

Drought At Sea

by Sabina Piersol

A small ship cabin with bunk beds, a desk, and a chair.

Characters:

IZZY (Nina), a writer

MARYBETH (Laura Jane), a nurse

Scene 1

[IZZY is recording herself on her iphone.]

IZZY

Day one. So, it's cozier than cozy in here. One tiny round window, but better -- it's fake. (*peering through window*) A portal to nowhere. That's gotta be a metaphor for something. (*nervous*) Guess that also means we're underwater. I wonder how far. (*pause*) GOD I hope I get a good roommate. Like an ex-cheerleader with a Disney princess voice...or a stern German massage therapist...or just someone with...secrets. I just hope she doesn't snore or sleep fart. But if she does I'll get up and work. I'll take my notebook up to the deck and look at Orion's belt or the scene at the midnight buffet. Maybe a bored couple eating a plate of chicken wings will spark my next idea. Or it'll happen right here in this room. Anyway, tonight I want to watch the lights of the mainland disappear.

[MARYBETH walks in as she's leaving someone a voicemail, lobs her bag onto the lower bunk where Izzy already has her stuff.]

MARYBETH

Soooo...it's all on the list, but don't forget to water the garden AT NIGHT, otherwise everything'll singe. I wanna see happy cukes and squash when I get back. And the cat -- DO NOT overfeed him. If he cries just throw him out -- the raccoons aren't that bad this time of year. Okay, well...enjoy this message because you might not hear my voice again for three whole months. Not that you're not worth \$8 a minute, but you know. I'll email you. They have internet cafes for us, and a gym, and apparently an employees only bar, since we're not allowed to socialize with the passengers -- oh! Gotta go. (*greeting Izzy not so warmly*) I'm Marybeth. Okay if I do this bed? Pre-sciatica.

IZZY

Oh, I already started to set up but -- sure! Isadora. (*shaking her hand*)

MARYBETH

Like the dancer who got choked by her scarf while she was driving a convertible?

IZZY

The very one.

MARYBETH

You look like more of an Izzy. (*judging look*)

IZZY

That's funny, I was just about to say you can call me that.

MARYBETH

What's your job on this behemoth?

IZZY

You already guessed it.

MARYBETH

Oh god, modern dancer?

IZZY

No, dance instructor. Salsa and swing. *(beat)* And retail assistant in the jewelry shop.

MARYBETH

Yeah, that seems about right.

IZZY

Oh. Thanks. *(eagerly)* But that's not really what I'm doing here.

MARYBETH

Honey, I hate to disappoint, but I'm not interested in doing the whole BFF thing with my cruise ship roommate. I'm sure you've got your reasons -- everyone does. *(beat)* Work, health, the weather -- I'm fine with that kinda stuff. *(goes about unpacking/ignoring)*

IZZY

(still trying to engage) So you've done this before?

MARYBETH

Nope, first ever tour on the SS Viagra.

IZZY

And what's your --

MARYBETH

Geriatric nurse. I'd like to lie down for a sec, so can you move your bag? Thanks a bunch.

IZZY

I can move my bag. *(puts it reluctantly on top bunk/other cot)*

MARYBETH

You don't seem pleased about that.

IZZY

You know, we're going to be in really close quarters for kind of a long time.

MARYBETH

(putting an eye pillow over her eyes) That is the deal, yes.

IZZY

So I'd like for us to at least get along.

MARYBETH

Sweetie, we will! I can be perfectly pleasant. You just stay over there and I'll stay over here. Don't ask personal questions, don't tell me when you're homesick. You can tell me when you're seasick, though -- that I can do. My Dramamine is your Dramamine. But this is kind of a...break for me, let's say. Like my own little retreat. *(beat)* Except on a ship where I take care of nearly dead people. But now I'm getting chatty. Wake me up in 20. *(puts in earplugs)*

IZZY

All right. *(pause)* Marybeth? *(no answer; she's snoring lightly. izzy starts recording on iphone again)* What am I doing here? Thanks so much for asking. Well, I needed a break too. Maybe you don't need to know what I'm doing here...I can just be a nice, quiet observer. If you won't tell me anything I'll make it up. I can still see you, even if you don't want me to.

