming in the cold Arctic sun.

She crashed into its chest at full pelt with her arms outstretched. The impact reverberated up her arms, making her head ring, but Captain Marvel shook off the shock. The robot teetered but righted itself, one huge hand swatting her away. The super hero ducked and wove through the cold air, deftly avoiding the machine's grip.

The robot's free foot lit up, and Captain Marvel realised it was trying to take off. It had attempted to activate its rocket boosters, but there was obviously still ice inside its mechanisms because nothing happened. The machine looked down at itself, almost as if it was confused.

This time Captain Marvel aimed straight for its knee joints. If it activated its boosters it would be directing the power of a megatonne bomb blast straight down into the glacier! If she didn't stop it...

Captain Marvel slammed into the robot's legs. The free one shattered at the knee with a sound like two train carriages shearing together at speed. Sparks shot into the air as the lights went out on the severed leg.

The robot tried to smash her into the ground, but Captain Marvel slipped through its fingers again.

'Captain Marvel?' Spider-Woman's voice echoed over the microphone in her suit. *'Are you—'*

'Little busy right now,' Captain Marvel shouted. *'Call you back!'*

The robot's severed leg was still sending out sparks as she doubled back and zoomed towards its other thigh. The machine was still trying to activate its remaining booster, but it saw her coming. This time she was a

fraction of a second too late to dodge out of its way. One hand thumped into her like a bat hitting a ball and she went tumbling feet-over-head, out of control.

'Aaaahhhhhh!' Captain Marvel yelled as she spun away. She managed to stop herself from being thrown miles across the ice, pulling herself up and shaking her head to clear it. Then she plunged straight back towards the metal menace.

The sentry was trying to drag its remaining leg out of the ice. The crack in the glacier was spreading, the ice splitting open like the Grand Canyon. If it got its rocket booster working now...

Captain Marvel flew at it from behind and grabbed the giant robot beneath the arms. She dragged it up, pulling with all her strength.

The robot's leg came free with a sound like a huge cork coming out of a bottle. It immediately tried to power up its booster, shards of ice cracking from its frozen foot,

but the booster didn't ignite. The robot twisted and turned, trying to reach the person on its back, but Captain Marvel wouldn't let go.

I've got to get it out of here, she realised. I've got to destroy it completely, somewhere it won't do any more damage.

She began to fly straight up, heading higher and higher as she dragged the sentry with her. It struggled and fought, but she wouldn't let go. Captain Marvel flew faster than she ever had before, shooting out of Earth's atmosphere and straight into space.

Space. Here she was, out here in all this nothing.

Carol still didn't stop. She flew across the solar system, heading straight for the sun, dragging the robot behind her.

When she was close enough, she spun herself around, gaining momentum before letting go at exactly the right second to pitch the sentry straight into the star. She watched as the alien robot flew into the sun's

blazing corona. The robot flailed its arms and tried one more time to use its single rocket booster, but Captain Marvel had thrown it too fast.

There was a final, catastrophic explosion, so bright that Carol had to shield her eyes from the glare.

The sun's heat vaporised the Kree sentry completely. One minute it was there, the next –

Boom. Gone.

Captain Marvel hung there for a moment, among the stars, watching the sun burn in the darkness.

'You're still alive, right?' came a familiar voice, speaking into her ear again. 'I refuse to believe that robot dude was too much for you.'

Captain Marvel grinned. *'Yeah, Jess, I'm still here.'*

'Phew. Bad guy all gone?'

'Yup. All gone.'

'Great. Well, hurry back. It's taco night, I just decided. You could, like... pick some up

from Mexico City on your way home?

Captain Marvel – Carol – turned and looked back at Earth, gleaming like a beautiful green-and-blue marble in the eternal night of space.

'I'll be with you soon. I just need a minute.'

She signed off with Spider-Woman and flew slowly back towards Earth. This was why she'd always wanted to get to space. This was why flying had always felt so natural to her, why it had always felt as if there was something out among the stars, calling to her. The powers she had hadn't come from someone else. They'd always been there, inside her, just waiting to wake up.

I am home, she thought to herself. Out here, among the stars – this is home.

I am who I'm supposed to be.

Carol Danvers.

