

## It's Been Awhile

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# **It's Been Awhile**

by [Analitac](#)

## Summary

Vijay was left behind on the Resolute too seven months before the start of season two. His friendship and bond with Sam bring him closer to the center if the story and to Penny.

# Chapter 1

## Chapter Summary

Penny and the Robinsons meet a certain someone on the Resolute.

## Chapter Notes

Why aren't there more fics with Vijay? I'm sad!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

*Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God!*

Penny couldn't think anything else. Huddled behind this table clutching her little brother to her, all she could think was how she was going to die and so was her little brother.

The monster Don had been screaming about was in the room with them. She could hear it scraping against the ground, dragging itself towards her and Will with every second that passed. Penny knew that if she survived this, that sound of metal dragging against metal might never leave her memory, along with all the other equally terrifying sounds and sights she knew would haunt her dreams for a long time coming.

Penny couldn't resist opening her eyes, bowing to that primal urge to know what was happening, to look the danger in the face, just to know. The clawed metal hand of the monster reached around the table and unknowingly towards Will. Penny froze. What could she do? Smack the danger away from her brother? That would only definitively alert the monster to their presence. But, if she waited, that arm would reach her brother and it probably wouldn't hesitate in tearing Will away from her.

“Hey!”

Apparently, she wouldn't have to make that decision.

The clawed hand disappeared out of sight and the sound of metal screeching against the floor followed running footsteps out the door and down the hall from whence the monster first came.

Taking a second to breath deeply and thank her stars that she and her brother had once again escaped near certain death, Penny looked down at Will, making sure he was alright.

Will looked up at her and smiled. How he was always so cheerful amazed Penny.

“Hey, did you recognize that voice?” Will asked.

Penny couldn't help but laugh. “Really, that's what you have to say? After nearly being found by yet another unknown scary monster that probably would have killed us?”

Will just shrugged his shoulders.

“You're one of a kind Will, never change,” was all Penny said in response before turning her comms back on and letting mom, dad, Judy, and Don know they were okay.

“Yeah, you guys should have seen it. This guy ran down the hallway after the thing. He chased it! What is he crazy?” Don's voice crackled over the radio.

Guy? Someone Will thought he recognized? Who was this person? And why were they still on the Resolute?

Penny looked down at her comms, “Hey Don, could you tell who it was? Did you recognize him?”

“Sorry Penny, the binocs don't see that far. But I mean –”

“Don, did you see where this man went and more importantly where the monster went?” Maureen's voice cut through Don mid-sentence.

“Um, no. Other than away from the mess hall, I can't tell you. But I'd take a guess that they were headed for the engine room.”

“Thanks Don.”

Penny looked at Will and, deciding that the adults had the situation under control, or as under control as the situation could be, and knowing she wouldn't be wanted or needed to help with whatever they were doing, pulled Will into helping to clean up the mess hall.

“Come on Will, this place looks like a mess,” she tossed over her shoulder as she walked towards the upturned table, “You grab that side and I'll grab this side.”

“Okay, Pen.”

After a while, the two had all the tables and chairs righted and even the spoiled food piled together on a table in the corner as far out of sight as possible.

All the while they had been working, Penny and Will could hear their family on the comms. At one point it got pretty heated; there was lots of yelling, what sounded like lots of running, then more heavy breathing, and Don complaining about being manipulated, half-heartedly anyway.

“Penny, Will, Judy we're safe.” Penny heard her mother breathe into the comms.

Penny straightened and looked at Will before calling back to her mother, “From what and do I even want to know how?”

“We’ll talk about it later when we are all together, and as for knowing how – “

“Yeah, we had some help.”

Penny could just imagine her mother glaring at her dad for interrupting her. “Help from who dad?”

Before her dad could answer however, her mother did, “Vijay Dhar.”

Penny chocked and Will smirked and started to laugh before Penny glared at him. She cleared her throat but still sounded strained when she answered, “oh really? That’s great. But what is he still doing on the Resolute?” Penny had spent seven months thinking about her relationship with Vijay; blackmail to flirtation to romance to break-up to rejection. She decided if she met him again, which she had practically prayed for because it would mean getting off that stupid planet they were stranded on, that she would be friendly but nothing more. If the boy thought he could break-up with her and promptly try to get back together with her after she saved his sorry ass, then think again boy! Penny Robinson is not a girl to be trifled with.

“We’ll talk about that one too after we all meet back up. Judy, where are you?”

“Hey mom, Samantha and I are – “

“You found Sam?! Is she okay?!” Vijay’s voice, a sound Penny hadn’t heard for seven months, broke through the comms, cutting off her sister.

“Hey, why don’t you let my sister finish before interrupting, huh?” Penny couldn’t help the jab.

“It’s fine Penny. Samantha is fine, in fact she saved me. We’re still headed towards the mess hall but can reroute to the Jupiter if you want to meet there instead Mom.” Judy calmly defused Penny before the fuse was even really lit.

“No, no. Meet at the mess hall. Can you make it there Don?”

“Already on my way,” was Don’s snappy answer. “See you people in a few. Man am I happy to be done with that IV.”

“You took out the IV!!! Don!”

“What? You didn’t really expect me to sit patiently by while you all ran around in danger did you? And plus, I couldn’t stop Smith so I might as well try to be useful.” Don replied as he huffed and puffed, hoping down corridors.

Penny could practically feel Judy narrowing her eyes, knowing she couldn’t really admonish Don.

Just then the doors opened, and Maureen, John, and Vijay walked in. Vijay kinda stumbled when he saw her but quickly regained himself and followed John towards Penny and Will. He stopped short though and seemed uncomfortable during the family reunion hugs. But Penny

didn't feel comfortable enough to give him a hug so she just smiled at him. A smile he returned bashfully.

Maureen pulled Penny's attention away from Vijay to congratulate her on calming the horse and Penny was promptly absorbed in the attention from her mother until the doors opening again and a delighted scream whipped her attention towards the door in time to see a small girl run headlong at Vijay and launch into his arms. Vijay wrapped his arms around her and swung her around as she squealed in delight. Vijay laughed before putting her down and checking her over to make sure she was unhurt.

"Are you ok, Sam? Where did you go? We were going to meet back up on the floor above us when the blast doors closed but you weren't there. I was so worried." Vijay was clucking like a mother hen over a lost-and-found chick.

"I'm ok 'Jay. I'm sorry I wasn't there. I found Judy," here Sam pointed to Judy, "and we started to come back here, but then we saw It and were trapped for a while. I'm sorry." Sam looked down at her shoes repentantly.

"Oh Sam, it's okay. I'm just glad you're all right." Vijay smiled as Sam picked up her head to look at him.

"Really?"

"Yes really."

Then of course the moment was ruined because Don just had to choose then to spill into the mess hall complaining loudly.

"Ow! Let me just say how genuinely unpleasant it is to travel with you Robinsons. I've lost track of the number of dangers I've very nearly escaped because of you." Don looked ready to pass out purely for the attention it would give him. Well, the attention it would get him if the Robinsons didn't know him so well.

"Oh hush." Judy snapped at him as she made sure he hadn't negatively impacted his recovery by yanking out his IV.

As Judy fussed over Don, Penny watched the reunion between Sam and Vijay and wondered how they even knew each other, much less how close they evidently were. Obviously, there was no romantic attachment as Sam couldn't be older than eleven and Vijay was sixteen – no he was seventeen now. Though, it wasn't like Penny cared one way or another who Vijay was interested in romantically.

Penny was pulled from her thoughts when Vijay looked up and caught her watching them. Luckily for her, her dad picked now to ask Vijay about what had happened and how he and Sam came to be the only ones left on the Resolute.

"Well, when we all got off that planet and were waiting for you, dad went to the bridge, as you know. Then we all watched as your ship was pulled into that vortex thing. Next thing we knew the alarm klaxons were sounding and there were reports of another attack. Apparently,

the robot and the other one had made it here and were fighting on board. They made it to the engine room and released that other alien. All this I didn't find out until later when I got a peek at the security footage while evading the third one. But, during the second attack, I wasn't with my mother and on my way to our Jupiter found Sam. She was looking for her mom and I tried to help her.