[blackout; when lights come back up, izzy is writing at the desk. mb enters in one of those nurse shirts]

Scene 2

[In this scene, which is a few weeks into the cruise, Marybeth is starting to show interest in Izzy (despite having drawn a line on the first day) out of a mix of curiosity/boredom/loneliness. Maybe Izzy is anxious/jumpy in this scene because she's trying to write and getting nowhere? Trying to be cool & aloof toward mb now since mb wasn't so nice in beginning?]

MARYBETH

Day 21 and what a day! One case of diarrhea, probably just from the shitty food, a few standard blood pressure checks, and three neon red sunburns. Is neon red a thing? I hope when the storm hits the clinic doesn't turn into a giant vomitorium...*(waits for a reaction; izzy doesn't respond or turn around)* What're you scratching away at there? A love letter? You know they don't have a post office on this rig --

IZZY

(noticing mb's in the room; takes out earbuds)
Oh sorry, were you saying something?

MARYBETH

No, nothing. So you like old school pencil and paper. You know the postman doesn't come out here, right?

IZZY

Oh, I'm not writing a letter. *(goes back to writing)*

MARYBETH

It's like, a journal then?

IZZY

Not exactly.

MARYBETH

Diary?

IZZY

Nope.

MARYBETH

Well you're not blogging...

IZZY

I'm not, no. *(annoyed)* You can tell because I'm not on the web.

MARYBETH

Is it true?

IZZY

Is what true?

MARYBETH

Whatever you're writing. Is it truth, or fiction?

IZZY

But you and I only talk about work --

MARYBETH

Fiction that's actually just your life with all the names changed?

IZZY

-- or the weather. *(turning around)* You know, I'm actually in the middle of something -- *(going back to writing)*

MARYBETH

So you ARE a writer.

IZZY

Why the sudden interest?

MARYBETH

(trying to look at her notebook) Are you just taking notes? Recording snippets of conversation?

IZZY

You could say that.

MARYBETH

So what's the problem?

IZZY

I don't have a problem. *(beat)* You know, I'd love to tell you how my dance classes are going. They've been a smashing success so far, thank you for asking! *(puts earbuds back in and starts singing lightly)*

MARYBETH

You're not writing very much -- just scratching around like a hen in a coop. What's that like? The stopping and starting, not knowing how a story ends...or whether anyone even cares. *(pulling out one of Izzy's earbuds)* You realize you're singing out loud? I'm in the room, you know. And how can you think with music on anyway? *(izzy puts back in)* I'm gonna need the desk too, eventually --

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE

(should this be both official AND campy sounding? crackly? hmm)
Due to a high wind and waves advisory, all employees are required to remain below deck until further instructions from the captain.
Repeat: all employees are to remain in their quarters until the safety alert has been lifted.

IZZY

(removing earbuds again)
What was that?

MARYBETH

It's just the guy at the drive-thru. You want a milkshake or anything?

IZZY

No seriously, I missed it. What'd they say?

MARYBETH

Nothing yet. We're heading into a nasty little storm. Haven't you been paying attention?

IZZY

Hold on. The storm that's way to the south of us?

MARYBETH

Well it changed course, apparently.

IZZY

What the hell are we going to do, then? *(starts pacing room)*

MARYBETH

Whoa whoa whoa. *(gets out her knitting stuff)* Nothing to do but sit tight.

IZZY

But I'm outta candy. I can't do this without chocolate. *(closes notebook and gets up to leave)*

MARYBETH

But we're not allowed to --

Izzy exits in a hurry.

MARYBETH *(calling after her)*

Seriously? *(beat)* Can you get me a Payday?

[MARYBETH goes over to the desk and opens Izzy's notebook, glances at the page, then lets the cover drop. Opens it again and reads for

several seconds. Turns the page and keeps reading. Lets it close again. Then goes into Izzy's makeup bag (also on the desk), finds a perfume bottle, sprays her wrist. Picks up a bottle of pills, eyes widening in recognition, stuffs back in quickly as she hears Izzy coming back into room.]

IZZY

They wouldn't let me up.

MARYBETH

That's probably for the best.

IZZY

What's that supposed to mean?

MARYBETH

(pause) I don't know, what if a giant wave had knocked into us and you had fallen and...hit your head or something?

