

**STAR LAB**

# **Runaway Food**

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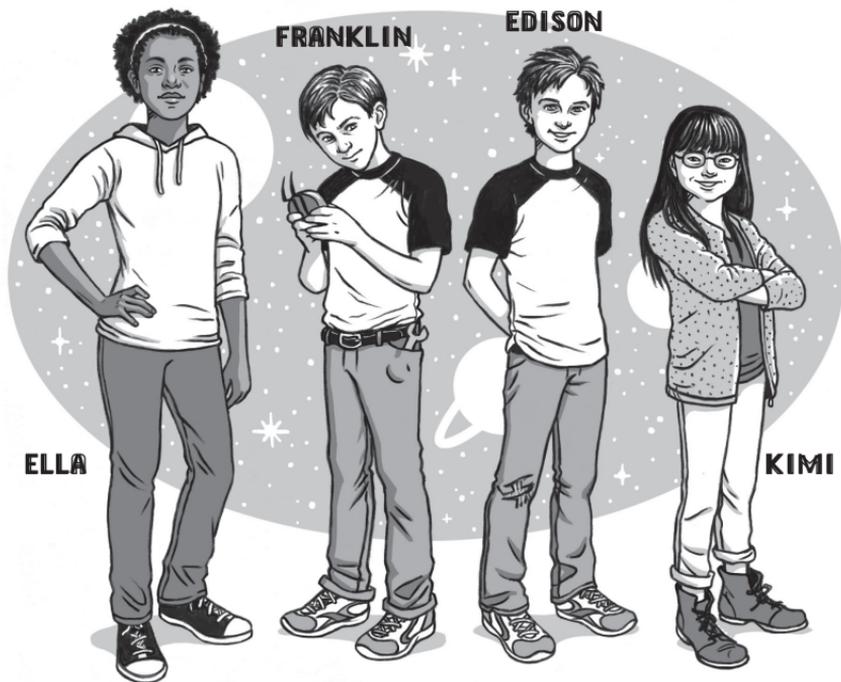
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# Meet the Star Lab Kids



Ella, Franklin, Edison, and Kimi live on a space ship with their parents. They travel from planet to planet. Their parents look for new rocks and plants to help people.

**Ella Drake** is 13 and likes to be in charge of things.

**Franklin Orloff** is 11 and likes inventing gadgets.

**Edison Orloff** is also 11 and likes solving problems. He and Franklin are twins.

**Kimi Matsu** is 9 and likes to explore. Sometimes that gets her in trouble!

# Meet Star Lab 3's Crew



**CAPTAIN  
DRAKE**



**FIRST OFFICER  
MATSU**



**SCIENCE OFFICER  
WONG**



**SCIENCE OFFICER  
ORLOFF**



**SECOND OFFICER  
ORLOFF**



**CREWMAN  
BEY**

**Captain Drake** is the ship's captain and also Ella's mom.

**First Officer Matsu** sets the path of the ship. He is Kimi's dad.

**Science Officer Wong** is the ship's doctor and also a scientist. She is Kimi's mom.

**Science Officer Orloff** helps Star Lab talk to other space ships. She is the twins' mom.

**Second Officer Orloff** keeps the ship running. He is also a scientist and the twins' dad.

**Crewman Bey** keeps track of supplies and fixes things on the ship.

## CHAPTER 1

# No Real Food

Star Lab 3 slipped silently through space. But inside it wasn't so silent.

"I'm sick of food bars!" yelled Edison. "Why do we always have food bars?"

He stomped over to the window wall and looked out at black space. Specks of stars shone in the darkness.

"You know why," said Ella. "We don't have any way to get real food out here in space. The rule is Real Food Once a Week."

"Well, ask your mom to change the rule," said Edison. "She's the captain."



“No,” said Ella, “I don’t think it would be right.”