"Unfortunately, we got cut off from all the Jupiters when a section of the corridor caved in on either side of us, trapping us. We watched as all the Jupiters left." Here Vijay stopped and shuddered before shouldering on hoping nobody noticed. But, Penny did. And John noticed too.

"Anyway, after we were well and truly left behind, we managed to dig our way through the rubble enough to find a hatch to climb down to the level below. And, we've been surviving here ever since. All the Jupiters were gone and the comms were blown. I wasn't trained or taught how to communicate another way to the Jupiters, even if I had managed to figure out what planet they went to. The most I could do was keep Sam alive and try to figure out how to trap the alien. I found the security footage and once I found out where he came from, I thought if I could get him back there it would hold him. I had just laid the trap a few weeks ago but had no way of getting him there without putting Sam in danger, either directly or by putting myself in danger, thereby jeopardizing her safety. So, thanks Robinsons. I couldn't have done it without you." Vijay stopped and hugged Sam one more time before looking at the Robinsons again, evidently expecting them to have questions or hopefully a plan. Vijay's gaze settled on Penny though. It was like he hadn't seen the sun in seven months, and she was the sun, or something of that effect.

Maureen looked at John before looking back to Vijay. "Well, you are more than welcome to stay with us until we can figure out a way to find your parents. That goes for you as well Sam." Maureen looked at Sam who looked as if she wouldn't release Vijay if there was a table of ice cream and treats in front of her to choose from.

"Thank you, Mrs. Robinson. A safe spot to sleep is all I ask, even a corner on the floor would be better than the past seven months." Vijay gratefully replied.

"You are very welcome Vijay."

At this point Judy, having finished fussing over and rebuking Don, walked up and asked Sam if she could check her over to make sure she was okay. Sam looked up at Vijay and, after he nodded at her, went off with Judy.

Maureen and John, satisfied with Vijay's account of things, turned to each other to discuss repairs that might be made and pulled Don and Will into the conversation, leaving Vijay and Penny for all intents and purposes alone. Vijay tentatively smiled at Penny.

"Hey," Vijay took a few steps towards Penny, obviously wary of how he would be received by the girl who rejected him the last they spoke.

"Hey," Penny responded. What else could she say? What should she say? "Sam seems nice."

Vijay seemed divided between disappointed that Penny didn't express anything towards himself and pleased to have an excuse to talk about his little friend. "Oh yeah. She's great. She may be small, but she's one of the most resourceful people I've ever met. She's also saved my butt a few times over the last seven months. I've promised her I'll help her find her mom and dad when we find the other people." Penny couldn't help but see the sorrow in his face.

"What about you? Surely you'll look for your parents."

"Yes, but I'm honestly not sure if my dad survived. He was on the bridge at the time and the way out of the bridge collapsed. I don't know if there was anyone up there. The terminal I accessed the security footage from didn't have the clearance to see the bridge footage." Vijay's gaze dropped to his shoes again and all Penny wanted to do was hug him. But she didn't.

"I'm sure he made it out." Penny wanted to offer what comfort she could, while maintaining that distance she promised herself she would keep. "And I'm sure your mother made it off. Did you check the footage outside your family's Jupiter?"

Vijay's head snapped up. "No! Why didn't I think of that?"

Penny just smiled and headed for the open mess hall doors. She got halfway there before she realized Vijay wasn't following her. She turned and called out to him, "Well, aren't you coming?"

"Coming where?"

"Yeah, where are you two going?" John looked skeptically between the two of them.

"To find a terminal to view the footage outside your Jupiter? Come on, I can't not follow through with my obviously brilliant idea." Penny flippantly called over her shoulder before carrying on down the hallway to where she knew there was a terminal, or sincerely hoped there was. Soon enough, a pair of young man's footsteps echoed down the hallway behind her, racing to catch up to her. Penny smirked to herself but schooled her expression as Vijay caught up to her and walked by her side with a nervous energy that was beginning to rub off on her.

"Here we are," Penny stopped in front of the terminal and waved her ID chip over the scanner and began searching for the footage. "Which dock was your family's Jupiter at?"

"Uh, twenty-three I believe. I'm not really sure. It was a kinda hectic day." Vijay was certainly proving to be very bashful this time around.

"I don't remember you being this shy." Penny wished she could have slapped her hand over her mouth for that. She'd spent so long with no one around but her family and had evidently forgotten how to hold her tongue. She turned back to the terminal and with an almost vicious intent searched for docking port twenty-three footage from seven months ago.



“Well, I haven’t seen anyone my age for seven months. I guess I’m sort of daunted in the face of a pretty girl.” Penny blushed.

“Found it!” Saved by the bell. Phew. Penny knew she’d have to have this conversation sooner or later with Vijay, and she highly suspected he’d get his way and her promise to herself would prove ill founded, but she wasn’t quite ready to have it out yet. “You ready?”

“No?” Penny turned to Vijay and read the nervousness and anticipation and hope and fear all warring openly on his face.

“Do you want me to watch it first and tell you what happens? Or I can leave so you can watch it alone.”

That might have been the wrong thing to say, because Vijay shuddered and quickly said, “No, I’ll watch it, but I’d like you to stay here. I’ve been alone for so long.”

Penny looked quizzically at Vijay, “I thought Sam was with you the entire time.”

“Yes, but she is only eleven. How much company can she be? I spent more time worrying for her than myself.” This couldn’t not move Penny, so she said,

“That is very noble of you. I’m sure your mother and father will be proud.”

This seemed to shock Vijay into remembering why they were there. “Alright, can you – I mean –”

Penny smiled slightly at Vijay before leaning forward and pressing play.

They watched as the alarms sounded and heard the announcements that followed. They watched the panicked people rush past the door to the Jupiter, frantically searching for their own Jupiter. As more and more people flooded past the doors, Penny turned her head slightly to look at Vijay. What she saw nearly broke her heart. The boy was desperately searching the crowd on the tiny screen for either of his parents, or anyone he knew. Penny knew that feeling all too well and laid a hand on his shoulder to offer a touch of comfort.

Oh, she knew she was falling for this boy and there was nothing that could stop it. She only hoped it would turn out alright and her dad wouldn’t kill Vijay.

Suddenly, Vijay started and reached for the screen. Penny turned back to the video footage in time to see Mrs. Dhar and Mr. Dhar enter their Jupiter. Vijay breathed a very visible sigh of relief and practically collapsed. He would have fallen to the ground and everything, well maybe just the console, if Penny hadn’t caught him by the arms.

“They made it Vijay, they made it off the Resolute.”

Vijay started crying he was so relieved. Relieved his parents made it off safely. Relieved not to be alone anymore. Relieved that he wasn’t the only thing standing between little Sam and a killing machine. Relieved he had more of a chance of seeing his parents again than he had yesterday, or any day from the last seven months.

Vijay was so relieved and so consumed with the tears of relief that he didn't register until a few moments later that Penny was hugging him. Well, it was more like she was holding him, but he didn't mind at all. He rather liked being held by her in fact.

"Hey, it'll be okay. We know they made it off the Resolute and now we can find them, alright? I'll help you find them, just like you're going to help Sam find her parents, okay?"

"Just like? Am I an eleven-year-old girl to you?" Vijay tried to sound confident and funny but fell miserably short. Instead, he sounded disappointed.

"Well, no." Penny was eternally grateful Vijay couldn't see her blush because he was still wrapped in her arms. Speaking of...

Penny pushed Vijay back a bit to arm's length, but still kept her hands on his arms. "I mean, I won't stop looking until we find them, alright? You'll never stop looking for Sam's parents, right?"

"Yeah," Vijay still smiled though, as if he knew what she was really saying.

Just then the alarms went off followed closely by the comms crackling to life. It was Maureen. "Penny, was that you and Vijay?"