[storm sounds, lights dim, and they feel the queasiness of the ship lurching ever so slowly]

IZZY

Oh god. Did you feel that?

MARYBETH *(vaguely sarcastic)*

I don't know -- when I'm knitting the rest of the world just kind of falls away.

IZZY

I think I'll take some of that Dramamine now.

MARYBETH *(overly sweet)*

Oh sure, honey, let me get that for you. Whatever I can do to help.
(starts looking for dramamine)

IZZY

Is this why you got into nursing?

MARYBETH

Isn't it obvious why people get into nursing?

IZZY

Not necessarily. I've had some pretty interesting nurses in my time.

MARYBETH

Oh, well, I hope you don't find me too "interesting" --

IZZY

(*after a pause*) It smells like my perfume in here.

MARYBETH

Does it? You wear perfume? (*beat; still looking for Dramamine*) Can't find the damn seasickness pills.

IZZY

I do, but not today.

MARYBETH

Oh.

IZZY

(*after a pause*) Were you looking in my makeup bag?

MARYBETH

No, that would be -- I wouldn't do that.

IZZY

I mean, you can borrow whatever at any time, but if you were, like, going through my stuff--

MARYBETH

I might have knocked your bag over while I was looking for something earlier. Maybe that triggered the bottle?

IZZY

Like it spritzed on its own?

MARYBETH

Like it spritzed on its own.

IZZY

What else did you see, Marybeth?

MARYBETH

I saw...your notebook.

IZZY

No, I mean what else did you see in my --

MARYBETH

I might have seen your writing.

IZZY

You what?

MARYBETH

I only saw one page. It was just lying open...I didn't really mean to. Honest. But I had to confess. Former Girl Scout!

IZZY

You read my writing. God, my mouth is dry. *(after a pause)* What did you think?

MARYBETH

What did I think? Are you kidding?

(Izzy goes digging in her makeup bag; finds pill bottle, feels reassured it's there, but doesn't take it out. Marybeth tries not to react the sound of the pills. Izzy goes to other bag and pulls out pack of cigarettes)

IZZY

No, I'm not. Tell me what you thought of it.

MARYBETH

This is a non-smoking cabin! *(going to take pack from her)*

IZZY

Excuse me, these are mine? *(lighting up a cigarette)* Just tell me what you read.

MARYBETH

Well, there was a woman going through some kind of crisis.

IZZY

Go on.

MARYBETH

She bakes a cake and it turns out awful. It's weird because I can't bake at all either.

IZZY

And?

MARYBETH

I didn't make it all the way through. *(beat)* You know, because I heard you coming in.

IZZY

I guess you didn't get to the part at the end about the cake having a bald patch, you know, because she ran out of frosting, and how she gives it to her grandparents and it just seems so inadequate, like so grossly inadequate she wants to cry. And then she watches them

eating it holding her breath the whole time so she won't bawl, and they've got tasteless gummy chocolate cake stuck to their teeth, or I guess I should change it to dentures, and then she forgets to breathe and passes out.

MARYBETH

(*after a pause*) That's it?

IZZY

Yeah. (*putting out cigarette in a cup; then looking anxious as storm gets louder*) This is a fucking disaster.

MARYBETH

Let's not get hyperbolic -- it's *technically* only a disaster if we all drown.

IZZY

How long is this gonna last?

MARYBETH

Could be twelve hours or more.

IZZY

No, how much longer until I write one...thing...that doesn't...suck? (*tantrum-y: ripping page, balling it up, and throwing*)

MARYBETH

Oh come on, it wasn't, like, offensive.

IZZY

Great, thanks. (*increasingly petulant*) You wouldn't understand anyway.

MARYBETH

Really?

IZZY

You're not a writer. (*melodramatic pacing/smoking again*)

MARYBETH

Oh, I see. I do have stories, though -- not that I'd want to go peddling them around in a book.

IZZY

What kinds of stories? (*trying to seem nonchalant*) You could tell me one if you wanted. (*sits up with pencil and notebook, hoping mb doesn't notice*)

MARYBETH

You know, I could tell you a story or two, but...not interested in being a character in your little book. Didn't sign up for that.

IZZY

I hate to tell you, but if you come into contact with me, it could always happen. You don't really have a choice.

