

## Wind Up Space

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# Wind Up Space

by [orphan\\_account](#)

## Summary

The only life Raja Kapoor had known in her 20 years of living was that aboard the Fortuna. She was born there, and she was sure as hell that she was going to die there; that was one constant throughout her existence. She was alone and she was always going to be alone. That is, until a damaged Jupiter lands on her vessel and an angry-looking Judy Robinson is pointing a loaded flare gun at her face. Cue the chaos.

## Put the Gun Down Please!

"Now that I got your attention, yeah. Hey, how ya doin'? How ya, how ya, how ya, how ya doin'? Come on."

A pair of heavy eyelids slowly fluttered open as the deep bass echoed through the room, the slightly-autotuned vocals of Mary Mary filling red-tipped ears. A lanky body shuffled under some very warm and comfortable covers, a groan releasing from the girl's mouth. The timed lights of the room slowly turned on, raising in brightness slowly which allowed the bed's occupier to adjust her eyes.

Raja Kapoor finally sat herself up, scooting herself backwards until she could rest her back against the headboard. Two balled up fists rubbed against tired eyes. Her head bopped along to the beat of 'Walking,' one of the many songs she had available. She took a few deep breaths of the artificial oxygen in the room, closing her eyes and imagining that it was something better, something fresher. It was difficult, considering that she's only ever breathed the tanked air. Once the urge to get up and do something overpowered her, she slapped a hand down on the pause button of her Yamaha compact disc player. She pressed the symbol to open the device and took out her square CD wallet, flipping through the laminated folders until she landed on 'The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill' in the middle. Popping it in, she hit the play button and got up to go to the bathroom.

This had been her routine for the past seven years. The same thing every morning. Get up, change the music, shower (and maybe do a little duet here and there with whoever was on), pull on a random shuffle of whatever she had in her closet that wasn't dirty since detergent was always running low, brush her teeth with a minimal amount of toothpaste, and get started. Raja was sort of excited for today, since she had found a package of Eggo chocolate chip waffles hiding in the farthest corner of one passenger's personal fridge. Thank god food didn't expire in space. Tossing two in the toaster, she busied herself with running diagnostics.

The ship's computer, thankfully, was for the most part operational. The accident that rendered the vessel immobile also destroyed the navigation systems, the long-range comms, the hydraulics systems for deck two, and jammed some of the doors on deck three so that Raja couldn't even get in. Deck three was mainly extra storage space and a few more bedrooms, so she didn't bother. As for the hydraulics system, she was able to re-route the pipeline system so that the excess water from the rest of the Fortuna would be concentrated into the collection point in the HUB. The accident had left the fuel reserves alone, so Raja read the operation manual and figured out how to get the excess fuel to keep the interior of the ship running. She wasn't going anywhere anytime soon.

Raja grabbed her steaming cup of black coffee from the machine on the counter and slid the two steaming waffles onto a ceramic plate she got from the cupboard. She sighed as she caught sight of the sink, realizing that she'd have to do the dishes sooner rather than later. Washing clothes and dishes was always by hand, since Raja had to scrap the washer, dryer, and dishwasher a few years back. The Fortuna had taken a hit by an asteroid a while back,

which created a hole in the furthest part of the ship, where all of the cleaning machines were. Raja had to jettison it, but she'd rather that than lose her life.

Her Eggos were good at the very least, and she made herself one more while simultaneously finishing the pot of coffee she made. She'd become a coffee addict in the many years that she'd been on her own.

Walking past the main refrigerator, she brushed her fingers against the magnet with a picture of the crew on it. It was small, but Raja and her parents were distinguishable if one looked hard enough. They were second-to-last on the second row. Her mother was holding her on her hip and her father had his arms wrapped around the both of them. Raja was beaming at the camera, with both her front teeth gone, and her parents had on more mellow smiles. The photo was taken when she was just three years old, nearing four. She was oblivious, of course, to why they were taking a picture. Harvey Jordan, the resident photographer, had explained in that peppy baby-talk that people use that it was to record them for all of time, long past when they were gone. She was interested but her small mind never bothered to inquire.

Twenty years ago, the Fortuna was lost to Earth and the rest of humanity. Before reaching Alpha Centauri, the vessel encountered an unidentified object which smashed into a neighboring planet and caused a planetary explosion. The Fortuna was hit with debris and knocked out of functionality. They were light years away from Alpha Centauri, where they were supposed to establish a first colony for humanity. Luckily, the crew of the Fortuna was very resourceful, so everyone was able to live past the accident. Raja herself was born just months after the accident, and she was dubbed the miracle baby aboard the Fortuna. The first baby born in space too, by everyone's knowledge. She'd broken so many firsts just by existing, and her parents never failed to mention that.