Ella was 13, two years older than Edison. She was always repeating the ship’s rules to him. Maybe it was because she was the oldest, or because Captain Drake was her mom.

Edison looked over at his twin brother.

“Franklin, what do you think?” asked Edison.

Franklin sat at the table trying out one of his gadgets. He looked up at Edison and shook his head. Edison turned to Ella.

“See?” Edison said. “Franklin agrees. Food bars are awful.”

Franklin didn’t talk. He never had. From the time he was a baby he found other ways to show what he was thinking. But Edison always knew what Franklin was thinking.

“Forget it, Edison,” snapped Ella. “No real food.”

“You’re not the boss of us, Ella,” he said.

“But my mom *is*,” she replied. “Sit down and eat your lunch.”

Edison wasn't giving up yet. He walked over and stood by Ella.

"Wouldn't you *love* some bread?" he said. "Just *one slice* of real bread?"



Ella took a big bite of her food bar and looked at her video book.

Edison sat down. He sighed, took a bite

of his food bar, and chewed slowly.

Ella looked up. "Where's Kimi? She's missing lunch."

"She's always missing lunch," said Edison. "I'm sure she's running around somewhere she shouldn't be."

Ella looked at Franklin. Franklin seemed to know things before they happened. He always closed his eyes first. He had his eyes closed now.

Franklin pointed at the door to the den. The door slid open, and 9-year-old Kimi stood there. She was breathing hard.

"Crewman Bey wants us in the supply bay right now," she said. "We're in trouble."

## CHAPTER 2

# Food on the Floor

“What’s wrong?” Ella asked with a frown.

“I don’t know,” said Kimi. “Just go see him.” She turned and left.

“Come on, you two,” said Ella to the twins. “Crewman Bey wants us.”

Star Lab 3 was a small ship. It visited planets and picked up plants, rocks, and bugs. It had labs to study these things. The ship held ten people—four children, five parents, and Crewman Bey.

The children’s parents flew the ship. They also studied the plants, rocks, and bugs.

Crewman Bey took care of the supplies. He did the cleaning, the cooking, and anything else that was needed.

The kids ran to the supply bay and looked inside. Crewman Bey was sweeping the floor. It was covered with little black things.

“What happened?” asked Ella.

Crewman Bey looked up. He was angry.

“*You tell me,*” he said. “I came in here and found this mess. Why would you throw away food?”

“Food?” asked Edison. He bent down to look closer. “Hey, these are raisins!”

“That’s right,” said Crewman Bey. “Which

one of you did this?" He looked at the kids.

They all looked surprised.



"We wouldn't throw away food," said Ella.

"Someone did," said Crewman Bey. He thought for a minute. "I suppose one of your parents could have dropped them.

For now, you four get to school. I'll talk with you later."

"OK, sir," said Ella. She led the others to the school room.

"Why is he mad at *us*?" asked Edison. "We didn't do it."

"No, we didn't," said Kimi.

"But who did?" asked Ella as they entered the school room.

"Good afternoon, children," said a deep voice. "You are late." A screen sat on the front desk. On the screen was a cartoon face.

Edison looked at the face. "We didn't mean to be late, Chip," he said. "Crewman Bey wanted to see us."



“I must tell your parents you were late,”  
said Chip.

“Please don’t,” said Ella. “It won’t  
happen again.”

“Thank you, Ella,” said Chip. “I trust  
that it won’t. Now open your touch pads.”

Chip led the kids through their afternoon

work. The last lesson was about magnets. So was their homework.

“I’m sick of homework,” said Edison.

The face on the screen frowned.

“If you are sick, Edison, you should go see Science Officer Wong.”

“It’s not that kind of sick,” said Edison.

He closed his touch pad and followed the others back to the den.

All of a sudden, Franklin grabbed Edison’s arm. He closed his eyes and pointed to the intercom on the wall.

“Ella,” said an angry voice. “Bring everyone to the supply bay. Right now! This has gone too far!”