

# Caroline the Comet Hunter

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**ALMOST 300 YEARS AGO, A COURAGEOUS YOUNG WOMAN NAMED CAROLINE HERSHEL WAS BORN IN GERMANY TO A FAMILY OF MUSICIANS.**

Her early life was full of hardships and trials. When she was only ten years old, she became seriously ill. As a result, she never grew taller than 1.5 metres and was left with scars all over her face. Her parents worried that her appearance would affect her chances of attracting potential husbands to support and take care of her. They assumed that she would never get married. But, instead of focusing on her education, Caroline's mother believed that she should spend her life working for free as the family's household servant.

After years of unfairness, Caroline figured that nothing good would ever happen in her life! Until one day, her older brother William invited her to move and live with him in England to assist him in his career as a musician. Finally, a glimpse of hope and a chance to lead a more independent life! She happily left Germany.

Her excitement was short-lived when she realised that she was still expected to take care of her brother's household chores. But at least William encouraged Caroline's independence and financially supported her as she started studying English, Mathematics, and Astronomy. She even took up music and singing lessons!

Apart from his love of music, William was fascinated with the skies above. He wanted to



learn more about our solar system, the stars, the moon, and everything in between. To do that, he needed a great telescope...No! He needed the best telescope, and he wanted to build it himself. But he could not do it without Caroline's help. And so, she became his assistant. William worked on building his telescope for long hours at a time, and Caroline helped him however she could; from polishing and grinding the telescope mirrors, to reading to him and making sure he ate throughout the day.

They successfully built a telescope, and William's career as an astronomer took off. Thanks to the telescope, they made many discoveries, including the planet we now know as Uranus! As William's career flourished, he taught Caroline mathematics so that she could help him in his calculations and even continue his work while he was not there. From then on, Caroline became an astronomer in her own right. She even discovered new

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galaxies and nebulae while observing stars with her smaller telescope. In August of 1786, she saw a strange object moving slowly across the sky. The next night, she saw it again. That could only mean one thing. She had discovered a comet!

Caroline had become the first woman in history to discover a comet. Her discovery amazed astronomers all around the world. Finally, after years of helping her brother, she was being recognized for her own skills. The following year, she even started earning a salary, making her the first woman to be paid for her work in science. She went on to discover seven other comets, many of which were named after her.

Caroline has been an inspiration to many generations of women who decided to follow in her footsteps and take up a career in science. Today, Caroline is celebrated for her determination and for succeeding in a field that has been male dominated for centuries.

**REACH FOR THE STARS AND NEVER GIVE UP ON YOUR DREAMS!**

**LOOK FOR THIS EXHIBIT DURING YOUR VISIT AT ESPLORA AND SEARCH THE SKIES JUST LIKE CAROLINE AND WILLIAM!**