MARYBETH

Wow, okay. I can choose to ignore you then. Easy enough! (*puts on her own giant headphones and resumes knitting*)

IZZY

You have no idea what it's like.

MARYBETH

I heard that.

IZZY

I can't get a single story off the ground. By today my word count was supposed to be at (*checking notebook*) -- 13,000. As of now, if I include words I crossed out that I can still read, we're at...637. God this room is getting small. (*goes to get her pill bottle; swallows one and then leaves bottle out on the desk*)

MARYBETH

(*bottle is in view/reach*) You know, I might be able to help.

IZZY

How?

MARYBETH

I just think you're stressed out. Why don't you just tell me what's going on? Maybe I can help you work through it.

IZZY

(*somewhat skeptical*) Why would you wanna do that?

MARYBETH

They trained us in basic talk therapy...I may as well practice. We'd be doing each other a favor.

IZZY

I mean, this was supposed to be -- I don't know. (*lying down*)

MARYBETH

You can tell me, it's okay. Here, take my eye pillow, it's lemony. *(putting it over izzy's eyes)* So, you've gotta be getting good material out of your high seas adventure.

[While Izzy is talking, MARYBETH is watching her and trying to slowly move toward pill bottle so she can get her hands on it.]

IZZY

I am. I've been watching the budding romance in salsa class between Rog and Lettie, both newly widowed, and how they're maybe both finding true love for the first time. Or about the cute guy down the hall who came here to work as a magician's assistant, and when he got on the ship they were like, "The magician quit -- here's a hat and some rabbits," and he has to learn magic on the spot and then has an epiphany about the power of suspending disbelief. Or something. Except every time I go to write, something starts to feel a little bit...off. Like none of the details will quite come together. I keep crossing out words, and then whole sentences. And then I stop. *(beat)* And then it's time to go back to the gift shop.

MARYBETH

I'm sorry, but -- you thought you'd be able to write on this thing? You know their whole point is to work us 24/7.

IZZY

You think I really wanted to work on a cruise ship? *(beat)* When I got back from my last writers' colony -- the one I spent the last of my divorce money on -- oh, and where I wrote about half a page total -- the bar called to say they replaced me while I was away. So, take student loan payments plus rent in Park Slope plus no savings plus no more paychecks and you've got -- well, either someone's couch or -- my childhood bed in Columbus? My ex-husband's California King? You know, that he still sleeps in? This is the only job offer I got, Marybeth. The funniest part is that I have a fucking fear of open water. And a manuscript due the day after I get back.

MARYBETH

Hmm. Then how must it feel to be surrounded by deep, churning, pitch black ocean water for miles in every direction? *(beat)* I mean, is the Dramamine making you sleepy yet? *(now with her hands on bottle cap, quietly unscrewing it)*

IZZY

(sitting up and looking at Marybeth, who takes her hand off bottle just in time)

No, but it is making me really thirsty. *(beat)* *(jumps off her bed to get water, at which point MARYBETH nervously jumps up from chair,*

knocking pill bottle over, pills spilling everywhere) Jesus, I thought I screwed the cap back on.

MARYBETH

Let me help you with those.

IZZY

That's okay -- I got it. [*they're both on hands and knees scooping up pills; they look up, make eye contact, and MARYBETH hands them to Izzy*] (*long pause*) Wouldn't want to lose any of these precious pearls!

MARYBETH

Why, what are they?

IZZY

You don't know?

MARYBETH

I don't believe I do.

IZZY

You don't recognize these little blue miracle workers?

MARYBETH

Just because I'm a nurse doesn't mean I can --

IZZY

How did it feel to have them in your hand just now?

MARYBETH

I don't know -- what are you saying?

IZZY

So you didn't see this bottle either. Or the perfume in my makeup bag.

MARYBETH

Look, if I did, I wasn't going to take any. Maybe you should try not leaving your stuff all over the place. (*beat*) I was going to ask a favor, though.

IZZY

Were you.

MARYBETH

Well, I helped you with your seasickness -- I thought maybe you could help me out a bit here? (*matter-of-factly*) I am FREAKED out by storms on the open ocean.

IZZY

You look completely unperturbed.

MARYBETH

I just don't show it on the outside like you.