Penny let go of Vijay and took a step back. "No mom. But," Penny looked at the terminal in front of her, seeing the red flashing light of a Jupiter docking. "Mom, it's a Jupiter docking at port twenty-four."

"Really? Meet us there."

"Okay mom." Penny turned to Vijay. "Come on."

Vijay hesitated before following Penny once again. "Do you think it's my parents?"

"I don't know Vijay. But we won't find out standing here. Know any short cuts?"

Vijay laughed. "I don't think your mom would like us getting there before her and the rest of your family."

"Oh, Vijay, that's the whole point. Come on. We're wasting daylight."

"What daylight? We're in space."

"Whatever, you know what I meant. Now, come on!" Penny turned on her heel and started off down the corridor.

"Uh, Penny? Wrong way. The short cut is right here." Vijay pointed to a hatch in the floor that would drop them to the level below, just a few hundred feet from the docking port.

Penny turned back around and blushed. "I knew that."

“No, you didn’t. Come on. If I’m getting in trouble with your mother for this, let me at least go first.”

“So, you can be my knight in shining armor? I thought we already determined that I’m the knight as I am the one who saved your butt, not the other way around?”

“Haha. But I’ve had seven months of practice at evading danger and rescuing damsels in distress.”

“You take that back Vijay Dhar! I am no damsel and I am certainly not in distress.” Penny was aghast.

“Of course not, how could I forget. But, as I owe you my life, allow me the privilege of going first and securing your entrance.”

“Well, if you put it that way...” And before Penny could say more, Vijay was through the hatch. “But just so you know, you don’t owe me your life or anything. I owed you after blackmailing you.”

“No, you didn’t. You already repaid that. Now get down here.”

Penny rolled her eyes, but dutifully dropped through the hatch, and straight into Vijay’s arms. Penny blushed.

“Uh, you can put me down now.”

“Right of course.” Vijay blushed furiously and almost dropped Penny in his haste to set her on her feet.

“I didn’t say drop me.” Penny mocked glared at Vijay before softening her gaze. “But seriously, I am sorry for blackmailing you. I mean, if it happened all again, I probably still would have done it, because I was doing it to protect Will. But, I’m still sorry.” Penny looked at her hands, fiddling with her jacket zipper. Then another hand reached over and covered hers. Penny looked up.

“It’s okay Penny, I forgive you. I’d have probably done the same thing if I had a younger sibling.”

Penny smiled before quipping, “don’t you though? Isn’t Sam your adopted little sister now?”

Vijay laughed. Penny liked hearing him laugh. “I guess she is.”

Suddenly they were interrupted by the comms coming to life again. “Hey, where are you guys? We already at the docking port.”

Penny jumped. But, this time, when she answered her mother, she kept hold of Vijay’s hand. “Sorry, Vijay got us lost.” Penny smirked up at Vijay, who scowled at her.

“Well hurry up. Do you need one of us to come get you?”

“No that’s fine, we’re almost there. Sorry to worry you.”

“That’s fine, just hurry.”

“Will do, over and out.”

Penny turned off her comms and glanced at Vijay. “Come on.”

“I take offense at you telling your mother I got us lost. She’ll never let me go anywhere without an escort to make sure I get to the right place, now.” Vijay pretended to be upset at Penny, but she could see he was only slightly offended and more amused than anything.

“Well, did you want me to tell my mom, and thereby my entire family, plus Sam, Don, and whoever was on that Jupiter, that we took a short cut but ended up standing in the same spot, talking instead? Would you really like to have that conversation with my mom, or more likely, my dad?” Penny smirked at Vijay’s terrified expression.

“No thanks, you were right. Let’s go before they come looking for us.” Vijay started walking off in the opposite direction of the Jupiter. Penny tugged him back by the hand she was still holding.

“It’s this way you know?” Penny pointed the other way.

“Right, yes, I knew that.”

“Of course, you did.”

Penny tugged Vijay again and they started in the correct direction of the Jupiter, still holding hands. It was a quiet few minutes of companionable silence. All the while, they continued to hold hands. Not until they were in sight of the Robinson family did Penny let Vijay’s hand go. She was in no hurry to have any conversation about Vijay with anyone in her family, or anyone in general for that matter.

“Hey guys, sorry we’re late.”

Maureen and John turned towards the sound of their daughter’s voice. “Penny.”

Penny looked past her parents to see a man she didn’t recognize standing in front of the open Jupiter.

“This is Ben Adler. He is a specialist who worked in the engine room. Before everyone left the Resolute, they set it so that if another Jupiter came back, the Resolute would send a signal to the planet the colonists took refuge on. Now that the other alien robot is back in the engine room, we can start repairs and bringing people back to the Resolute.”

“Can we get to Alpha Centauri?”

Adler stepped forward. “We don’t know that yet. We still have to assess the damage and see what repairs can be done, but we have hope yes.” Adler turned from her to Vijay. “Mr. Dhar,

your parents will be extremely relieved to know you are alive. All we knew was that you and Miss Sam here were not accounted for among the survivors.”

Vijay nodded to Adler but didn’t say anything. Penny saw how he overwhelmed he was and stepped forward a little to draw the attention away from him. “That’s great! So, Vijay and Sam were the only two left aboard?”

“Yes, everyone else made it off safely.”

“That’s fantastic. You mentioned repairs. Is there anything I can do to help? I’ve been stuck on a miserable little strip of sand on a boring planet for seven months. Please give me something to do that isn’t growing corn or changing air filters.”

Adler laughed. “That can be arranged. How do you feel about cataloging damage?”

“That would be great! Where should I start?” Penny was sincere, truly. She was tired of growing corn and changing air filters. She wasn’t too pleased about more busy work, that being all her mother ever gave her to do, but she was willing to do it if it meant having something to do.

“You can start on the first ring and work your way up level by level by ring. Now, you won’t have to do the entire ship, of course, but you can do as much as you want.”

“Great! Vijay, care to join me in the positively scintillating job of cataloging damage?”

“Sure. Lead on.” Vijay waved the way to the stairs.

“Be careful you two and be back up here in time for dinner.” Maureen told them.

“Yes mom. See you in a bit.”

Penny headed for the stairs with Vijay in her wake. Once they were down a few flights, Vijay spoke up, “Thanks for that. I didn’t know what to say to Adler.”

“It’s no problem. Now will you tell me about your seven months first or should I tell you mine?”

Vijay smiled, though Penny couldn’t see him. “You start. I’m sure the past seven months have been more exciting for you than for me. Plus, my time here isn’t really worth telling.”

Penny turned to look at him. He looked slightly haunted, as if he had escaped near certain death too many times alone. “I’d still like to hear your story, if you’re willing to tell it. I’d like to believe we are still friends.”

“Still friends, but I thought – “

Penny cut him off before he could say anything else. “Yeah it has been seven months since I last saw you. That’s a long time to still be friends, especially after only knowing each other for a week.” Penny turned back around and continued down the staircase.

“You know, I’ve had a lot of time to think about that week.” Vijay paused and Penny tensed. “I am sorry I broke your confidence, but my dad needed to know – “

“And he would have!” Penny whirled on Vijay. “My mom would have told him! She was on her way to do that when she and dad got trapped in a tar pit and you just couldn’t wait and went and told your dad!”

“I’m sorry, but I didn’t know that – “

“And you should have trusted me!”

“Penny we are teenagers! We can’t be trusted with stuff like that! I wanted to save my family and everyone else on that planet. I didn’t know your mom was going to tell my dad. All I knew was that we were so close to dying and I was scared!” Vijay shouted down at Penny, the remembrance of that desperation clear on his face.

Penny huffed but didn’t have anything to say to that. So, she just tried to calm down. “You’re right. And, I’d have done the same thing probably.”

Vijay chuckled, “I guess we’re more alike than either of us thought.” Penny looked quizzically at Vijay. “Both of us have said we would have done what the other did, given the right circumstances?”

“Oh right, yeah.” Penny smiled slightly.

