

Chapter 1 – Extreme Protocol

Carol was flying at max speed since she received the pager alert from Fury. All she got from the pager was that some super powered people had gone rogue on Earth, and Fury needed her to help someone fix it.

The last time she was on Earth was about eight years ago. She missed Goose, Maria, Monica and Fury. Unfortunately, when she got to Earth, she saw a terrorist group about to kill a group of children. On instinct she flew down and stopped the terrorists, but when the army got there, a general Hale wanted to take her in.

Fury then appeared out of nowhere, now the director of SHIELD. But the general claimed he only had authority if SHIELD takes control over the scene. Carol thought it was weird that Hale almost looked eager for that to happen. Not that Fury gave her the chance, instead he called to someone else, his godson Tony Stark, who had ties in the military and made sure that not only did Carol was free of this incident, but she was to be treated with respect according to her rank as captain in the air force. And so, she was officially a human citizen once again.

She wanted to thank the man for going above and beyond for her, but the man was very important, he was a Stark after all, and very busy so she had to wait for an opportunity. But it seems like that wasn't meant to happen as she received an urgent call to help from the Skrulls and had to leave.

Carol will admit she was still a little worried, because the same time she was about to fly off Fury stormed in, with a look she never saw before on his face. Pure worry and fear. Apparently, Tony Stark went missing after an attack on his demonstration site. Neither a body nor the man himself was found. Fury begged her to spare sometime to help them look, but Carol couldn't leave the Skrulls undefended.

She suggested Fury will use SHIELD resources, but the man adopted a guarded look before saying a quick goodbye and disappearing again. Carol didn't want to leave. She owed both Stark and Fury a lot. Both returned her life on Earth to her in a certain way, but still with a heavy heart she flew into space.

Eight years of travelling and helping caused her to forget about what happened on Earth, but it all came back to her when she got the message from Fury.

Finally, once she entered Earth's atmosphere her coms connected to the local channels. She slowed herself in descent toward the planet, and it didn't take Fury long to connect her to his com system. His voice was more gruff and tired than ever before as he said *"Danvers. About fucking time!"*

Carol didn't exactly appreciate that comment. Friend or not, she replied to him slightly annoyed *"Look Fury I didn't come here from the next planet over, it takes time to cross solar systems, even in my speed."* She took a deep breath and added more softly *"I will land at DC in a few minutes..."*

She wanted to offer to wait until they catch up, but Fury cut her *"I need you in Siberia as soon as possible, sending you coordinates now."*

Confused, but hearing the urgency in the man's voice she altered her trajectory to patch of white land beneath her. While flying down to the location Fury provided, she asked *"What's the mission?"*

The next words came robotic from the man, but Carol could still feel the tension behind them *"Your mission is to locate Tony Stark aka Iron-man and report. If you meet any resistance, especially Captain America, eliminate on contact."*

Carol almost froze in the air, and it had nothing to do with the coldness around her. Did Fury lose his mind in those years?

Tony Stark was still missing after all those years and Fury hoped she will be able to locate him? And what was is about Captain America? Didn't the man supposed to be dead? And even if he wasn't, while Carol never been a fan he is considered a hero, why would Fury order her to kill him on sight?

There are too many questions for her to proceed with the mission *"Fury I need more than that."*

The man sighed in frustration, but before he could answer a female voice with Irish accent sounded through her coms *"We lost contact with Boss about two hours ago, the last distress signal came from the coordinates Mr. Fury provided you. Boss was injured during a fight against Mr. Rogers when Boss tried to apprehend him for causing the deaths of dozens in the last few days. I believe this is enough information for you to proceed with your rescue, Captain Danvers."*

Carol startled by the information increased her speed toward the now closing in concrete building in the middle of a snowy desert. But still, she couldn't help but ask *"Who the hell are you?"*

Fury was the one to respond this time *"It was Friday. Stark's AI, she quite worried for her boss so if you will please focus on the mission Captain."*

Now understanding the urgency of the situation Carol didn't reply. She just opened the heavy door with her strength and began searching for any clue of Tony Stark.

But Carol also couldn't shake the disbelief of Fury's casual comment. Carol had been in countless planets during her years, and the only thing she could compare Friday to, was the supreme intelligence from Hala. Nowhere else did she ever see such advanced AI. The female voice sounded so human. Carol could hear the tension in her forced calm tone, while still noticing the fear when she spoke about losing her boss, and anger when mentioning Rogers.

Carol was programmed during her stay with the Kree to believe in the supreme intelligent, but while she was disillusioned from that specific AI, Friday seemed different. She cared about people and was distressed by the very thought of losing them. She took active role in making the situation better by interfering what Fury would have turned into a sarcastic response match. She was starting to like this AI Carol decided.

And then Carol saw the weirdest thing she seen in a while, which says a lot. Pieces of what look like a red and gold armor leading her to a man lying limp on the floor inside what remained of the armor.