Raja was a smart, no doubt. In a world of either thinkers or memorizers, she was good at both. She wasn't a super-genius, but she had wits. She was above average but surrounded by extraordinary people. Those chosen for the Fortuna voyage were supposed to be the cream of the crop; it made sense to them that their children would be the same. Raja wasn't a disappointment in her parents' eyes, but she was constantly pushed to be better than she already was. It was a lot of pressure for a child. It forced her to become a bit of a rebel from time to time; for once Raja wanted to do things her way, and she found ways to do that on small scales. The rest of the crew saw it as a phase, just a child's matter. She would grow out of it and become a model child, they told her parents. Too bad they weren't around for that to happen.

Just three weeks after her thirteenth birthday, the main airlock of the Fortuna opened. Raja never figured out why, though she told herself that it was just a short-circuit of the systems. Few died that day trying to close it, but while others were concerned with the air that was escaping, no one bothered to check what was coming in.

Pulmonary fibrosis, but make it alien. That was her definition of it. The airborne virus that miraculously entered the ship attacked the alveoli in the lungs and destroyed them slowly until everyone inevitably died of suffocation.

Raja was the only one spared. She'd only ever breathed the artificial, mechanically-generated air from the ship, which lacked some chemicals as natural air on earth. Therefore, her pulmonary system mutated to accommodate that. She lived but lost everything. Her parents, the people she grew up with, her family.

Within the year, she was left alone.

So that's how she's lived ever since. Alone. It wasn't like she could do anything about it. She told herself that she'd long forgotten the grief that plagued her when she was so young. Raja was fine the way she was, and she'd continue to be that way.

Making her way out of the dining hall, Raja decided to go over to the Zhukovs' Jupiter. She had hacked into each of the docked Jupiters and figured out how to override the identification system. She could go wherever she wanted now.

Raja remembered how their family kept stacks and stacks of novels and documents about military history. Fitting for their family name. She started reading *The Art of War* by Sun Yat Sen just two days ago, and she was already halfway through. What else was she going to do with so much time? Cradling her last mug of coffee, she settled herself in the cushioned nook of their HUB and started where she left off. Her eyes scanned the pages, not skimmed. She wanted to absorb the information there, and lucky for her, she still had a young mind filled with space.

She was almost done, nearly to the last page when a slow beeping pattern permeated through the bay doors. Raja furrowed her thick brows and peeled up, assuring herself that she was just going mad and hearing things. Once there was a pause in the beeping, she hesitantly settled back down and refocused. Then it started up again, and then she was sure she wasn't losing it.

"Warning. Unidentifiable object detected, approximately 328 kilometers from current location."

"Warning. Unidentifiable object detected, approximately 219 kilometers from current location."

Raja speed-walked back to the captain's deck. Looking at the screen of the navigation systems, she shook her head as she saw the glitchy, but nonetheless operational, image pop up. It was an old-fashioned radar, but it conveyed a clear image; a small red dot passed through the green rings that surrounded the green circle that was the Fortuna. It was heading right towards her.

Raja was not an optimist, though. After everything that happened, she'd lost hope a long time ago. She assumed that whatever was heading towards her was dangerous. Worse yet, she had no weapons to defend herself. Raja has tried every printer available, but she couldn't bypass the program's restrictions for printing weapons. Luckily, though, she'd watched almost every video on self-defense and fighting techniques that the Rickards family left behind, so she could protect herself at least somewhat.

"Object commencing unauthorized docking procedures in Port 54."

Port 54. That was on the third deck. Running there as fast as her legs could carry her, Raja made sure to lock down the rest of the decks behind herself. If somehow she didn't make it back, then whoever these things were were going to have to fight some more to take her home.

Raja finally made it to the bay doors of Docking Port 54. Her breathing was heavy and she'd shed her sweater so that she stood there in just her tank top and black cargo pants. Her fists clenched at her side as the hissing of the first set of doors of the other vessel opened. Some banging and incoherent noise could be heard on the other side of the metal door, and Raja tried to calm her racing pulse. Raising her fists by her jaw, Raja readied herself, taking in deep breaths.