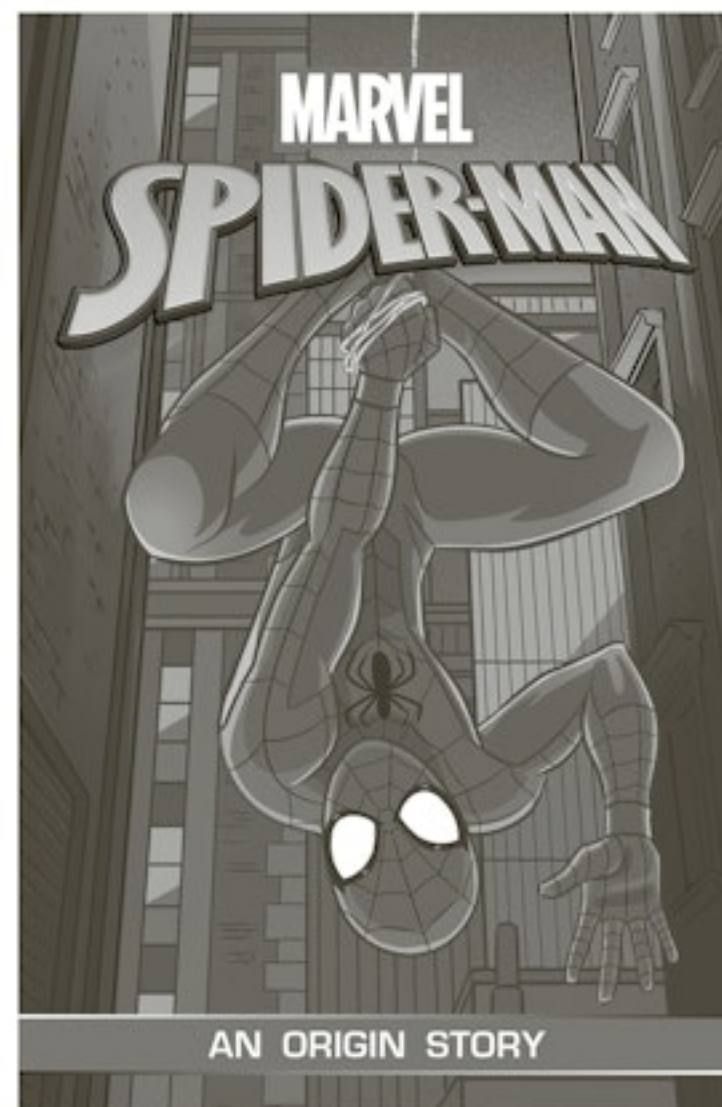
Car-Ell.

Captain Marvel.

ALSO IN THE SERIES

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SPIDER-MAN



OUT NOW



CHAPTER 1 **SPIDER-MAN IN SPACE**

Spider-Man had never been more scared in his life.

Under the Spider-Man mask, Peter Parker grimaced. He was hanging onto the side of a space rocket as it hurtled upwards. He was gripping on with all his might, but it felt like he was about to be pulled off the rocket at any moment and thrown back towards the ground. His Spider-Man costume felt cold against his skin.

As the rocket climbed higher and higher, he looked back down. This was a mistake. He had no way of telling exactly how far he

was from the ground, but it was very, very high up.

'Hey, I can see home from here!' he said. It was true. As well as the skyscrapers of Manhattan, he could see all the way to the small suburb of Forest Hills in Queens, where he lived.

'How did you get yourself into this one, Spidey?' he asked himself.

It had all happened so quickly. Peter Parker had been on a high-school trip to see the launch of experimental space shuttle, *Osborn-6*. However, within seconds of the shuttle taking off, it was obvious that something was wrong. The shuttle was moving too slowly and alarms were sounding all around the viewing station.

Peter had raced away from the rest of his class to change into his Spider-Man costume. He was already wearing the full red-and-blue bodysuit, with a spider logo on the front, under his school clothes. Peter had quickly put on the Spider-Man gloves and boots that

were hidden in his backpack. The Spider-Man mask had gone on last; this was the part that made him feel like he had really changed – like he had become someone completely different.

As Spider-Man, he had rushed to the Oscorp launch pad and talked to the ground-control staff. Together they had persuaded the pilot of a light jet plane to fly him close enough to jump onto *Osborn-6*.

