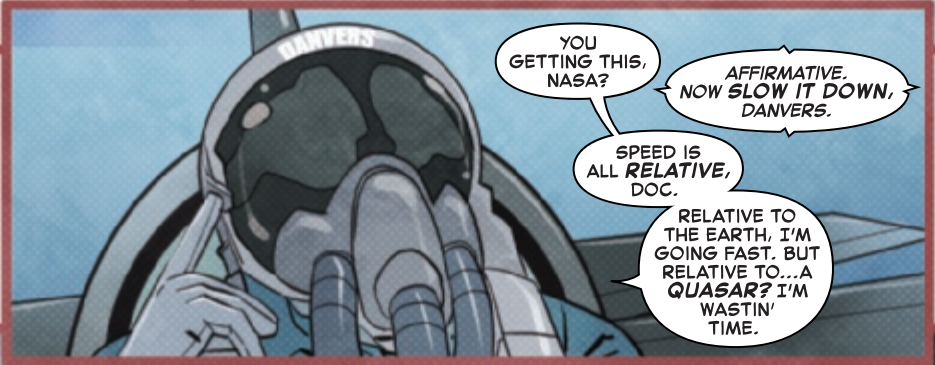


★ THIS IS WHERE MY JOURNEY BEGINS, WHERE IT ALWAYS BEGAN: IN THE SKY...WITH ALTITUDE AND ATTITUDE....

HOOOOYYYAAAAAAHHHHHHH!

**YEARS AGO.**

SOMEWHERE IN THE AIR OVER KENNEDY SPACE CENTER...



YOU GETTING THIS, NASA?

AFFIRMATIVE. NOW SLOW IT DOWN, DANVERS.

SPEED IS ALL RELATIVE, DOC.

RELATIVE TO THE EARTH, I'M GOING FAST. BUT RELATIVE TO...A QUASAR? I'M WASTIN' TIME.

JUST DON'T WASTE THAT BILLION-DOLLAR PROTOTYPE. YOU'RE BURNING UP FUEL.

JUST A LITTLE HIGHER.

DIRECT ORDER, COLONEL.

JUST TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THOSE CLOUDS.



DO THEY NOT DO DIRECT ORDERS WHERE YOU COME FROM, AIR FORCE?

WITH RESPECT, NASA, I'M A LOANER. UNTIL THEY STAMP THE PAPERWORK, YOU'RE NOT EVEN IN MY CHAIN OF COMMAND...

...AND BESIDES...THIS IS BETWEEN ME AND THOSE CLOUDS.

CLOUDS? CAROL, THAT'S THE ATMOSPHERE. WHAT ARE YOU IMAGINING IS OUT THERE?

WELL, IF I KNEW, I WOULDN'T HAVE TO IMAGINE IT, DOC...





DID I MENTION "BILLION"? WITH A "B"?

YANNO, I **SEE** YOUR WING FLAPS MOVIN', BUT ALL I **HEAR** IS CLUCKIN'...



TURN THAT TAIL AROUND, AIR FORCE.