There was a moment or two of silence, during which neither could tell whether it was awkward or not. Then Vijay cleared his throat, “Well, we don’t have all day and seeing as how you volunteered me for this boring job without my consent, I’d like to finish as soon as possible.”

Penny rolled her eyes. “Would you rather I have left you to the mercies of my questioning mother? She would never have stopped asking you questions about the past seven months. And then, if she actually did finish, Judy would start asking you questions about medical stuff about you and Sam. Then it would be Will, asking what you had seen of the robot. Then my dad, asking about what your intentions were with me. Then it would be Adler, asking security questions and stuff. You would be lucky to get away before midnight tomorrow. So, how I see it, you owe me for rescuing you.” Penny smirked at Vijay’s terrified expression. “Relax. I’m kidding. They’d release you before then, probably fifteen hundred hours tomorrow.” Penny pulled a Cheshire grin.

Vijay glared at Penny. “That’s not funny.”

“It is.”

“No, it’s not.” Vijay paused. “But, uh, what was that your dad would have asked me? Something about intentions – “

“Shut up.” It was Penny’s turn to glare at Vijay.

Vijay just laughed. “Alright, come on.”

Vijay walked down the stairs, passing Penny. Penny reached out and grabbed his hand.

“I am happy to see you, you know. I’m happy to see really anyone again, but I’m happy to see you.” Penny made eye contact with Vijay. “I’m also happy you survived the past seven months too.”

“Penny...”

“We don’t have to have this conversation now. In fact, I’d kinda prefer we didn’t, but I just wanted you to know that. You don’t seem like yourself. Well, the you I knew for all of a week on that planet, anyway.” Penny blushed but powered through. “I just wanted to make sure that you knew someone was happy you made it through in one piece and that... I’m willing to be your friend, if you need anyone to talk to, alright? I didn’t spend seven months alone, but I spent seven months thinking I’d never see another human other than my family. Okay?”

Vijay was at a loss for words. “Uh... yeah... Penny, thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” Penny smiled at Vijay again before tugging him down the stairs. “At this rate, we will never start, much less finish this ridiculous job.”

“You are the one who asked for it though.” Vijay laughed. “Hey, uh, what did you mean ‘willing to be friends,’ if I needed someone to talk to? Does that mean you don’t really want to be friends with me?”

Penny turned to Vijay. “What? No. I mean yes. Wait what? Hold on.” Penny paused and waved her hand that wasn’t holding Vijay’s around a bit. “No. I meant, yes I want to be friends with you. I should have phrased that differently. I want to be friends with you alright?”

“Okay,” Vijay smiled warmly at Penny and squeezed her hand a little. “Can I kiss you?”

Penny flushed. “What? No!” Vijay deflated. “Not yet, alright. We haven’t seen each other in seven months. This is our chance to do this right, okay? No breaking confidences, no telling the other we shouldn’t see each other anymore, no ignoring each other, no holding things over each other, no trying to get back at each other for dumping them, no rash decisions period. Right?” Penny leveled her gaze at Vijay. “We both made mistakes during that week, and now we have a chance to move forward.”

Vijay nodded. “So, friends first?”

“Friends first.”

“When does that mean I get to kiss you?”

“Really?” Penny rolled her eyes. “I don’t know but not yet okay? Let’s finish this job and get back up there where the food is.”

“Okay,” Vijay said and went to drop Penny’s hand. Penny tightened her grip though.

“That doesn’t mean we can’t hold hands. Close friends okay? Just not dating yet okay? We need to get to know each other better first. But, however long that may be from now, I don’t think either one of us is really ready to let go of the other. So, just stay by my side, alright? Because, I am so not letting you go. You may have been more alone than me, but I couldn’t go farther than the confines of the Jupiter basically for seven months. Just stay with me so I know I actually made it off that planet, okay? Please?” Penny couldn’t look Vijay in the eyes. She hadn’t meant to say all that, but she really was slightly afraid all this wasn’t real, and she was still stuck on that planet.

Penny was gently brought out of her thoughts by a hand under her chin. “Penny, it’s alright. I need the same thing, okay? I’ve spent the past seven months trying harder to keep a little girl alive than myself. I couldn’t see anything other than keeping one step ahead of that robot.”

“Okay. Okay.” Penny breathed deeply, trying desperately to slow her heartrate.

“Come here,” Vijay pulled Penny into his arms, only letting go of her hand to wrap his arms around her back and hold her to him as she had held him just an hour ago. “It’ll be okay. We’ll figure it out together.”

Penny twisted her hands in the back of Vijay’s jacket. “Okay.” Penny tucked her face in Vijay’s shoulder and refused to move for a long time, not that Vijay was complaining.

## Chapter End Notes

So, what do you think? I was saddened by the lack of LiS fics with Vijay. So, I'm here to fill the void! AHAHAH!!



## Chapter 2

### Chapter Summary

The dreaded dad conversation. With the added bonus of Maureen receiving revelations about her parenting.

### Chapter Notes

Vijay's POV! Yay! I love him! Ahaha

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Oh wow. Is this real? Vijay was still in shock. He kept pinching himself, terrified that he would wake up and realize that this was all just a dream and that he would still be running for his life from another scary robot, all while trying to keep a young girl alive and comforted. The past seven months had been the worst period of Vijay's entire life.

And seeing Penny again, wow. It was amazing. Really, it was amazing to even see another human being after seven long months. But, Penny. He liked Penny. Sure, they'd only known each other a few days down on that planet and sure the relationship didn't end quite the way Vijay had wanted it to, but Penny was a great person and a joy to be around. She had such a unique sense of humor that was sarcastic, but she also knew when not to be too caustic and instead be comforting. She did bail on him to spend time with her little brother after the whole Robot incident. Speaking of, she was a great sister. Vijay sometimes wished he had had a sibling.

Today, after the Robinsons trapped that robot and Penny swooped in and helped him find the footage of his parents leaving the Resolute safely, Vijay had been so relieved, he collapsed. And Penny had caught him and just held him as he cried. It had been too long since he'd last had someone to comfort him. Sam, as sweet as she was, was just too young to have Vijay put that burden on her. Not that Vijay wanted to put that burden on anyone, but Penny at least was his age and had gone through probably more scary near death situations than Vijay had and could well understand him.

Down in the lower decks, when they had been cataloging damage, Penny and Vijay by seeming silent agreement, refused to let go of each other's hand. Really, it took them a while to untangle themselves from their hug. It was just too nice to feel the heartbeat and breathing of another person.

After Penny and Vijay finished cataloguing damage on the lowest deck (read: they failed miserably because they were too distracted thinking about each other), they made their way back up to the dining hall just in time for dinner. The entire time, they kept holding hands, each desperately needing a grounding wire, until they had to let each other go at the doors of the dining hall; they stayed close to each other though. Neither was really ready to broach the topic of whatever their relationship was at the moment with Penny's parents, siblings, or anyone else who may ask questions. To be honest, they didn't even know what their relationship was at this point. They just knew they were unwilling to be too far apart. They felt a connection, through shared trauma, that provided both a comfort and a crutch, but was welcomed regardless.

During dinner, Maureen and John informed their kids and Vijay and Sam, who they had offered to stay with them in the Jupiter 2, that they would be temporarily moved out so the scientists, lead by Ben Adler, could remove the alien engine in the cargo hold. Penny of course objected to being ousted from her comfy bed, though she complained about it all the time and asked where they would be funneled off to in the meantime. Apparently, Maureen and the kids, minus Judy, would be staying with another family, while John and Judy went down to the planet to help with preparations to leave. But, they would get one last night in the Jupiter 2 seeing as how it was already too late to be moving, the other family was yet to arrive, and everyone was dead tired, barely having the strength to stand.

After dinner, the Robinsons plus Don, Vijay, and Sam filed off to the Jupiter 2 for sleep.

Maureen clapped her hands to get everyone's attention. "Alright guys, tomorrow is another big day. We all need lots of sleep. We have to pack up first thing in the morning and John and Judy have to leave right after. Sam, you can room with Judy if you want."

Sam nodded excitedly.

