



The Cold, Dark Well

By Arthur Young

Freshwater Biology, Fall-2021, University of Maryland

I lie at the bottom of a deep, dark well. Water crashes above me, it tugs incessantly at me. But at the bottom of this pool, I am safe. The water is slow down here, there are many rocks to hide under. I scabble over them, in search of food. Others steer clear of me, I have strong claws, and



Crayfish from Fishing Creek, north of Frederick, MD, on 29-Sep-2021

they fear me. But I am not the strongest. There are others here, faster, bigger, stronger. I move quickly for the shelter of the rocks, where they cannot reach me. I find my meal, fresh green plants. Insects scurry away upon my arrival. I find some dead. I eat them. Among these rocks the tug of the water is weak, I barely feel it. Suddenly, the rocks are thrown aside. They crash all around me and into me. But my body is strong, my cuticle hard. The water grips me, tears me from my purchase and drags me away. I tumble helplessly down, the water slamming me all around. I am caught in a riffle! I come to a sudden stop. I feel the water forcing me against a wall. I cannot move. Silt, sand, and pebbles pepper me. I endure. The current stops. I am lifted from the water. My lungs labor for breath. I can breathe, but not well. The light outside of the water is blinding. Suddenly I am restrained. I violently convulse, trying to break free, but the grip upon me is strong. I attack, knowing my claws are strong, but I cannot reach behind me. I am at this creature's mercy. I labor for breath while the creatures observe me, they are impossibly tall, impossibly strong. The heat is asphyxiating, suffocating, I cannot resist. Mercifully, the creature drops me. I tumble down with the riffle, knowing it will carry me far. I drop into a new pool, quickly dashing under the rocks. I lie at the bottom of a deep, dark well. Water crashes above me, it tugs incessantly at me. But at the bottom of this pool, I am safe.