IZZY

That's why these drugs are prescription -- I actually need them.
(*beat*) What's your deal?

MARYBETH

What's my deal? I'm trying work something out between us, and you accuse me of stealing. (*beat*) Look, I can hardly help having eyes that can see things in this tiny cabin. It wasn't on purpose.
(*adding*) I didn't have to share my Dramamine.

IZZY

And I don't have to share my valium.

MARYBETH

No, you don't. I wish I'd never seen it.

IZZY

I wish I'd never gotten on this stupid ship.

MARYBETH

Yeah, this (*gesturing to them and the room*) does not really seem to be working out for us.

(*transitional pause: izzy is figuring out an offer to make mb*)

IZZY

What if I poured half of these into your hand? (*shaking pill bottle*)

MARYBETH

(*after a pause*) Why would you do that?

IZZY

I have more, too. Xanax for anxiety. Painkillers left over from knee surgery. What if I were to twist my ankle during a dance lesson -- you never know, right? Or feel a panic attack coming on? I hardly ever take any of it, but I just like knowing it's there.

MARYBETH

You hardly ever take any of it? Then why do you --

IZZY

I hate all of it. Makes me nauseous. But I need it I guess. The doctor said so.

MARYBETH

And you would give it to me.

IZZY

(this is where izzy starts to go off the rails/get a bit manic out of desperation)

You can have it all if you'll help me out. *(beat)* I need you to tell me some stories. The darker the better. *(getting her notebook and pencil)* Here's a prompt: what are you really doing out here, Marybeth? Why a cruise ship? What did you leave back home? Just start at the beginning. Or in the middle. Doesn't matter. Just make it good.

MARYBETH

This is totally bizarre.

IZZY

Unless you're not interested. I can flush everything too. Or report you to HR for attempted theft.

MARYBETH

You haven't 'figured out' why I'm locked away at sea for three months? You're holding it in your hand. Of course I get a roommate with a treasure trove of pills who "doesn't even like them," and then leaves it all lying around in plain view --

IZZY

You went *looking*.

MARYBETH *(shaking her head)*

I thought writers were supposed to have an excellent understanding of human nature.

IZZY

We do. *(defensive/kind of mean)* I just didn't know I'd be getting an addict for a roommate.

MARYBETH

And I didn't know, but I should have, that this idea of a floating detox retreat would backfire. Have you seen the actors in the pirate musical? There's a fine dusting of cocaine on every fake mustache. Every inch of the ship soaked in booze. But I'm not into any of that

so I thought, no problem. Because my thing is pills. Nice and clean, and so, so calm. Almost like a meditation. Just not the Buddhist kind. And here's where they were all supposed to be out of reach. (pause) And then what happens? You. So this -- this is not good.

IZZY

(scribbling madly; getting excited for the material but expressing no compassion) This is good stuff. Tell me more. I can just record you if you're comfortable with that...

MARYBETH

I am definitely not comfortable with that. *(Izzy holds a pill out to MARYBETH. MARYBETH takes it and gestures to Izzy for her to give her one more, which Izzy hands her. MARYBETH lies down and lets out a long sigh, pills still in hand.)* I'm just gonna...can we pick this up later? I need to close my eyes for a minute.

IZZY

That's fine. I'll be right here.

[lights down. storm sounds get quieter. they have both fallen asleep. then MARYBETH's iphone flashlight goes on, followed by izzy's. lights up, but dim],

MARYBETH

He's gone.

IZZY

Are you talking in your sleep?

MARYBETH

(sits up with a start) My son hasn't written me back since we got on the ship.

IZZY

I didn't know you were married.

MARYBETH

What? I said my SON hasn't written me back.

IZZY

Oh. Sorry. I think I was having a strange dream.

MARYBETH

I'm worried about my garden. And the cat. *(beat)* I think he might have left.

IZZY

Does he still have his claws?

MARYBETH

Not my cat, my son.

IZZY

Isn't his father watching him?

MARYBETH

His father's dead.

IZZY

Oh my god, I'm sorry. *(beat)* Who's watching him then?

MARYBETH

No one -- he's 30 years old.

IZZY

Where do you think he went?

MARYBETH

Probably somewhere with someone he loves more than me.

IZZY

Who would that be? All boys love their moms best. *(beat)* Is the storm over?

