Anna Gumberg

Mr. Palshaw

English IV

19 January 2017

Sea Legs

Two wooden oars float on the water, dip and re-emerge above the surface.

“David, grab them!” She gestures wildly to the oars drifting away.

His arm is elbow-deep in the water, reaching to no avail, his weight tipping the small boat. His other palm is pressed securely against his eye. “Oh, you want me to grab them? Brilliant! Hadn’t thought of that!”

“Just jump in! We can’t just float out here!”

“Are you kidding me? You jump in and get them.”

She sputters, waves her arm. “I can’t believe this. I can’t believe you dropped both of the oars.”

“*I* dropped the oars, Sarah? *I* dropped them? Yeah, you’re right. But you know, maybe I could have held on to them a lot easier if you hadn’t shot a champagne cork directly in my eye!”

“You made me open it! I told you I can’t open champagne bottles!”

“How hard is it? Seriously? My eye takes up like, one millionth of the places you could have aimed. There was a million in one chance you would hit me in the eye with a goddamn champagne cork, and yet.” He removes his hand from his eye and blinks experimentally. “Well, you haven’t blinded me, so that’s something at least.”

She says nothing. The couple sits in silence for a moment. The dinghy slowly rotates and rocks in the gentle waves.

“I still can’t believe you dropped the oars,” Sarah starts. “What if we have kids? Are you just gonna toss them in the ocean, too?”

“I might, if you try to shoot them in the eye with a champagne cork.”

“*You made me do it!*”

“Yeah, okay, Sarah. I don’t think the fish that end up nibbling on our decomposed remains when we finally succumb to dehydration will care who made who do what.”

“Did you actually just say ‘nibbling on our decomposed remains’?” She lets out a breath of air. “Shit. We should not have paddled out this far. Can you just call the coast guard?”

He rummages around in a knapsack next to his side. He checks one outer pocket. Then the other. “Um. I uh, I don’t appear to have my cell phone on me.”

Sarah’s mouth drops open.

“Hey, at least we have sandwiches. We won’t starve to death.” From a cooler by his feet, he pulls out two sandwiches.

Sarah clenches her hands into fists. “Oh God, I am not eating that sandwich.”

“Anger is no excuse for intentional starvation, and beggars can’t be choosers, my lady.”

“No, I mean, I don’t feel that great.”

“Look, I’m sorry I forgot my phone. We’ll probably just drift to shore.”

“No, dumbass, I mean I feel nauseous.”

David’s eyes widen. “Are you seasick?”

“A little bit, yeah. Did you bring the Dramamine?”

“Yeah, I did. Let me grab it.” From a small backpack, David produces a small white bottle. He shakes it, and the pills make a rattling sound. He starts to hand it across the boat, then thinks better of it and pulls the bottle back to his chest.“If you want the drugs, say it wasn’t my fault that we lost the oars.”

“Are you seriously withholding medication from me?”

“I’m not withholding anything. You have the power here, Sarah.”

“I am actually gonna puke.”

“Sarah, I can help you. I want to help you. But I need you to help me first. Say that we lost the oars because you viciously assaulted me with a champagne cork.”

“Give me the Dramamine, David.”

“Sarah, this is so easy. Help me help you.”

“Give me the *fucking Dramamine, David!*”

David pulls back the bottle. “Whoa, am I sensing some hostility?”

Sarah starts to leap across the boat, then leans back and groans, clutching her stomach.

“Okay, fine, lay on the guilt a little thicker, why don’t you.” He hands her the bottle.

She grabs the bottle and grins weakly. “That was easy.” She begins to unscrew the lid.

David eyes dart back from Sarah to the bottle, back to Sarah, and blurts out, “Easy, was it?” And he smacks the bottle out of Sarah’s hand, and like a falling leaf, it soars through the air and lands on the surface of the water, bobbing five feet away.

Her mouth is frozen in a perfect O, her hands remain close to her chest, still poised to unscrew the lid. “Oh my god. Oh my fucking god. You did not just do that.”

“You were faking it!”

“What? *What?* Faking? Oh my god! Help me paddle toward it!”

The two put their hands in the water and paddle furiously, succeeding only in pushing the bottle farther away.

“Oh my god. Oh my god. I can’t believe you just did that.” Her face is pale, shiny with sweat.

“Sarah, you’re gonna be fine. Studies show Dramamine is a placebo, anyway.”

“Is it? Is vomiting a placebo side effect then? Oh my god.” Her voice is quiet. “If I survive this I might kill you.”

“Come on, Sarah, you’ll be fine. You got this, babe.”

Sarah rests her head on the side of boat, hands resting on her abdomen. “How are we going to get back? Holy shit. We’re stuck out here. We’re stuck out here and I’m stuck with a sadistic prick who threw my motion sickness medication into the ocean.”

David bites his lip and shifts in his seat.

“Um, do you want a sandwich, now? Turkey and swiss. Gourmet. It might help.”

“Are you kidding me?”

“What? Do you think it would make you sick?”

“Did you seriously make us turkey and swiss?”

“Uh, yeah?”

“I’m vegetarian, asshole.”

“Oh crap, oh right. I guess it’s good you’re too sick to eat it then.”

Sarah looks at him, then closes her eyes. “That’s it.”

“What?”

“That’s it. I’m breaking off the engagement.”

“Oh come on, Sarah.”

“Does it sound like I’m kidding? No way. Done. I’m done.”

“C’mere.” He extends his arms to her. “It’ll help.”

“Back off, or I am literally going to vomit on you.”

He sits back and takes a bite of his sandwich. “Sorry about your Dramamine.”

Sarah opens her eyes to roll them.

David crumples the now-empty sandwich bag in his hands and replaces it in the cooler. “Are we just going to sit here in silence then until we die of exposure?”

“The sooner, the better.”

The boat moves slowly up and down. Sarah is green. A seagull flies overhead and promptly “lets one loose” on Sarah’s shoulder. She turns to her shoulder in horror, and David looks in shock.

He holds back a smile.

“I swear to god David, if you start laughing right now… .”

“I’m not laughing.” He purses his lips.

“Don’t even think about laughing. Do not--” She gags once, then throws her torso over the side of the boat and vomits into the ocean.

David’s lips quirk up at the corners. He moves over to her, puts his hand on her back. “Are you okay, babe?”

“Don’t fucking touch me.”

He lets out a chuckle.

“If we get rescued, I’m never talking to you again.”

David laughs into his shoulder. “Sarah, babe, I--” He can’t finish.

“Shut up, David,” she groans.

He’s laughing now, hard. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” he gasps. “It’s not funny.”

She shoots daggers, and he’s howling, wiping tears from the corners of his eyes.

“You suck.”

“You have to admit it’s kind of funny.”

“I just threw up off the side of this boat.”

“My point exactly.”

“Fuck you, David.”

He regains his composure. “Sorry, sorry, I’m not laughing.” He wipes his eyes again, then pulls out a water bottle from the cooler, pops the lid, and hands it to Sarah. She takes a small sip.

David reaches his hand into the cooler again, shoving aside ice and other beverages in search of a second water. His face lights up, and he pulls out a black cell phone. “I found it! We’re not gonna die!” He beams. Sarah says nothing.

“Lighten up, Sarah. We’re not gonna die out here! The engagement is back on!”

Sarah looks him in the eyes, says nothing, then turns and vomits again in the deep blue water.