The bay doors creaked and opened suddenly. Raja's mind didn't even bother identifying what was on the other side. Her fist went flying towards whatever was in front of her, but she was able to stop herself before her hand connected to a very flare gun. And the even more dangerous-looking person holding it.

"What the hell-hey woah put the gun down please!"

The short, curly-haired girl lowered the red weapon to stare back at Raja. Her expression held the same confusion. "Who are you?"

"I could ask you the same thing" Raja replies, her eyes scanning the other girl. Shock overwhelmed her. She was found. After all this time...someone found the Fortuna.

"Judy Robinson. Captain Judy Robinson. And you have some explaining to do."

# Follow Me, Les Miserables

## Chapter Summary

Judy and Raja get to talking.

“Wait...how do I know you’re not dangerous?”

The other woman scoffed. Her hands were raised by her head in a show of defenselessness. “First of all, you’re the one with the gun. Second, do I look dangerous? Honestly?”

Judy huffed, a streak of annoyance passing through her. She looked the unknown person up and down. British, by her accent. She couldn’t possibly be older than 23. She had tanned skin and a tall body. She wouldn’t say that she was lanky, but Judy noticed how her bare arms were far from pudgy. She had short but unruly jet-black hair, the edges just barely brushing her shoulders. Her eyes were a light hazel color, covered by long eyelashes. Her lips were a light pink and her nose was slim but buttoned at the bottom.

“Are you human? What’s your name?”

Again the stranger looked at Judy like she was crazy. “Am I hum-no I’m a damn ostrich. Of course I’m human, what kind of question is that?!”

“And your name?”

“Raja Kapoor” she replied monotonously.

Judy lowered the flare gun and stuck out her free hand. “Judy Robinson.”

“Yeah we’ve established that already” Raja deadpanned, although she still accepted her outstretched hand. Judy notes her calloused palms before they broke their handshake.

“How..how did you get here?”

“I was kind of hoping you could explain that to us” Judy replied.

Raja’s eyebrows knit together. “Wait, us?”

Judy kissed her teeth and hit the side of the bay doors three times. She turned and watched as the members of her crew, led by Will and Penny, streamed out of the entrance.

“No, no, no. No! What...” Raja breathed out, eyes wide as she pushed her hair back with one hand. “Kids? Us...is you and a bunch of children? No you can’t bring them aboard?”

Judy cocked her head. “And why not?”

“B-because! Kids destroy stuff, and they’re rowdy, and I don’t need that on my vessel” Raja exclaimed, looking frustrated.

Samantha stepped out and ran to grab Judy’s hand. She tugged on it, making the older girl look down. “Judy, can I have a snack? Please, I’m hungry.”

Sam pouted, sticking out her bottom lip and doing those puppy-dog eyes. Judy looked up at Raja, giving her an expression that said ‘would you really turn down a starving child?’ and she broke.

“Fine. Fine, good Christ. Let me just...” she gestured to the doors with one hand, the other on her hip. “Open it up for you. Captain.”

Judy couldn’t help her snarky smile, and she followed behind the taller girl. She turned to the rest of the kids who were gathered behind a large metal door. “We’ll be safe here for now. We’re heading for the dining hall, so you guys can get something to eat. There’s no reason to worry.”

Raja punched a few things into the nearby keypad and all of the metal doors quickly rescinded, clearing a path for everyone. Raja glanced back to the hoard behind her and groaned internally. “Follow me, Les Miserable.”

...

“So, Captain huh?”

Judy looked up from her seat at the cafeteria table. Penny and Will, who were sitting next to her, did too. Raja climbed into the seat on the bench opposite of her with a granola bar in hand. She looked to Judy expectantly.

“Yeah” she responded curtly.

“New, I’m guessing. And you’re entire crew is under 16? Sounds like Lord of the Flies just waiting to happen. Yikes” Raja said, raising her eyebrows briefly.

Judy clenched her jaw. It was still a touchy subject. She noticed how Penny looked away and Will frowned. “I am new. I never wanted this but...” she trailed off, not wanting to finish that thought. “The adults, they couldn’t come with us, it’s complicated.”

Raja looked confused, then a look of realization dawned on her features and she nodded silently. “Sorry. I...didn’t mean to make anyone uncomfortable.”

“It’s fine” Judy said quickly, wanting to change the subject. She’d been aching to question the mystery in front of her. Mainly about one thing. She leaned forward, shifting in her seat. “Do you...do you know who Grant Kelly is?”

Raja nodded, her eyes turning a darker shade of brown. “I knew him. He was my captain.”

