The Open Boat

# Stephen Crane

* The people were on a small boat, on a choppy ocean.
* A cook is bailing out water, and an oiler (engine room worker of a boat) was steering
* The correspondent was also steering the oars
* The captain is injured, lying in the bow
* Oiler’s name is Billie
* They are all arguing whether or not they should go to this refuge (if there is a crew there to help them or not)
* Though they know it’s not a great situation, they’re staying optimistic.
* They were angered by birds “taunting them” (they could fly away where the sailors couldn’t)
* They were in a dinghy.
* They created a sail with the captain’s coat
* They hadn’t slept for days, or eaten much.
* Oiler had worked a double shift previously, was already tired. Now he was rowing.
* They see the shore, hoping that people will see and send a lifeboat. They deduce that their other boats (from the sunken ship) had not made it back yet, or else someone would be searching for them.
* The people thought they were definitely going to be rescued, so they smoked some cigars.
* They begin to realize that perhaps the house of refuge isn’t what they thought it was, because no one is coming out.
* Because no one was coming, the crew decided they’d have to get ashore themselves. They became mad because they could see the shore, but they may die anyway.
* The crew sees people on land, but they aren’t necessarily trying to save them.
* One of the crew members asks, a second time, why he was able to “nibble the sacred cheese of life” if he was about to drown…
* The captain is trying to stay positive by bringing up pie, but Billie doesn’t like that.
* As one of the two rowers rowed, the other slept in the bottom of the boat.
* Now, the waves aren’t that bad, and the cook and the oiler sleep in the bottom of the boat
* The correspondent was rowing alone, while others were sleeping and he saw a shark.
* The correspondent rowed for a really long time, thought of a story about a soldier dying in Algiers, which he never really cared about. Now, he felt sorry for him.
* He finally asked Billie to take over, and he did. But just as he was falling asleep, Billie asked him to take back over.
* The men, in their final hours they think, consider right and wrong and things they’ve done in life.
* The men finally get swamped and have to jump in the water. (IT IS COLD.)
* The oiler began swimming really hard and really fast… “ahead in the race”
* The correspondent was caught in a current, thinking to himself that drowning must be a comfortable relief to the pain he’s in.
* A man on shore saw them, undressed, and bound into the water to save them. They said he “had a halo.”
* The man saved the cook, then the correspondent, then the captain, but the oiler was already face down in the water, dead.
* It is ironic that Billie died, because he was the one trying the hardest to get to shore. (He also rowed the most.)
* The men were at sea for 30 hours.