"And Vijay, we don't have another room, not until we find Smith and lock her up somewhere else. So, for tonight, you can have the couch out here. It's not the most comfortable thing, but it'll work."

"Thank you, Mrs. Robinson." Vijay smiled at Maureen.

"Right, off to bed!" Maureen clapped her hands again and walked out of the round room.

Everyone else went to their rooms too. Penny sent Vijay a smile before heading off for her bedroom. And when Vijay looked back into the room, John was staring at him. Vijay tried for a smile and met John's eyes until John finally turned to follow Maureen.

Vijay breathed another sigh of relief. He was safe. Sam was safe. Vijay could finally sleep peacefully.

---

John was propped on the door frame leading into the round room, watching Vijay. It was unnerving. Vijay had been awake for a while, months living on edge in constant fear of attack made one a light sleeper. So, an hour earlier when Vijay heard John's footsteps halt at the

door, he expected John to say something. Vijay really wished he would; the feeling of being watched was also something Vijay had become less comfortable with in recent months.

Finally, enough was enough. Vijay rolled over and glanced at John before standing up, “good morning, Mr. Robinson.”

“Good morning, Vijay.” Vijay looked up and he hadn’t moved. Not a single muscle. And he was still watching Vijay, almost like he was sizing him up.

Vijay stalled. What was he supposed to say now? “Anything I can do to help? I don’t have much stuff to pack. So, I’m free to help with whatever...” Vijay trailed off.

John kept staring.

“Maybe I could help with breakfast? ...”

As Vijay stared back at John, John seemed to finally find what he was looking for. “What do you think of Penny?” Or not.

Vijay froze. The dad talk? Now? They weren’t even dating! But you want to be, whispered a little voice.

“Hey guys! What’s for breakfast? I’m starved. And tell me we can eat in the Jupiter. I’m not setting foot in the dining hall until they get the horse smell cleaned out. Uh uh.” Penny walked in just then, stretching and yawning.

Saved by the bell. Phew.

John held Vijay’s gaze for a moment more before turning to his daughter. Vijay shifted a little before telling Penny good morning.

---

After breakfast, a welcome affair for Vijay and little Sam, the Robinsons set to work packing up what they needed for a few days and going over plans for the day. Maureen was taking charge, as usual.

“Penny, Judy, Will. I want you three to pack your stuff and be ready as soon as possible. Your dad, Don, and I will need help with some other things. Judy, I know you have some medical supplies you need to pack for your trip to the surface. So, please do that quickly. John, I know you don’t have much to pack for the surface. So, when you’re done can you help me in the cockpit? There are some shut down protocols that need to be completed before we leave. Don, is there anything specifically you need or could use help with?” Maureen turned to Don.

“Uh, yeah. I need a way to move Debbie, preferably without livestock management finding out. I’m holding on to my girl.” Don grinned.

“We’ll help you Don.” Penny and Will laughed and started singing, “Debbie and Don sitting in a tree...”

“That’s right. She’s the perfect woman! You two are just jealous you don’t have someone as wonderful as Debbie.” Don started chasing Penny and Will around the table.

“Alright, settle down.” Maureen scolded gently. It really was good to see them playing around. “Vijay and Sam, you can help wherever. Or, if there’s something you need to do off the Jupiter, just let me know before you head off.” Maureen turned to Vijay and Sam, who had remained off to the side a little, no doubt feeling slightly out of place in this close-knit family.

Vijay smiled. “We have a few things we should probably get, but that can wait. After helping us out yesterday, I owe you and your family. I’ll help in whatever way I can.”

John, who had been carefully watching Vijay, said, “I could use your help in the garage. Sam can help Judy out, right Jude?”

“Yeah, what do you say Sam? Want to help me out?” Judy smiled at Sam.

“Sure! See you later ‘jay!” With that, Sam trotted off behind Judy, smiling and laughing.

As soon as Sam and Judy left, the rest of the Robinsons began to file in one’s and two’s to their various duties. Penny shot Vijay a smile as she walked out, leaving Vijay alone with John in the round room. Vijay gulped and turned to see John giving him the same look he had earlier.

“Come on, we have work to do in the garage.” And John turned and headed for the ladder, leaving Vijay to follow.

Vijay stood up and took several fortifying breaths. This wasn’t going to be fun, and Vijay should have seen this coming. In fact, he’s surprised John didn’t try to talk to him when he actually was dating Penny. Oh well, down the hatch and into the dragon’s den it is.

When Vijay jumped the last two rungs and dropped to the floor of the garage, Vijay was surprised to see a mostly empty room. The chariot was missing. Knowing the Robinsons even as little as he did, Vijay wondered what crazy thing the Robinsons had done this time that they lost the chariot.

Vijay kept looking around and saw John routing around in some boxes off to the side of the room. “Mr. Robinson? What do you need me to do?” Vijay tried to keep the tremors from his voice.

John turned. “Ah Vijay, would you help me find some of these tools I keep losing? I’m headed down to the planet and need them.”

“Sure Mr. Robinson. What kind of tools are they?”

“The protective father kind.”

Vijay paled. “Ah, those kind...”

“Yes, those kind. Now, are you going to answer my question?” John was doing the staring thing again.

“Question? The question from before breakfast?”

“That question.”

Vijay was on the verge of panicking. He’d never endured the Dad Speech™ before. Granted he’d never dated anyone before either. But, Vijay liked Penny. He really liked her. And if that meant enduring the dreaded Dad Speech™, then Vijay would endure the Dad Speech™.

“What do I think of Penny? To be perfectly honest, Penny is amazing. She’s funny. She’s kind. She would do absolutely anything for her family. She ditched me to cheer up Will, back on that planet. She’s mature. And, she knows who she is and what she’s capable of.

“And just to clarify, we aren’t dating.”

Vijay stopped talking and watched John just as much as John was watching Vijay. John seemed to be appraising Vijay.

“You were dating on the planet.”

“I guess. I mean, we never officially came to that conclusion, and too much happened before we could.”

“You mean we left the planet.”

“Well yes, but more than that. I actually broke it off with Penny a few days before we left. She had told me about the planet dying and then I told my parents and you know what happened. We argued and I broke it off.”

“So, you broke my daughter’s heart?” John’s voice had a dangerous lilt to it.

Vijay gulped. “Uh, maybe? I’m sure I hurt her, but it was never my intention. And later she was too hyper focused on her family to spare too much thought on me, though she did save my life in the caves.”

“Yeah, I read about that.”

“Read?”

“Penny wrote a book in the last seven months about our little adventure over the past year.”

“Oh, cool...” Vijay didn’t know what else to say. Penny hadn’t mentioned the book to him or that he was in it.

John seemed to realize they had detoured from the original topic of conversation. “What about now? Are you still interested in my daughter? And what did you two talk about last night?”

“Um, yes... I still like Penny.” Vijay was going to keep to himself the little fact where thinking of Penny was part of what kept him sane for seven months. Sure, he thought about his family too, but it hurt too much thinking they might be dead. Penny was a safer subject. She was just a friend.

“And last night?”

Vijay froze. Could he tell Mr. Robinson what he and Penny had discussed yesterday? Wouldn't that be breaking her confidence? Again. But, this was her dad. He had to tell John, right? What would happen if he didn't tell John? Would John tell Vijay he couldn't see Penny again? Surely not. There weren't enough teenagers on the Resolute to be friends with, and Penny already had a friendship with Vijay. John wouldn't take that from Penny, right?

And what would happen if Vijay did tell John? Penny would probably find out. She had a way of just knowing things, after all. When Penny did find out, Vijay would have hell to pay. She had forgiven him for the first time he had broken her confidence, but if he did it again? Penny would never speak to him. Ever. No matter if she liked him.

Vijay made up his mind. He wouldn't tell John, regardless of what that might mean.

“All due respect Mr. Robinson, but I won't tell you what Penny and I talked about yesterday. That is between her and me and I will not betray her trust.” Vijay took a deep breath and met John's eyes.

