

Not waving but drowning.

Inspired in part by Stevie Smith's poem of the same name.

TWO SKINNY dippers flailed in the dark water of the Detroit River. From a distance, it looked as if they were embracing. A hundred feet away, Codell leaned on the safety rail at the river and watched. All three of them were a football field from the Bob-Lo boat, the ferry to Boblo Island between Detroit and Canada. The amusement park had been there forEVER.

It was night. Music and laughter from the Boblo floated above the skinny dippers' cries for help. Red lights from the boat rippled on the water like ribbon candy.

Codell had watched the skinny dippers strip off their clothes, hop the rail, and jump in. They'd been in the water for quite some time. They were much further out than they thought.

One of the skinny dippers sunk below the surface. He grabbed at his companion, who treaded water and reached for him. She managed to hook her arm under one of his armpits and awkwardly, slowly, swam them both toward Codell. She struggled to keep their heads above water. "Help, help!" They dipped under, muffling her cries, "eurg, eurg." Like gargling.

The nude pair neared a ladder below Codell that led up to the river walkway, the man gasping and sputtering. The woman lunged for the ladder and missed it. She lunged again and reached it. She clung tightly to the ladder with one arm, and the other she wrapped around her limp companion. She breathed heavily, first heaving, then sobbing.

Written by K.G. Jones.

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From far upstream, Belle Isle perhaps, sirens howled down the river, the sound of hope drowned by anguish. Codell shivered, always chilled around water. He ran, cold in the summer air.

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