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CHAPTER ONE

SEVEN YEARS LATER

Craig Carter sat on his autocycle, and looked up at the impressive NASA building. Nervously he adjusted his tie, and made sure that his hair was combed perfectly. He cleared his throat, climbed off his motorbike and headed towards the entrance to the building.

The young man walked into the reception area, and smiled at the lady behind the desk.

“My name is Craig Carter, miss. I have an appointment with Commander Simms.”

The receptionist consulted her computer, and smiled at the nervous man.

“Yes you do. Please wait a few moments. The Commander is busy with another applicant at present.”

Craig walked to a row of chairs and sat down to wait his turn.

Half an hour later he was called into the commander’s office. Simms invited him to sit down, while he read through the young man’s résumé. After a few minutes, he put the data disk down, and smiled at the young applicant.

“So Mr Carter, you would like to become a space explorer.”

“Yes sir,” he replied shyly.

Commander Simms got up and, clasping his hands behind his back, he paced behind his desk.

“Why?”

The question took Craig by surprise. “Excuse me?” he asked stupidly.

“Why do you want to become a space explorer?”

Craig sighed. “It’s all I’ve ever thought about. I have wanted this for most of my life.”

Commander Simms looked at his hopeful candidate.