Judy’s heart dropped. “Was?”



“Yeah” Raja responded like it was obvious. She looked away and then looked back, clearing her throat. “Everyone...everyone aboard the Fortuna died. Seven years ago.”

Judy sat back, deflated. A small gasp left her open mouth. Will and Penny exchanged looks of surprise. Raja observes their reactions and sat up. “Wait, you didn’t know that?”

Judy was silent. She had so much hope, so much. Maybe it was the fact that she just lost her other father, maybe forever. She was desperate, and seeing the Fortuna there, her mind started to make fantasies about having some semblance of a proper family again. She was crushed then.

Penny was the one to speak up. “We were told that the Fortuna’s signal was lost 20 years ago. Everyone just assumed that the crew died then.”

Raja clicked her tongue. “Nope” she replied, popping the p. “Well, that might explain why no one came looking...”

Will placed his forearms on the table. “Wait, so...what really happened then?”

Judy looked up, and Raja caught her eye, holding her gaze. “The planet nearby, CS-237, was hit by some object, we never figured out what. The debris crashed into our ship, we lost a lot of functionality. But, life support and the basic necessities were there so we just...lived off of what we had” Raja said, shrugging.

“We followed a signal that led us here. We all thought that this was Alpha Centauri” Penny interjected.

“A signal was sent out right after we lost functionality, since comms were the only things working. Problem was that our identification code wasn’t working, so no one would know that it was us calling.” Raja shook her head. “After the second...incident, I decided to keep the signal going. Don’t know why.”

Judy looked at Raja, really looked at her. “Wait...the Fortuna’s signal was lost 20 years ago. And it left Earth months before that. But you don’t look that old?”

“I’m 20 years old. I was born a couple months after we were stranded” Raja explained.

“And everyone died?”

Raja’s jaw visibly clenched. The granola bar wrapped crinkled in her tightened fist. She bit her bottom lip and turned her face away. Judy’s throat went dry and pressure built in her head. Not only had her father died, but he died a horrible death but the looks of it. The only consolation her mother and she had about his death was that maybe it was peaceful. Now she’s finding out that that wasn’t the case.

Raja turned back. “There was a....malfunction. A virus spread on the ship. It’s died out by now, I’ve purged all of the decks but...it killed everyone.”

“But you” Judy staged, her voice low and hoarse. Raja glanced at her, but Judy’s eyes were focused on the table.

“But me” Raja repeated, looking guilty.

“So all of the Ambassadors...” Judy continued, her question apparent to the other girl.

Raja just shook her head, and Judy took in a sharp breath. Penny looked between them two and tilted her head. “The Ambassadors?”

“The Ambassadors of Knowledge, is the long version” Raja said. “They were supposed to establish the first colony on Alpha Centauri. They carried the entirety of the knowledge of the human race, the smartest that there was to offer. Each Ambassador has a designated subject that he or she studied as an expert.”

“Were you an Ambassador?”

The black-haired girl turned to Will. “Yeah. Officially, I studied political theory and government. The guy who specialized in it died in the first accident, so I was raised to take his place.” Raja paused and let out a deep breath, clasping her hands together. “Unofficially, I kind of...took everyone’s place.”

Penny’s confusion seemed to deepen. “So what are you saying, that what, you’ve become a specialist in everything?”

“Not everything” Raja replied. “I’ve studied many subjects, though. Still have a lot more.”

“How?”

“Well when you’re alone in space, you need something to keep you busy. Or else you go cuckoo, so...” Raja raised her eyebrows briefly.

A rumbling came from out in the hallway, and the dining room grew silent. Raja and Judy exchanges glances, both of them slowly and quietly getting out of their seats and creeping towards the entrance. Heavy thuds, like metal footsteps, echoed into Raja’s ears. She reached the door with Judy right behind her.

“Will Robinson.”

“What in the mother of God is that?!”

Judy visibly relaxed, staring up at the tall, dangerous-looking alien creature. “It’s just Robot.”

“You have a robot?! And you couldn’t have mentioned that sooner?!”

Judy made a face like it was obvious that it wasn’t a big deal. Raja threw her hands in the air, landing them back on her hips. “Just when I thought nothing could happen, the lost boys and their ugly Iron Giant shows up, godammit” she muttered under her breath.

Robot looked around using what Raja assumed was his face, though she really didn’t know. Then it looked back at the new edition and started slowly walking towards her. Raja scrambles back. “Not one step closer, R2-D2.”

“Danger, Raja Kapoor.”

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