MARYBETH

I don't know. I'm asking for your help right now.

IZZY

This is like that moment in college when the roommate you thought was out to get you starts whispering to you in the dark.

MARYBETH

Izzy.

IZZY

I'm listening.

MARYBETH

I don't need you to listen so much as say something helpful.

IZZY

Like what?

MARYBETH

Like, stop being so ridiculous, of course he hasn't left or forgotten you, he's just too busy to check email on his iphone. (*starts crying a little bit*)

IZZY

But everyone checks email on their iphones constantly.

MARYBETH

That's not what I need to hear right now. So why isn't he responding?

IZZY

Does he camp?

MARYBETH

Yes. (*beat*) I'm afraid I've become that mother.

IZZY

I don't follow.

MARYBETH

The kind whose son wants to get away from her.

IZZY

I'm not sure that camping or being a bad emailer means he wants to get away from you.

MARYBETH

What if he's camping with a girl?

IZZY

That's so so fun, especially if it's new. They'll be out in the fresh air together and all cozy in their tent. Maybe she'll teach him things about wildflowers and constellations, and he'll impress her with something manly like a good campfire.

MARYBETH

Why would he spend time with his mother anymore if he's got a girl in a tent?

IZZY

He's allowed to have a life, isn't he? You know your son's not your boyfriend, right?

MARYBETH

That's disgusting.

IZZY

Exactly.

MARYBETH

But he's all I've got.

IZZY

I didn't -- you never told me you lost your husband. I don't know what to say. *(beat)* Actually, I'm gonna go ahead and say that MAYBE your 30 year old son shouldn't be living with you anymore.

MARYBETH

Oh, Grant's father and I were never married. He was faculty on my study abroad trip to Ecuador, and after almost a year of no P in the V I just couldn't take it anymore, but I wasn't about to be the American college girl having sex with a guy from the village -- my friend Suzy took care of that. So instead I was the college girl having sex with her environmental ethics professor. Mark and I hooked up a few times, and when I got home, I found out I was pregnant. We actually tried to make it work for a hot minute after the baby was born, but it just didn't. We were more like friends. Or at least that's how I felt. He was so much older and I just...anyway, he was always such a good father. And then he got sick.

You never realize how much somebody's in the fabric of your life until the thread starts to unravel. He degenerated so fast, and the worse he got the more I avoided him. Grant was with him every day, 'til the very end, sleeping next to his dad on a cot with the hospice nurse on call in the next room, but they barely needed her -- Grant did almost everything. Meds, bedpans, bathing. And to think I missed the chance to -- Izzy?

[no response from Izzy]

It's late, of course you fell back asleep. This is a sign. Telling the story again doesn't help. It doesn't change a thing.

IZZY

(after a pause) I'm not asleep.

MARYBETH

Was that enough material, then?

IZZY

Is that why you do it?

MARYBETH

Do what?

IZZY

Care for old people.

MARYBETH

I don't know -- I might need to see the whole stash to answer that one.

IZZY

(not mean; more compassionate) You want what I have so badly, don't you.

MARYBETH

I do, and I think you might be just desperate enough to give it to me.

IZZY

(silent, deliberately vague reaction)

MARYBETH

So much that you're willing to lay the goods right in front of a junkie in exchange for -- a story? I don't get it. *(beat)* You might try being a little bit nicer to your characters.

IZZY

Oh yeah, a teacher said that to me once.

MARYBETH

What do even need me for? What about your own life? Don't they always say "write what you know" or whatever?

IZZY

I did that once. Wrote a collection of stories in undergrad -- they just sort of came out. Based on childhood, guys I'd slept with, stuff like that. And on a whim I sent one to a magazine, a famous one, and that magazine decided to publish it. And it won a prize. And then came the book deal from a big publishing house, and before I knew it I had a book. It's so weird to say, but it wasn't even that hard! I would stare at it on the coffee table, this thing I had created, waiting to be overcome with elation, but I didn't feel...anything. Or I did, but it wasn't the feeling I wanted.

MARYBETH

Like post-partum depression.

IZZY

I guess. You're cradling this thing in your hands you thought would bring you so much happiness --

MARYBETH

But then it doesn't, at least not at first. I know. A lot of mothers go through it. That's why god invented potato chips and pinot grigio.