When she got closer, she recognized the face of Tony Stark from the magazines she seen last time around. His face was now bloody, and his expression was contorted in pure agony.

But Carol attention was drawn to the man's chest, where the entire metal plate had a long and narrow dent, with a broken thing she couldn't recognize in its center. What shocked her most, however, was the fact she could sense residual power coming from the broken device, and not just any power, but one similar to her own!

"..Vers, report. Carol!" Fury's voice cut through her daze.

She shook off whatever got into her and replied *“I located Stark, but the situation is bad Fury. There is a lot of blood, probably broken bones, and his chest plate has a large dent going deep inside of it. The device in the center is completely destroyed.”*

Carol could hear a static noise, which she assumed was Friday displaying distress in the same time Fury growled *“Motherfucker.”* A deep breath later he asked, *“How long will it take you to fly him to New York?”*

Carol did some mental calculation and responded, *“I can have him there in half an hour.”*

Fury took a moment to consider it apparently before answering *“It will have to do. Friday will send you the coordinates to Stark Tower we will meet you here.”*

Carol released a deep breath, took one last look around and that’s when she saw the shield. Such an icon in the past now lying discarded on the floor like trash. For the first time Carol wondered what happened here, especially considering that another corner of the room had what looked like a melted metal arm.

But she had to focus herself. She wondered for a moment if she should take off the armor, but not knowing how or even if it will be wise, she decided against it. Picking up the man, she noticed the weak heartbeat he had, which started to worry her.

Holding him tightly as she began to fly to her new destination she whispered *“Stay with me Stark. I got you.”*

Once she got to New-York it wasn’t difficult to find the Stark Tower. It was after all, one of the tallest buildings in the horizon and had the Stark name across its top floor.

When she got close to the landing pad, she saw Fury standing there waiting with a team of people wearing white lab coats.

Her boots barely touched the ground before an Asian woman with long dark hair stepped forward and ordered *“On the ground, gently.”*

Carol didn't argue, just doing as told. Once Stark was on the floor Fury stepped forward and began pulling and pushing things quickly all around the armor until a 'hiss' sound later had the armor opened.

Two men stepped out from the group and lifted Stark from inside of his armor onto a bed on wheels that waited next to them. Once Stark was on the bed the entire team ran inside the building, followed closely by Fury. Not knowing what else she should do, she followed them as well.

She stepped next to Fury inside the small room. The room had nothing but a wide window into the operation room next to it. Carol watched as they brought Stark's bed next to a weird pod and slowly moved him from the bed to inside the pod.

Fury probably noticed her confused look, and while some members of the medical team began connecting Stark to the few devices inside the pod he explained *"It's called the cradle. It's meant to be a medical pod to revert any damage done to the body. Dr. Cho was the one to develop the theory, but no one other than Tony believed it will be possible. Tony funded not only that project but all of her projects."*

Well that explain why the woman seemed so devoted to Stark, but then again money doesn't buy a look of concern like the one Cho was wearing at the moment. Fury began looking concern as well and spoke, not to her she realized *"Friday?"*

The AI answered with a voice full of concern and fear, which again increased Carol's admiration for her, *"Boss heart is very weak. His left arm is broken in two places. Both his lungs are punctured with shattered ribs. Internal bleeding is extensive, and he suffers from frost bites as well. Chances of survival are decreasing as we speak."*

A new voice asked from the entrance *"What about the cradle Friday?"*

Carol was startled she missed the opening of the door. A woman with long red hair, wearing a business suit and high heels entered the room and looked out the window. Tears filled the woman's eyes as Friday answered her *"There is so much the cradle is capable of Miss Potts. Boss lost too much blood, and the frost bite prevents it from fixing the damage done to many areas. With his current heart rate Dr. Cho and me calculated Boss have another two days, is we run the cradle it will increase to a week."* The Irish voice filled with such grief when she spoke next that it made Carol's heart clench *"In any case Boss is going to die."*

Carol could feel even her heart break a little with the news. She didn't know him very well, but he helped her when she needed him, he chose to help the people when others went rogue. When she looked back at Ms. Potts, she was crying on the shoulder of a new man. This one wearing a suit and a little wide around the middle.

Carol could hear Ms. Potts was muttering *"How am I supposed to tell that to Rhodey and Vision? Happy..."*

The wide man, Happy ironically, had a somber look as he held Potts close and said *"Don't worry about it babe. You are strong, we will do it together. Tony always said that when he die..."*

"He won't... fucking... die... on my watch." Fury growled out from between clenched teeth.

Dr. Cho seemed to hear Fury on the other side of the window and asked, looking toward the glass on her side *"What are you suggesting Fury?"*

The man stood straight and said *"Plan A and B failed. It's time for plan E."*

Potts stood straight herself and eyed the dark man wryly *"You don't mean..."*

The man didn't answer Potts instead he starts talking to the room again *"Friday. Overwrite code /DF00E."*

When the AI responses it's in with an exited voice *"Overwrite code accepted."*

Potts tried to intervene again *"He wouldn't want it, Nick."* She said gently.

