

Title of Work: Free Under The Stars

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Free Under The Stars

I heard one girl say that a goldfish has a memory of three seconds. I don't think that's true. I remember almost every part of my life. I remember always being lonely.

Life used to be exciting. I was moved from my overcrowded pet store birthplace into a new tank, with new pebbles, a different brand of food, and, get this, filtered tap water. I had it all, the world was my oyster! Then, routine set in. The school kids came back from the holidays, they pointed at me and tried to poke me but I hardly minded, life was just too exciting to let the little things get you down.

Eventually, though, my new perks got old. The pebbles were too scratchy, the food was bland, and the tap water was just too cold. Even the school kids got bored with me, not even acknowledging the amazing swimming I would do for them. Let me tell you, swimming in circles is not as easy as you think. Weeks go by and nothing captivates me, but I still have hope that eventually, things will surely change.

I swim around the bowl. The same bowl I've now been swimming in for two years. I sit in the busy classroom all day, but still, no one pays attention to me. Then the day ends, and I float in solitude. The silence is deafening, and I find myself longing for even the rowdy kids to return. But they don't. It's the holidays and I've been forgotten. Left on the teacher's desk to rot away. Every so often some maintenance men come in and feed me. They arrive, sprinkle the bland flakes of food into the water, and then turn to leave. Just like everyone else has. I've truly hit the depths of despair.

Then as the door creaks to shut behind them, I see a brief glimpse of the outside world, a world of sunshine, warmth, and things I've never even seen before. It's time for a change. Anything must be better than my lonely life here, right? I know it's now or never to come up with a plan. A plan to fix this myself once and for all. I haven't felt so excited in years! I swim around trying to come up with an idea to escape to a better life. I've got it. I wait nervously for the time to come. I know it must be soon.

My plan is set in motion a week later as the maintenance men come back to the classroom take me to the kitchen to clean my bowl, as they have always done once a month. But, if everything goes to plan, hopefully, I'll be well on my way before that. He lifts the bowl and opens the door of the classroom, walking out quickly, not caring if the water spills.

This is exactly what I've waited for. He travels towards the next section of the hallway. I see some plants and know this is it. I swim around and round to gain momentum, then swim up with all my power, propelling me out of the hatred bowl and into a group of freeing bushes. They were watered that morning, so I land in a huge puddle of water. I look back, and the maintenance man hasn't even noticed that I'm gone yet. I don't think he will until he eventually makes it in the kitchen and tries to clean the bowl. I laugh, that's what he deserves for never staying to chat with me or ask me how I was. Oh, and how lovely this water is! Everything is beautiful and I don't even care that I'm alone. The plants are green, the air is warmer than I've ever felt before, and the dirt is so much softer than the scratchy pebbles of the past.

I float in the puddle and swim around for a bit. The air is so freeing on my scales! I settle back into my puddle for the night, finally happy again. The air is warm and soothing. I fall asleep staring up at the sky, where see my ancestors resting between the stars. I'm content with my progress to freedom, but tomorrow, I will find a friend, and never be lonely again.

I wake up slowly and it takes me a moment to remember where I am and the events of the previous day. It comes back to me in a burst of pure joy as I remember what I have achieved. But something feels different to last night... The warm air is drier, thicker. It's so much harder to breathe. I don't understand! Where did my perfect puddle go! I flop, flop, flop, and flop some more, but I can't find the water anywhere. I did like the water, but I'm sure I'll be fine without it, right? Everything will be ok because I know I'm finally free. At least I had one night under the stars before I join them.