

Missing page from "The Gallows Necklace," by Sharyn McCrumb, part of The Dark short stories edited by Ellen Datlow.

This page should begin after the fourth paragraph of page 228 (this paragraph ends with "...where all had suddenly gone quiet.")

"It's been two minutes, hasn't it?" he heard someone say.

"I say, Jack?" another of the shadowy figures called out.

"Can you see him?"

"Did he swim to shore?"

"Has anyone seen Arthur?"

"Jack!"

Seeley turned and scanned the tree-lined bank of the river, but he could see no human form in the shadows cast by the moonlight. He leaned over the side, trying to see ripples in the black water, but he could make out nothing. "Hasn't he come up yet?" he called.

"No," came the reply from the second boat. "And here's why!" A hand was thrust at him and he felt the cold slime of wet foliage against his hand. "They are tangled in the weeds!"

"We should go in and see if we can free them!" someone called out.

These exchanges were punctuated by the sound of Sarah alternately screaming and breaking into floods of weeping.

"But shouldn't someone go for help?" asked Seeley.

"I expect so," said the calm voice. "Won't be time to save them, of course, but...I expect so. Why don't you take your boat ashore, then? I'm going after Jack!"

The conversation ended there.

"Right, I'll go for help them," said Seeley, half to himself, because nobody seemed to be paying him any mind.

The fellow from Merton stood up in the boat. "Can you manage it on your own then?" he said. "I just thought that I might be more useful here. I can swim." He took off his jacket, folded it and laid it on the seat, and eased himself over the side, careful not to upset the punt. "Be as quick as you can, though, will you?" With that, he was gone.

The cries and the splashes faded as Seeley poled downstream a few hundred yards toward the lights of a distant house. He was thinking that the divers would be hauled to safety long before he could return, and perhaps he'd better ask for a flask of tea to take along in case they had taken a chill. He was calm and without any foreboding of tragedy when he lodged the punt in the reeds on the riverbank and waded ashore.