

Longing. For freedom. For happiness. For a life. Those were the thoughts coursing through his mind as he stared unseeingly into the distance. The now dark paradise seemed so close yet was impossible for him to reach; no matter how hard he tried he couldn't get past that shining, silver barrier. And he hated it. It was stupid really, how something so delicate looking, something with holes in it, could possibly stop him from running away to the place where he longed to be. Distressed. Others stared at him as if there was something wrong with him. Something wrong with desperately wishing to be freed from the things that call themselves his owners. Apparently, he should be grateful; apparently, he shouldn't be complaining. "you have everything you need here: you have food, a place to sleep, and you are safe from the dangers of the forest". That is all anyone has ever said to him. Yet, how can he be grateful? How can he not complain? When those things, those people, haven't even deigned to give him a name. Just a pathetic number. A number. As if he was worse than them, as if his life meant less. They kept him in a claustrophobic cage that left his feet swollen and indented. They kept him from where he belonged. The forest. Therefore, the next day, as soon as he realised the cage that had held him captive for his whole life was finally left open, he did not hesitate. He ignored everyone's protests, their howls of horror. He leaped. As soon as his furry feet touched the ground, he knew he had done the right thing. His little body rejoiced at the rightness of the contact with the grass, as if it were welcoming the rabbit home. He reached the forest in a frenzy. Adrenaline pumped through his veins at the very sight of it up close- it was even more majestic than he had ever imagined. The trees were colossal, the brightness of their leaves even more beautiful up close. The trees beckoned him forward with the delicate swoosh of their branches. As he ran the insects hummed to themselves and the plants softly whispered to each other, the scent of blooming flowers and fresh grass filled his senses. He realised that running through the woods- where he felt the soft grass and occasional twig or rock beneath his feet- was liberating. He had completely forgotten about his rough and lumpy feet, courtesy of his shining captor. He froze. His long ears shot up. He stayed as still as rock. Behind him, he heard the snap of a twig, the rustle of leaves. He felt the presence of an enormous creature looming over him. A cold shiver ran down his spine, he was warned of this. He couldn't run; it was too late. So, as he heard the fox spring at him, all he did was close his eyes and relish the feeling of the woods. He had a life. He had been happy. He had been free. He no longer longed for anything.