IZZY

People kept saying I was a raw talent and the world needed more of my work.

MARYBETH

The word 'raw' grosses me out. Speaking of which, my nerves are feeling a little tenderized right now...might need a little something to help out with that. (*should izzy be going to get more pill bottles for mb?*)

IZZY

All I know is...I don't think I'm ready to dive back into this mess. (*gesturing to self*)

MARYBETH

And you think you're gonna find your next book in other people's messes.

IZZY

That's the thing -- another person's mess feels so safe. Like a...(*as if she's inventing on the spot*) life raft you can get in to go check out your own shipwreck without really having to go down there, you know?

MARYBETH

Because if you do you could drown.

IZZY

Sometimes I think that would be easier if this thing just sank.

MARYBETH

Here we go again. You know what I'd recommend? That everyone in this cabin tries calming down a bit. And what I mean by that is --

IZZY

Let's have a pill party. And forget. I can see your point.

MARYBETH

Why don't we actually get real for a second.

IZZY

What kind do you want? I've got blue, I've got white, I've got yellow... (*holding bottles out to mb*)

MARYBETH

No. (*forceful/decisive; grabbing izzy's wrists*)

IZZY

But this is your payment for agreeing to help me.

MARYBETH

You are pretty far beyond help if you think our little talks are gonna fix your problem. (*beat*) And if you think you're doing me any favors.

IZZY

(*slightly hysterical/desperate*) But you have to help me. You can just have all these, and then you'll give me the idea that will get this all going again, and that'll redeem the marriage I threw away to come to New York to be a Writer, you know, young writer in Brooklyn who's always working on a project that's *totally interesting*, maybe a screenplay too, all while keeping her head screwed on straight and looking stylish without trying, and probably dating a musician. (*beat*) Who am I if I can't pull this off?

MARYBETH

You really are more cracked than I thought you were.

IZZY

(*petulant*) You're the one who wants to eat all these, god knows why--

MARYBETH

Because sometimes I don't want to think about the past either. And what can't be fixed. But maybe now I'm finally ready. Not for the full force of it, but one small piece at a time. You know what I've been doing on this ship? Sometimes when I'm with a male patient, I pretend I'm with my son's father.

IZZY

That's creepy.

MARYBETH

No, not like that. The other day one of my favorites, Rog, was lying down in the clinic after a fainting spell. So I just sat with him and held his hand. He squeezed it, and I saw him smile. I closed my eyes, and for a minute I imagined I was holding Mark's hand. Just sitting with him so he knew I was there. That's all. I wish I had done that when I had the chance. But I didn't, even though it would have been the simplest thing in the world.

IZZY

I thought you were gonna describe a disturbing sponge bath fantasy.

MARYBETH

I remember giving those to my son in the kitchen sink. Baby skin! Bathing the elderly, helping them when all their bodily functions start to fail, now that is a different story. It reminds me where we're all going, and that we need to be touched and cared for and seen, even more so as we are fading out.

IZZY

(after a pause) It sounds like Mark had that, even if it wasn't from you.

MARYBETH

That's what I want to look straight in the face. My life, the actual version. *(beat)* So keep your pills or I'll have to report you for pushing.

IZZY

(after a pause) I don't feel so good, Marybeth.

MARYBETH

I don't think it's gonna get any worse tonight. Seems like the wind's died down.

IZZY

I wanna get off.

MARYBETH

I'm sorry but I can't help you with that.

IZZY

No, get off as in -- quit this program.

MARYBETH

Maybe if you brought 'em some of your goods the pirate actors would rig up a raft for you. Or you could walk the plank. That would make a good story.

IZZY

Marybeth?

MARYBETH

I'm still here.

IZZY

I won't use any of what you said to me.

MARYBETH

Thank you, I'm flattered.

IZZY

To be honest, the Oedipal stuff with your son is kinda played out.
(beat) Maybe I don't need to 'use' any of this at all. As in, I
could be a dance teacher and an expert on puka shell necklaces, and
that would be just fine right now. This ship could just be a ship and
I can just be a person on it. You know, just hanging out on the open
ocean with herself. Shit.

MARYBETH

Who knows -- it might be the only way to end the drought.