

Sailing Chris Sowers

I'm floating alongside the capsized sailboat, and it's bothering me that I can't see my feet. The water is too murky. Kids' lifejackets are too snug on me now. You handed one to me while you were convincing me to go out on the sailboat with you, but I swapped it for a larger one when you weren't looking. Instead, the adult-sized lifejacket slides its way upwards until it digs into my armpits, and I grab it just above the top buckle and tug it downwards back into place. It immediately starts its journey back up.

"You won't tip it over?" I'd asked you.

"I won't."

"You promise?"

"I do."

I tread water. Not because I need to with the lifejacket on, but because the movement keeps the piranhas away. *People that live around the lake, you like to tell me, they buy piranhas as pets. But then they get tired of feeding them; it gets expensive, so they dump them in the lake. Don't ever get in the water with even a hangnail. They'll smell blood and be all over you before you know it.*

I tread water and think about my hangnails and the scratch on my shin and the piranhas racing towards me like torpedoes. I kick my feet harder and raise my hands out of the water. Less bait. Hopefully there's a kid somewhere else in the lake bleeding to death from losing his foot to an outboard motor.

I curse myself for watching *Jaws* recently.

You've shed your lifejacket. It's hard enough to right a capsized sailboat without it getting in the way.

This time it's taking longer. You usually have the boat right-side up within minutes. I look down at the dark water and picture the cover of the *Jaws* VHS tape. Huge shark, teeth bared, darting upwards towards an unsuspecting swimmer.

You finally give up. You clamber into a standing position on the underbelly of the boat, face the shore, and wave your hands over your head. Grandpa sees you, and walks down the dock to bring his pontoon out to us. I don't see Mom.

"Your son is trusting you," she'd said.

You laughed. "I know, I know."

"You don't have to go," she'd told me.

"I know. Dad wants me to."

We haven't been on the sailboat since you moved out, but now you're back. Saying you and Mom are working it out.

I climb onto the pontoon and Grandpa helps you free the sail from the underwater weeds. The boat bobs into its rightful position. Grandpa lets me steer the pontoon back to shore, towing the waterlogged sailboat with you in it. He stands beside me with his arm around my shoulders.

"He just thinks it's funny," he says. He sounds tired.

"I know." I try not to sound disappointed.

Mom is starting the car. Grandma wraps a towel around me and I climb into the back seat. "You're staying," Mom tells you. She wears sunglasses when she's crying. I can't see her eyes but I hear it in her voice.

I'm terrified of the piranhas and great white sharks that live in the depths of this northern Indiana lake, and I don't ever want to go sailing again.