

Swim the Stars Synopsis:

Ryan Cruor sits strapped into the worst shuttle in the United Galaxies Academy fleet, waiting with the four other Third Year cadets chosen for a unique training mission on the starship *Sunfish*.

Minutes before the rendezvous with the *Sunfish*, the transport shuttle is attacked and boarded by Ryan's mom, revealing Ryan's claims of being an orphan a lie. Rescued by the *Sunfish*'s captain, Ryan feels the mistrust of the other cadets as they start the mission.

Once she's alone aboard the *Sunfish*, Ryan's wristlet dings with a Feed ping. Mother has put a bounty out to bring her home. Ryan decides to keep this secret from the crew.

After Ryan is given the role of navigator when she was expecting to be an engineer, she's struggling not to show her disappointment. A call from an admiral changes the crew's mission to a hunt for information. Someone is sabotaging the stellar turbines that provide power to the United Galaxies. All the UG fleet ships are busy with repairs. The *Sunfish* must work from a fuzzy image to find something not available in the UG archives.

A mandatory visit to see the ship's doctor reveals Ryan worked off the seven years of her dad's debt in six months by getting an illegal cranial implant. When it was removed, it left massive scar tissue that causes excruciating headaches.

Ryan is certain her career is over, but for the first time in her life, an adult is angry for her instead of at her.

Ryan flies for the first time and discovers the joy of diving in and out of the stellar streams that wind across the universe. She's found a real purpose for herself.

The crew goes to retrieve info from the Spaceship Necromancer. As they're negotiating a price for the ship specs, Ryan's mom sends a new Feed ping. She's guaranteed payment for bringing Ryan home. The Necromancer demands Ryan as payment and kidnaps her. Ryan trades away her most prized family heirloom for her freedom and the information they need.

Good news! They know where the crum bum is going to be. Bad news! The *Sunfish* is the only ship in range to stop them.

The captain and the synth first mate go down to the planet and catch the villain, Nimue, with the cadets watching from up on the ship. The cadets are brought down to the planet to help. Ryan is put in charge of guarding a ranting and raving Nimue. Ryan wants to give her some privacy, so she locks her in a back office.

When black smoke starts rolling out from under the door, Ryan opens the door and is attacked along with the captain. Nimue escapes.

The cadets try to figure out where Nimue will go next. When the crew deciphers Nimue's instructions hidden in farting dog memes, they discover the people behind Nimue's path of destruction have miscalculated her fuel supplies. They're leaving her to die.

While the team figures out how to call Nimue and offer to save her life, Ryan's mom changes the bounty to a death contract. Now Nimue and Ryan are both facing a death sentence.

The ship reaches the rendezvous point. After quick thinking by Ryan, they orbit a comet and bring Nimue on board.

On the way to deliver Nimue's ship, Ryan's mom boards the *Sunfish* to abduct her. Though the captain claims salvage rights over Ryan, she instead claims herself. She cuts off her leather-wrapped braid, declaring her grieving for her father over. She renounces her family name and heritage. The first mate forces Ryan's mom off the ship by the point of a blaster pistol.

The captain calls the admiral declaring victory and delivering Nimue's ship. As a reward, the captain is allowed to extend the mission and keep the cadets. There's more adventuring still to do.