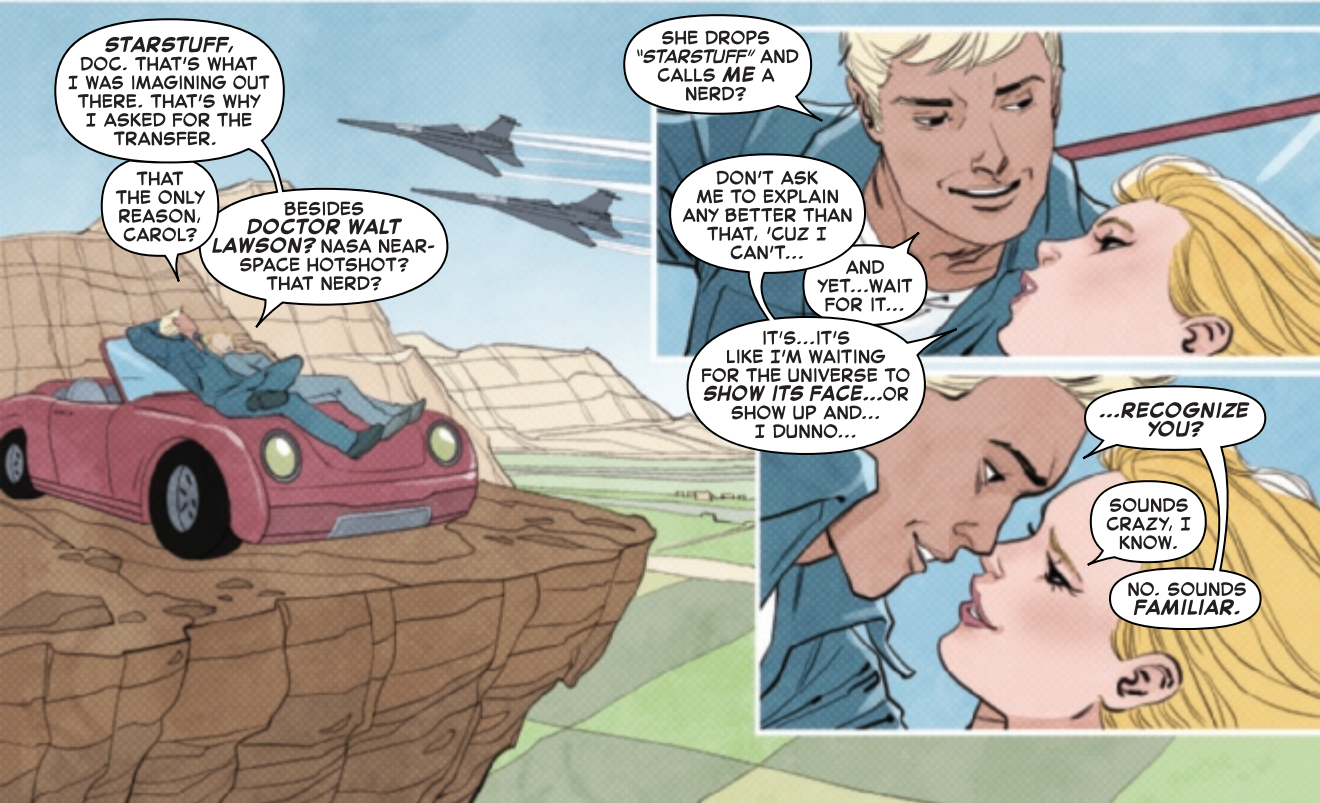
MAKE ME, NASA.

THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER ASK.



OH, IT'S ON...

ROGER THAT...



**STARSTUFF**, DOC. THAT'S WHAT I WAS IMAGINING OUT THERE. THAT'S WHY I ASKED FOR THE TRANSFER.

THAT THE ONLY REASON, CAROL?

BESIDES **DOCTOR WALT LAWSON**? NASA NEAR-SPACE HOTSHOT? THAT NERD?

SHE DROPS "STARSTUFF" AND CALLS **ME** A NERD?

DON'T ASK ME TO EXPLAIN ANY BETTER THAN THAT, 'CUZ I CAN'T...

AND YET...WAIT FOR IT...

IT'S...IT'S LIKE I'M WAITING FOR THE UNIVERSE TO **SHOW ITS FACE**...OR SHOW UP AND... I DUNNO...

...RECOGNIZE YOU?

SOUNDS CRAZY, I KNOW.

NO. SOUNDS FAMILIAR.



## HARPSWELL, MAINE. NOW.

ALL THOSE YEARS I SPENT WAITING FOR THE UNIVERSE TO SHOW ITS FACE...?

YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN YOU COULD NOT ESCAPE THE JUSTICE OF HALA, MARI-ELL.

...YEAH, THAT'S NOT THE FACE I WAS HOPING FOR.

MA?! CAROL?! HELP?!

HUSH, HUMAN! I CARRY AN IMPERIAL KREE TRANSMISSION--A MESSAGE FROM HER INTELLIGENCE EMPRESS PAM'A!

WHRRRRRRR

MARI-ELL, CAPTAIN THE FIRST...

...YOU HAVE BEEN TRIED IN ABSENTIA AND FOUND GUILTY OF HIGH TREASON.

...AND EXECUTE YOUR SENTENCE, WHICH IS DEATH.

YEAH, WELL, I GOT A SENTENCE FOR YOU!

THAT'S...

PAM'A. SHE SENT ME ON MY MISSION TO EARTH, ALL THOSE YEARS AGO. THAT RECORDING MUST BE ANCIENT.

YOU CANNOT HIDE FOREVER. ONE DAY, MY KLEANERS WILL FIND YOUR LOCATOR BEACON...

NO, CAROL. NOT WHILE SHE HAS JOE.

HALA HAS SPOKEN. DRONES-- COMMENCE EXECUTION PROTOCOL!

AAAAHH!