John's eyes widen in surprise slightly. He was obviously shocked at Vijay's words. But, he didn't say anything, just kept staring at Vijay. Though, this time, the staring was different. There seemed to be an appreciation in John's gaze.

Finally, John did speak, “Alright, I'll accept it.” That was all he said.

Vijay might only be seventeen, but he believed he could recognize a dismissal when he saw one. Vijay nodded to John and turned to head up the ladder.

“And if you do break my daughter's heart, I won't be the only one you'll need to watch out for.”

Vijay paused on the ladder for just a second before continuing up towards the center of the Jupiter and hopefully where he would find Penny.

---

Vijay found Penny in her bedroom, packing a bag.

“Hey,” Vijay said.

Penny looked up. “Hey Vijay, did my dad find what he was looking for in the garage?” Penny was smirking.

“Haha. I think so.”

Penny laughed. "I'm sure he did. Help me with this?"

Penny pointed to her bag.

"Oh, I'm smart enough to know not to get involved in what a girl packs."

"Ah!" Penny smacked Vijay's arm. "Ha! You wish. No, I meant carry this for me."

"Am I pack mule now?"

"Obviously."

Penny and Vijay both broke out into laughter.

---

Hearing the laughter carrying from Penny's room, Maureen paused. It was good to hear Penny having fun again. Maureen knew it had been hard for Penny, just as it had been hard for all of them, to be without her friends for seven months. Really, it had been hard for Penny to leave her friends back on earth. Penny's friendship with Vijay on that dying planet had brought a little consolation to Maureen for taking Penny from her friends.

"I'm glad Penny has Vijay to talk to again." Maureen said absently to no one in particular.

Will looked up from where he was packing his backpack with some stuff. "Yeah, she hasn't been herself at all for the past seven months." Will shook his head.

Maureen frowned. "What do you mean? I know Penny didn't like being separated from her friends and it was difficult for all of us on that planet, but she seemed to take it alright."

"Mom. Penny loves her friends. She would do anything for them. She puts all of herself into her friends and barely keeps any for herself. When we were on that first planet, she ditched Vijay to cheer me up. She cut into your leg despite how grossed out she was. She read to Judy to cheer her up when she was stuck in the ice even though she was terrified Judy would die. She gives her all and some people just don't notice."

Maureen was shocked. Will was actually glaring at her. Granted, to say Will was glaring was akin to saying (something cute). It wasn't exactly Penny's considering-how-to-cook-you-for-dinner glare. Still, to see even that level of disappointment on her son's face was, to say the least, unsettling.

"Will, we notice these things. What does it matter if people who aren't family notice? Family matters more." Surely Will understood that the popular opinion of you didn't matter as much as what your family thought of you.

What Maureen was hoping to see in her son's face, was certainly not there. If anything, he looked angrier.

Will leveled her with a full on glare this time. "Mom, Penny doesn't actually like horses."

With that, leaving Maureen in stunned shock, Will stuffed a few more things into his bag, picked up the rest, and walked out of the room, heading for his bedroom.

Maureen didn't know what to think. Penny didn't like horses? That's absurd. She used to spend hours in the barn with her and the horses. Maureen remembered the all the conversations about school and friends they had while brushing out the horses or getting them ready for a ride.

As much as Maureen tried to brush off what Will had said, she couldn't. She kept thinking about it; while she was finishing her packing, while she made dinner (yay for more MRE's!), while she said good night to her kids, and while she was settling in for the night beside her husband. John's trip to the planet was delayed a day due to issues with getting another Jupiter to the Resolute.

"John..."

Maureen had lain awake, staring at the ceiling listening to her husband's breathing, for an hour now.

John rolled over with a huff, shaking the sleep from his eyes. He wasn't such a light sleeper now, what with nothing to wake him up at a moment's notice anymore. "What is it Maureen?"

"Penny likes horses, right?" Maureen just couldn't get it out of her head. Surely Penny did. What reason would she have for pretending to like the animals?

John stayed quiet.

"John?" Maureen turned her head to look at John.

John sighed and sat up. "Why do you ask?"

Maureen knew that look. John knew something. "Does Penny like horses?"

"Maureen..." John trailed off, which wasn't like him at all. With all that Maureen talked, when John had the chance to speak, he usually didn't let it go to waste. Not unless there was something else going on, that is.

Knowing she wasn't going to get anything from John by intimidation, Maureen gave in. "Today, when Will and I were in the round room, packing up... He uh... Will said that Penny didn't like horses..." Maureen trailed off.

John was looking at her expectantly.

"I had heard Penny and Vijay laughing in her room," here John sort of tensed up. "Oh relax, they each need a friend right now."

"That's what I'm afraid of." John's face scowled at their bedroom door, as if he could see Penny or Vijay if he stared hard enough.



Maureen smiled at John's overprotectiveness of Penny. He had always been closer with their daughter than she was.

"Well, I mentioned that I was glad to see Penny having fun with someone her own age again. And, then Will said something about how she hadn't been herself these past seven months."

John had tuned back into the conversation and spoke up. "Well, she hasn't."

Maureen threw up her hands. "Why do people keep saying that? Are you seeing something I'm not? Am I that bad of a mother?"

John smiled at Maureen, but she could see the underlying sadness lurking in his eyes.

"Maureen, you are a wonderful mother. It's just sometimes you get so absorbed in your work that you sometimes forget about the rest of us." Maureen tried to object, but John lifted his hand. "You do. And that's okay sometimes, because you're trying to save the day. But we need you too."

"And I know that! I just – why would Will say Penny didn't like horses? Of course, she likes horses! We spent hours in the barn!" Maureen turned to John and threw up her hands again.

"Maureen..." John had that same smile on his face again!

"What?"

"Penny doesn't like horses." Maureen waited for John to say more but he had this look on his face. It was like he was waiting for the lightbulb to flick on.

"I don't get it. If Penny didn't like horses –"

John interrupted her. "She doesn't just not like them."

"What?"

"She's afraid of them." Maureen frowned at John. Penny had never showed any fear of horses. But, John wasn't lying. She could read it in set of his jaw, relaxed, and the shape of his eyes, almost pleading.

"Okay, well, if she's afraid of them, then what reason would she have to want to be around them?"

Now John was looking at her like she had completely missed the point. "Because you were there. Goodnight, Maureen." And with that, John kissed her forehead, rolled over, and went to sleep.

*What? Penny doesn't like horses; she's afraid of them even. But she wanted to be around them because of Maureen? What?*

Maureen was just confused. What was she supposed to make of that?

## Chapter End Notes

So? How was this chapter? I fully realize its been four months since the first chapter, but school sucks and it's over for the summer. Yay! And, I was working on another WIP. Also, ten points to the person who finds where I hit writer's block. Ahh,,, what are words?

# Chapter Three

## Chapter Summary

there's honestly a good many things that happen here. but the short is Penny is awesome and strong, but seriously give the girl a hug and some love please

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*What a couple of days, am I right?* Penny was stunned and tired. In the course of just a few hours, she and her family had made it back to the Resolute, were chased, terrorized, and nearly killed and then trapped by another Robot; found Vijay and a little girl named Samantha; and discovered the rest of the colonists were alive and on the planet below.

Yeah. You heard that right. Vijay. Vijay Dhar. The boy Penny sort of dated for a few days on the *first* alien planet they were on. Now, they're on the Resolute, after seven months apart, trying to figure out where exactly they stand with each other. It's all very confusing for Penny's exhausted, sleep deprived brain.

Sleep was becoming a concern. Penny wasn't getting enough. In all the months on that planet, Penny had continuously had nightmares about that week. She dreamed about falling out of the sky in their Jupiter. She dreamed about Judy dying in the ice. She dreamed about not being able to find her parents and Will in the storm. She dreamed about her dad dying in the explosion of the Jupiter. She dreamed about Smith taking over the Jupiter and not rescuing her dad and Don in time. She dreamed and dreamed and dreamed. And each dream sucked, and she woke sweaty and terrified. She hated it.