Now he was clinging on to the side of the space shuttle for dear life.

'Spider-Man! Can you hear me?' crackled a voice in his ear.

'Yes, of course I can!' said Spider-Man, before he remembered who he was talking to. He had been given an earpiece before he took off, and he was talking to Mission Control.

'You need to find a way to separate the rocket from the capsule with the astronauts,' said the voice in his ear.

'Sure, that sounds fine,' said Spider-Man. 'Should be easy. I mean, it's not exactly

rocket science!'

Mission Control didn't reply.

Astronaut John Jameson III was aboard the shuttle, in a capsule connected to the rocket. John Jameson was the son of J. Jonah Jameson, the editor-in-chief of the *Daily Bugle* newspaper.

'Hey, could you do me a favour?' said Spider-Man to Mission Control. 'If there are any journalists from the *Daily Bugle* in the control room with you, could you ask them to write something nice about me? That would be cool!' He could do with some good press right now.

Spider-Man knew he shouldn't look down again. It was only going to make him more scared. The ground was too far away. He looked down again.

'Is this going to be more complicated than pulling out a bunch of wires?' he asked, trying to keep the fear out of his voice. 'Because otherwise all the movies I have seen have lied to me.'

'We're sure you can do this, Spider-Man,' said Mission Control, but the voice at the other end didn't sound too confident. 'Just move upwards to the big panel above you.'

Spidey was slowly inching his way up the rocket, trying not to think about how fast he was going or how it was becoming harder to breathe.

'I think I've found the right panel,' he told Mission Control. 'Hey! There's a red wire and a blue wire! I'm pulling the red one.'

BOOM!

The main capsule flew away from the rocket, just like it was supposed to. Spider-Man smiled under his mask as he held onto the falling capsule. A feeling of relief spread from the tip of his forehead, down through the rest of his body. He had done it. Spider-Man had saved the day!

Any moment now the parachute in the capsule would open and they would all glide gently to the Earth. Any moment now...

The parachute wasn't opening.

Now, instead of rising too quickly, he was falling too quickly. He was going to have to do something. Fast.

'Hello? Scientist guys in my ear? The parachute in the capsule isn't working! Any idea how I get it open again?' he asked, but there was no response. The earpiece had lost its connection to Mission Control.

For a second, he froze. What did he, a teenager from Queens, think he was doing, trying to save a space shuttle? And now it was all going wrong and it was entirely his fault!

What was he going to do?

Spider-Man spent a few seconds banging on the side of the capsule. He was trying to release the parachute, but also it made him feel better. If only he was a real spider, he thought to himself. Then he could just float away.

Wait a minute... maybe spiders were the answer! Some spiders used their threads to float through the wind on air currents. He remembered watching a documentary

about it with his Uncle Ben. It was called 'ballooning', and it happened when spiders spun triangular parachutes to catch the wind. Maybe he could do the same!

Working faster than he ever could have thought possible, Spider-Man started to create a large triangular net, using the mechanical web-shooters in his wrists. As he spun and spun, a makeshift parachute started to take shape.

It was working! Although there were holes in the net, it was slowing the descent of the astronauts' capsule, and he could use it to steer the capsule towards the East River, which separated Manhattan and Queens. The most important thing was to make sure the capsule didn't crash anywhere where it could hurt a lot of people.

The capsule was still falling at speed, and Spider-Man was not at all confident that this would work. But it had to. Everything was moving towards him quickly and—

With a massive *FWOOOSH*, the capsule

landed in the river in a huge explosion of sound and water.

Spider-Man was thrown up in the air, then pulled under the water. He was spun around under the current so many times he didn't know which way was up. He kicked out, trying to push himself through the water. Then he surfaced, coughing and spluttering in the East River. He could see the capsule opening – the astronauts looked a little shaken, but they were safe.

Spider-Man looked up and saw a giant electronic screen advertising the *Daily Bugle* newspaper, with the words *SPIDER-MAN – MENACE!* staring down at him. J. Jonah Jameson had never liked Spider-Man. Even though Spidey had just saved his son, Jonah wasn't going to say anything nice about him. In fact, it looked like he hated Spider-Man even more now, for upstaging his son's big event.

Spider-Man sighed and started to swim to shore.