And Carol is shocked that not only Potts dared to call the man by his first name, but Fury looked her in the eye and replied in the same gentle tone *"It's no longer his choice. It's ours, Pepper."*

Potts, Pepper and he stared at each other for a long moment, before the red-head gave him a single, but determined nod. Carol looked up at Happy, but the man looked just as lost as her.

Fury turned his stare back to the windows and said firmly *"Friday, allow Dr. Cho access to the Extreme Protocol."*

Friday answered him with relieved tone, causing Carol to wonder what miracle this Extreme Protocol was. *“Of course, Mr. Fury.”*

On the other side of the window, a panel opened, and a vial was revealed. It was full of red liquid. Dr. Cho immediately began typing in her tablet something.

Carol used the time to turn toward Fury and ask, *“What the hell is in that vial?”*

“Extremis Virus 3.0” Was Fury’s short answer.

That was when Po...Pepper spoke again, directly at her *“It’s a virus invented by some mad people to heal the body from any injury in an instant. Unfortunately, the first version also made people who took it explode. Tony thought that one day it can be useful in case of a fallen Avenger, so he and Bruce perfected the formula. It’s not only the closest thing to the super-serum used on the idiot Rogers, but this formula is superior in every way.”*

Carol nodded in understanding, once again this man impressed her by creating something she yet to see in any other place across the universe. But another thought occurred to her, and she asked with a frown *“Why wouldn’t Stark want to use it?”*

Pepper sighed and answered with a sad look toward the window, where they all could see said man taking another shallow breath *“He never wanted to be an enhanced, he took pride in being an ordinary man. Even when it’s the last thing you can say about Tony Stark. Unlike most, he never envied those with power he just wanted to help people.”*

Carol remembered the suit. It looked like a hell of a battle armor for a man who didn’t envy power. She thought it might not be the appropriate time to bring it up, but the woman clearly needed a distraction. So, with a suspicious voice Carol asked, *“What about the armor?”*

The woman’s blue eyes narrowed at her, and she spoke with a hard tone *“Tony build the first suit to escape terrorists' capture. He used it to clean the mess his COO did by selling weapons to terrorists under the table. But the world kept demanding more, and more from him, and Tony could never refuse when the people called for his help. And so we ended up in this situation.”*

With wide eyes, Carol looked again at the man in the pod. Something new began stirring in her heart.

Dr. Cho looked toward them again and said *“For the Extremis to work now it must be injected into the heart. We will have to put the Arc-reactor back inside him.”*

Fury didn’t say another word. He left the room, his coat bellowing behind him. When she caught the pale faces of Pepper and Happy, she began to worry herself.

Trying to take all their minds off it for a moment she spoke *“I’m Captain Carol Danvers by the way. Also known as Captain Marvel.”*

Pepper tilted her head, before her eyes widened and she said with a small smile *“Yes, I remember. Tony pulled a lot of strings in the military for you a few years ago. I am Virginia Potts, CEO of Stark Industries. But everyone calls me Pepper.”* An awkward cough from the man behind her made Pepper to smile sheepishly at him before adding to Carol *“And that is Happy Hogan our head of security.”* Happy gave her a friendly nod.

Carol gave them both a smile before asking *“I thought Stark was the CEO of his company.”*

Pepper shrugged *“He named me CEO when he became Iron-man.”*

She was about to ask about this Iron-man thing, but Fury chose that moment to enter the medical room and he handed Dr. Cho a device that look exactly like the broken one from his armor.

Carol turned to Pepper and asked, *“What is that?”*

Pepper’s face grimaced before she replied *“It’s the Arc-reactor, a self-sustaining energy source. Tony’s dad created the original one, but during his capture by the terrorist, shrapnel entered to his heart. So, Tony miniaturized the technology in a cave from a box of scraps to save his own life. Up until three years ago it was inside of him... he hated it. And now he will have to live with it again.”*

Carol put a hand on the other woman’s shoulder and said, *“He will understand you chose to save his life.”*

Pepper only murmured *“I hope so.”* Before her phone made a sound. Pepper checked the screen before turning to Happy and saying, *“We have to go and deal with the board now, they at least going to be happy we don’t have to support the Avengers anymore.”*

Happy gave her a nod and left the room. Pepper turned to her again and with a small smile asked *“You will stay with Tony and Nick? They both can use all the help they can get after the last week.”*

Once again surprised by the use of Fury’s first name, she nodded and said, *“As long as there isn’t an urgent call I will help as much as I can.”*

With that Pepper left, and Carol turned around to look as the medical team prepared for the operation, just as Fury walked back into the small room and stood next to her.

Carol looks sideways at Fury before saying *“I think we have a lot of catching up to do... Nick.”*