When they had reached the Resolute, Penny had been so relieved. They finally had a chance of going home. Or to Alpha Centauri, anyway. With that relief and sense of safety, Penny had hoped the nightmares would go away. Last night, they were the worst ever. Penny dreamed that upon reaching the Resolute and the SAR attacking, her entire family had been killed including Don and Debbie (she loved that chicken too, damnit!).

And it wasn't just that. Vijay was in the dream too. Vijay had only occasionally made appearances in her dreams before, but this time... This time had been different. This time

Vijay died. SAR got to him just as it got to the rest of Penny's family. And the absolute worst part of it was Penny couldn't do anything about it. She had been paralyzed in fear, watching her family and friends be killed in front of her and she couldn't help because her fear rooted her to the deck plates.

Penny woke up crying from that one. Penny sobbed into her pillow. How could she not? She had failed. Penny always felt useless. She wasn't as smart as her mom or Will. She wasn't as strong as her dad. She couldn't heal people like Judy. She couldn't fix anything like Don. She couldn't even manipulate people like Smith. She was useless. She was a writer for crying out loud! She couldn't save anyone! If her family needed her, Penny wouldn't be able to help them. They would die because Penny wasn't smart enough, strong enough, or quick enough to do anything about it.

Penny sobbed and sobbed and sobbed. She didn't know how long she cried, but eventually she heard people moving around in the Jupiter. Today her dad, Don, and Judy would go down to the planet and the rest of the family would be moving into another Jupiter with the Azevedos for a while. Penny needed to get up before someone came looking for her. Ugh. There was no way she was having *that* conversation with anyone.

Penny flipped over in bed and took a few deep breaths before swinging her feet over to the floor and standing up. She wobbled slightly while her vision did the "*oh no it's getting darker; am I going to pass out?*" thing it does when a person stands up too fast after laying down. After Penny balanced out again, she dressed, dried her tears, did her hair, and headed for breakfast. Might as well look presentable. It would save time. It had nothing to do with Vijay being here. Nope. Nothing at all.

Penny walked out into the round room to see her dad doing his best death glare at Vijay who looked about two seconds shy of running terrified out the nearest airlock. Uh oh. Her dad wasn't. Oh no, he was. Poor Vijay. Granted, her dad hadn't had many chances to give the dad talk. He was always away with the military to begin with, but even when he was home, Penny didn't bring many guys around. Penny didn't make friends super easily. She was outgoing sure, and she had a couple close friends, but most people she wasn't friends with long. And if her friends were few, boyfriends were even fewer. All in all, this was a first for her dad. Good thing Penny got here when she did, though she doubted it would save Vijay for long.

And it didn't. Right after breakfast, after Maureen gave jobs to everyone, John asked for Vijay's help in the garage. Here we go.

Now, Penny was a respectful daughter who did everything her parents told her to do and never did anything wrong ever. Yeah, right. As soon as everyone was off doing their own thing and John and Vijay were in the garage, Penny snuck over to the top of the ladder to listen. She made it just in time to hear:

“What do I think of Penny? To be perfectly honest, Penny is amazing. She’s funny. She’s kind. She would do absolutely anything for her family. She ditched me to cheer up Will, back on that planet. She’s mature. And, she knows who she is and what she’s capable of.”

Penny couldn’t help the blush. Vijay said some pretty nice things about her. And, okay she hadn’t *ditched* him for Will. Penny actually was going to go hang out with Vijay. She’d really wanted to. It had been hell on that planet and Vijay was fun to hang out with. But, Penny knew how bad Will had been then and known she had to stay with him. She just *couldn’t* hang out with a friend and have fun while her little brother was in pain. She wasn’t totally heartless. And anyway, she had explained all that to Vijay and he had understood.

“And just to clarify, we aren’t dating.”

Well, he isn’t wrong.

“You were dating on the planet.”

Eh. Penny tilted her head to the side. She didn’t really know about that one. Granted, she had thought they were, but in retrospect, maybe they hadn’t been.

“I guess. I mean, we never officially came to that conclusion, and too much happened before we could.”

See. That’s a perfect explanation.

“You mean we left the planet.”

“Well yes, but more than that. I actually broke it off with Penny a few days before we left. She had told me about the planet dying and then I told my parents and you know what happened. We argued and I broke it off.”

“So, you broke my daughter’s heart?” John’s voice had a dangerous lilt to it.

Oh no. Penny stood up and prepared to go down the ladder. Vijay was her friend first and well, she didn’t want her dad to kill him before they could become something more.

“Uh, maybe? I’m sure I hurt her, but it was never my intention. And later she was too hyper focused on her family to spare too much thought on me, though she did save my life in the caves.”

Phew. Vijay saved it. John probably wouldn’t kill him. Probably. Penny still stood over the ladder.

“Yeah, I read about that.”

Penny jumped and hit her foot on the hatch. She scrambled back and froze, praying neither her dad nor Vijay heard her.

No no no no. Don’t say that dad! Vijay doesn’t need to know about that!

“Read?”

“Penny wrote a book in the last seven months about our little adventure over the past year.”

Oh no... no no no no no... there was no salvaging the cover up Penny had been frantically scraping together in the past six seconds. It was out. Vijay knew she wrote a book. Vijay would want to read it. What if he didn't like it? Oh no...

"Oh, cool..."

"What about now? Are you still interested in my daughter? And what did you two talk about last night?"

And back to the beginning... did Penny want to know the answer to this question? Did she want to know if Vijay liked her still? From how he acted and what he said yesterday, he definitely did. But, to hear it from his lips, in actual words? Did Penny want that?

"Um, yes... I still like Penny."

Too late. She knew now.

"And last night?"

Oh, this. Would Vijay tell her dad? Would Vijay tell her dad what they had talked about last night? He had no reason not to. This was her dad after all. If Vijay didn't tell him and her dad decided he didn't like that, he could tell Vijay to leave Penny alone. Vijay might even listen to her dad too. He wasn't as much of a rule breaker as she was.

"All due respect Mr. Robinson, but I won't tell you what Penny and I talked about yesterday. That is between her and me and I will not betray her trust."

Oh wow. Penny hadn't even thought of that. Ironical, seeing as that was the biggest reason Penny had been pissed at Vijay. But, Penny had to admit, she respected Vijay a hell of a lot more now that he had kept her confidence even when he had every reason not to. Huh. Penny smiled.

Finally, John did speak, “Alright, I’ll accept it.” That was all he said.

“And if you do break my daughter’s heart, I won’t be the only one you’ll need to watch out for.”

Penny laughed to herself. Of course, her dad would say that.

There were sounds at the bottom the ladder. Vijay was beginning to climb back up! Crap! Penny straightened and took off quietly for her bedroom, sticking close to the walls like a spy or something. She didn’t want Vijay catching her eavesdropping. In fact, Penny’s gut twisted in guilt for spying on their conversation, especially after Vijay had been so noble. She would have to make it up to him somehow.

Penny had her bag on her bed and was just beginning to put things into it when Vijay knocked on her door.

“Hey,” Vijay said.

Penny looked up. Vijay was hanging back just outside her door, looking timid. “Hey, Vijay. Did my dad find what he was looking for in the garage?” Penny smirked.

“Haha. I think so.” Vijay shifted back and forth, nervous. It was an easy tell and he had done it plenty of times on the planet. He even had his hands in his pockets too. Penny couldn’t help but smile; he was cute when he was nervous.

Penny laughed. She knew exactly what her dad had been ‘looking for.’ “I’m sure he did. Help me with this?” Penny pointed to her bag.

“Oh, I’m smart enough to know not to get involved in what a girl packs.” A comedian, is he?



“Ah!” Penny smacked Vijay’s arm. “Ha! You wish. No, I meant carry it for me.”

“Am I pack mule now?”

“Obviously.” Penny deadpanned.

Penny and Vijay both broke out into laughter.

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A little while later, Maureen stuck her head in Penny’s room to tell them that John, Judy, and Don wouldn’t be going to the planet.