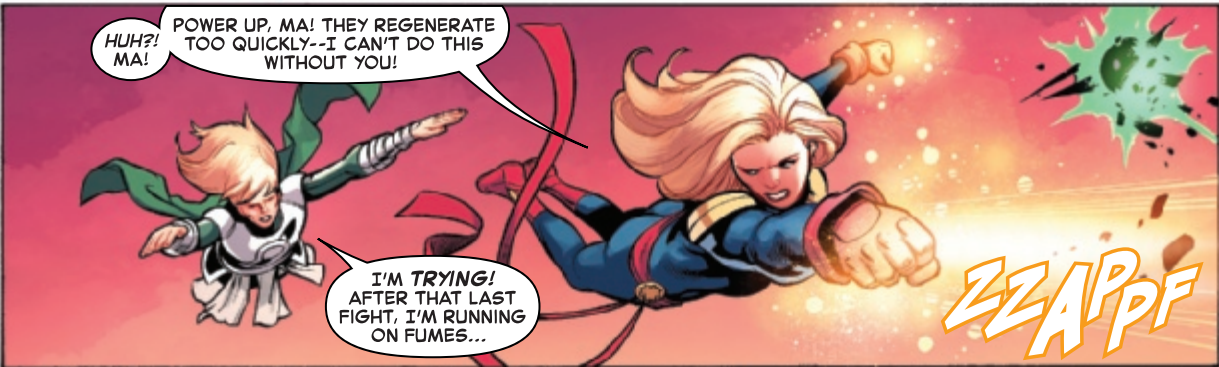
WHAT THE...?!

KREE AUTO-DRONES...PERPETUALLY REGENERATING!

CLONE DRONES?! I DON'T KNOW WHICH OF THOSE WORDS I HATE MORE.



I'LL TAKE THE FLANKS, MA-- YOU BLAST THROUGH AND HEAD FOR JOE, AND I'LL--



HUH?! MA! POWER UP, MA! THEY REGENERATE TOO QUICKLY--I CAN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOU!

I'M TRYING! AFTER THAT LAST FIGHT, I'M RUNNING ON FUMES...

ZZAPPF



I'M NOT AS YOUNG AS I USED TO BE, SWEETHEART.

SAYS THE FLYING LADY WHO PUNCHES OUT ALIEN DEATH SQUADS?! MA, YOU'RE STILL FIERCE.

I'LL COVER YOU...LET'S MOVE!



KA-BOOM

ZZAPPF

KR-TH





LOOK AT THAT. I'M THE WORST THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO THIS TOWN. THIS IS ALL MY FAULT...

OH, NO...

THAT KLEANER AND JOE JUNIOR HAVE GOT TO BE HERE SOMEWHERE. LET'S SPLIT UP TO RECON. I'LL SWEEP THE NORTH END...

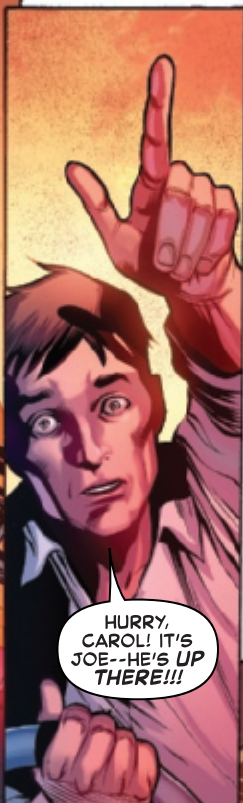
...AND I'LL TAKE THE SOUTH.



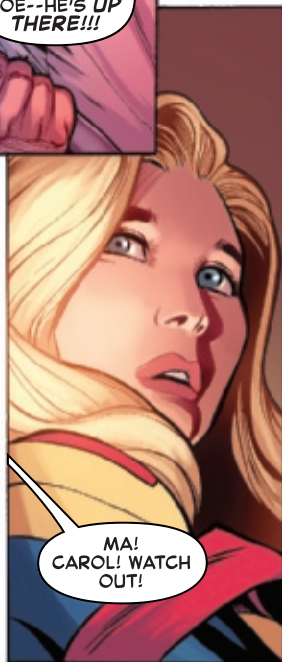
WE GOTTA MOVE! IF THE STEEPLE COLLAPSES--

LOUIS?

CAROL?



HURRY, CAROL! IT'S JOE--HE'S UP THERE!!!



MA! CAROL! WATCH OUT!



JOE! HOLD--  
NO NO, CAROL, IT'S--