“Why not? Is something wrong?” Penny tensed up on her bed where she was sitting and swapping stories with Vijay from back home. Penny didn’t want anything to be wrong.

“No, there’s just an issue with getting a transport Jupiter to the Resolute. They’ll have it worked out tomorrow. So, your dad, Judy, and Don won’t be able to head down until tomorrow morning at the earliest. That also means tonight, we’ll be in different Jupiters. The family we are to stay with don’t have enough room for all eight of us and Vijay’s parents won’t be up until tomorrow at the earliest.”

“We’re separating?” Penny’s voice caught in her throat. After seven months together and a week where they almost lost each other countless times, the absolute last thing Penny wanted was to split up the Robinsons. The Robinsons were supposed to stick together.

Penny missed the look Vijay gave her.

Vijay was being awfully quiet in the corner, but Penny was acutely aware of his presence. He may not be family, but he was a friend. A friend she wasn’t about to let go of, especially after the loyalty he had just showed to her.

“Only for a little while. Your dad and I will be staying here tonight. Don already has quarters on the Resolute he will be staying in. And Judy will stay with you, Will, Vijay, and Sam, in the Azevedos’ Jupiter. And we will still eat together. I promise.”

“Okay, when do we need to leave our Jupiter?” Penny frowned, wanting a change in topic.

“As soon as you’re finished packing. Judy and Will are mostly done.”

“Okay, five minutes? I need to grab a couple more things.”

“Sure,” Maureen said and walked out.

Penny took a deep breath.

“Are you okay?” Vijay sounded concerned. He took a tentative step towards Penny, like she was an animal that might spook. Like a horse. The irony might just kill her.

Penny turned to him and grinned. “I’m always okay.”

“Uh huh,” Vijay didn’t look convinced. Penny didn’t expect him to. But, at least he didn’t push it. Vijay just asked if there was anything else she needed to pack and shouldered her bag when she was done.

“I can carry my own bag you know?”

“Hey, I’m just doing what you told me to.” Vijay had a smile in his voice.

Penny laughed and pushed Vijay's shoulder. She knew what he was doing, and she was grateful.

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The walk to their new (temporary) Jupiter was short but pleasant. Vijay and Penny had joined back up with Judy, Will, and Samantha and they had all walked together. The relationship between Vijay and Sam was the cutest freaking thing in the world. When Vijay and Penny had rejoined the other kids, Sam had thrown herself into Vijay's arms and squealed happily when Vijay had swung her around in the air. Penny had smiled and laughed with them.

Settling in with the new family was weird. Penny was occupied with deflecting the girl's, Anise, attempts at flirtation from Will. Anise is fifteen and Will is twelve! Come on! Vijay was decidedly no help and just kept laughing. It was rather gratifying to tell Anise about "Debbie," the "cute chick with pretty red hair." Vijay almost ruined it though, laughing his face off. Penny had glared at him.

After settling in and Will running off to "check on Debbie" (yeah, right. He was up to something but Penny would let it slide, for now), Penny was enjoying just relaxing in Anise's bedroom and actually having decent conversations with her friends. Anise was actually kinda cool when she wasn't flirting with Will. Except, Penny should have known it wouldn't last. Relaxing just wasn't in her vocabulary apparently. Because Anise just had to answer the door and it just had to be Smith at the door.

"Uh, Penny. There's someone here to see you." Anise looked uncomfortable.

"Who is it?" Penny asked.

"A Doctor Smith."

Penny froze. Judy froze. Sam looked up. Vijay knew vaguely something was up.

“Did you let her in?” Penny tried to keep her even.

“Yeah... should I not have?” Anise looked discomfited at the thought of doing something wrong. Penny made a note to coax out the rebel in Anise.

“No, it’s fine. I’ll be right out.” Penny said. Penny stood. “Judy, call Raddick. Sam, Vijay, Anise you three stay here.”

Penny was dreading this. Did she really have to talk to *her*? Really?

Penny steeled herself and walked into the hub. Instantly, Smith hopped up from her perch in one of the windows.

“Why is our Jupiter surrounded in plastic?” Smith looked annoyingly calm.

“It’s not your Jupiter.” Penny crossed her arms. “What are you doing here?”

“The head of security wants to arrest me.” Smith made a half effort imitation of a shrug.

“For once she speaks the truth.” Penny laid on the sarcasm.

“You remind me so much of me sometimes. You know how to read people. You deflect with humor. And your good at spotting a lie. That’s why you write so well.”

Penny resisted the urge to shift uncomfortably. Smith wouldn’t get an inch out of her. “You can’t hide here.”

“I’m on a spaceship.” Smith rolled her eyes. “I can’t hide anywhere. But if I’m going to be incarcerated, I’d really like some reading material.”

“Go to the library.”

“I was actually hoping you – you’d have an extra copy of your book.”

Wait, what? What does Smith want with Penny’s book? Whatever. If she wanted it, she could have it.

“Yeah. I – I actually have your copy. You can have it back.” Penny turned and walked from the room, just to see Anise lurking at the doorway. Penny just kept walking after throwing a warning glare at Anise.

Penny walked to Anise’s bedroom where Penny’s bag was, with Smith’s book in it. She didn’t know why she had grabbed it. She just had.

Judy must have stepped out to call Raddick and was waiting for him at the door. Vijay and Sam were still in Anise’s bedroom, though. Vijay looked up from playing with Sam when Penny walked into the room.

“Hey, is everything alright?”

“Uh, almost. I just need to grab something.” Penny hedged, not wanting to go into detail with Sam in the room.

Penny walked over to her backpack and started digging around for Smith’s copy of her book. Vijay stood up and walked over to her.

Vijay leaned down and whispered in her ear, “Do you need me to do anything? Come with you?”

“Yeah but stay here with Sam. Keep her away from Smith.” Penny whispered back and smiled. She grabbed Smith’s copy, and walked out, avoiding looking at Vijay.

Penny walked back into the room with her book held tightly to her chest. “If we’re so similar, can you tell me how you turned into you?” The last thing in the world Penny ever wanted to become was Doctor Smith. The scary thing was, Penny could actually see the similarities between herself and Smith. Penny tried not to shudder.

“Afraid you might become me?” There was that awful smirk Smith so loved to wear.

“Terrified.” Penny clutched tighter at her book.

“I’ll tell you my secret, at some point in life you’ll learn, it’s better to be feared than loved.”

That was abjectly disturbing. Seriously? That was this woman’s outlook on life? It’s better to be feared than loved? Who hurt her?

“I mean, have you ever been loved?” Penny shook her head.

For just a moment, there was a look of genuine something on Smith’s face before she covered it with an eye roll. She walked up to Penny and grabbed the book from her.

“I’m glad we had this little heart to heart.” Smith only barely hid the bite to her words. She tried to flounce off but stopped abruptly when she saw who was standing in the doorway.

“Appreciate the call, Miss Robinson. Jessica Harris, you’re under arrest.” Unfortunately for Smith, it was just then that Raddick appeared with armed guards.

Smith turned on Penny, with a completely unwarranted look of betrayal on her face. As if Penny would actually feel bad about betraying Smith. As if Penny was actually even

betraying Smith after all the mess she'd put the Robinsons through. Please. Smith was getting her due and Penny was just pushing that along.

Penny stepped back as Raddick's guards stepped forward to arrest Smith. Penny nodded once to Raddick as Smith was led out before darting off to Anise's bedroom. When she stepped through the door, Anise and Judy were already back and Vijay and Sam were right where Penny had left them. Penny near threw herself onto Anise's bed and settled between Anise and Judy. Judy immediately reached out and began fiddling with the ends of Penny's hair; something Penny only let Judy do. Penny would think about everything else later. Between separating from her parents, dealing with Smith, and the overall general hellishness of the past seven and a half months, Penny just wanted at least six hours of nightmareless sleep. Too bad she had school in an hour.

## Chapter End Notes

so, chapter three... honestly, I only have half a clue what im doing here. these people aren't doing at all what im telling them to do.

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