

THE GO AHEAD BOYS AND THE RACING MOTOR-BOAT



Chapter 16: The Rescue

A cry of horror and alarm arose from the startled boys when they beheld the accident. In a moment one of the girls was seen swimming near the overturned canoe. The other, however, was not within sight.

“It’s time for us to do something!” shouted John, who was almost beside himself in his excitement.

Fred at once had changed the course of the Black Growler but a semi-circle was necessary to be turned before she could approach the place where the girls had fallen into the river.

Grant, meanwhile promptly had removed his sweater and taken off his sneakers preparing to go to the assistance of the unfortunate girls. As he was the strongest and swiftest swimmer, his companions by common consent had expected him to be the one to leap into the water.

A moment later it was seen that one of the girls had seized the canoe. In her desperation, however, the frail little craft was over-turned and she lost her hold and again disappeared from sight.

At that moment the motor-boat approached within twenty-five feet of the place where the accident had occurred. Shouting to his friends to take the canoe and do their utmost to rescue the unfortunate girl, Grant dived from the deck of the Black Growler and a moment later with powerful strokes was swiftly approaching the victims of the accident.

Meanwhile, following the instructions of Grant, John and George had been able with a boat-hook to reach the overturned canoe and drawing it speedily to them, both carefully and hastily took their places on board.

“Get one of the girls while I am getting the other,” called Grant as he turned his head for a moment toward his companions.

At that instant Grant saw the face of one of the girls appear on the surface but a moment later it again disappeared from sight.

The current was moderately strong, and aware that when she again was seen it would be a little farther down the river, Grant slowly moved with the stream.

The depth of the water made it impossible for him to dive in an effort to find her in the depths. Carefully he scanned the water all about him and when in a brief time her face once more was seen and only a few feet farther down the stream, with two powerful strokes he darted forward and succeeded in seizing the girl by the hair of her head just as she began to sink once more.

Grant was elated when he discovered that the girl was still conscious. Holding to her hair with one hand he contrived to place himself behind her. Then holding her up by one hand with which he grasped her under the shoulder, he said hastily, "Don't move. Don't try to do anything for yourself. There, don't do that," he added as the frantic girl made an effort to seize him. "Don't touch me. Keep just as you are and you'll be all right."

In a measure his orders were obeyed. Instead of trying to swim toward the boat Grant was simply doing his utmost to keep himself and his companion afloat. He was treading water and moving with the current.

At the same time he looked all about him for help. He saw two of his friends in the canoe and was relieved when he discovered that John, who in his excitement had neglected to drop the boat-hook was holding the long implement toward the other girl who already had grasped it with both hands and was being drawn toward the boys.

"Come here and help me," shouted Grant. He was hoping that his two friends would be able to rescue the other girl, or at least prevent her from sinking, but he was well aware that if he and his companion were to be saved help soon must be had.

In response to his hail Fred turned the bow of the Black Growler and slowly approached the place where Grant was struggling.

The girl now was motionless and Grant's great anxiety was in a measure relieved. He had been fearful that she would try to seize him by the neck or arms and prevent him from doing anything to help either of them.

Grant was aware also that his strength would not permit him to continue the struggle much longer. Already he was breathing heavily and all his powers were required to keep himself and the nearly unconscious girl afloat. He had been able thus far to hold her head above the water, for fortunately at this time the river was unusually calm.

Again, almost in despair, he looked back at the motor-boat.

"Here!" called Fred, who had left the wheel and was standing in the bow holding a rope in his hand. "Catch this!" He had hastily tied a noose in the end and as he threw this toward the struggling boy, Grant fortunately grasped it.

By a supreme effort he managed to slip one arm through the noose and as soon as this had been done Fred instantly began to pull. Several times in spite of all the care Fred was exercising, the heads of Grant and his companion were drawn beneath the water. Still Grant managed to maintain his hold upon the girl and in a brief time they were drawn alongside the Black Growler.

"I can't pull you both up," called Fred in his excitement.

"No," gasped Grant. "I don't think you can pull either one of us."

While he was speaking he had contrived to slip the noose over the shoulders and under

the arms of his companion. As soon as this had been done, he released his hold and said to Fred, "You can keep her head out of the water anyway. If your noose holds she's all right."

"What are you going to do?" demanded Fred.

"I'm all right," responded Grant as turning himself upon his back he floated with the current and obtained a brief rest.

Meanwhile John and George had drawn Miss Susie Stevens to the canoe and seized her by her hands. John had been seated in the stern but now he stretched himself upon the bottom of the little craft and reached over with his hands, one on each side of the canoe, and held the girl up so that she was able to breathe, although he did not attempt to draw her out of the water. "Take your paddle," he called to George. "I've got her all right, but make for the Black Growler. There's no knowing what will happen."

In this manner the canoe slowly was paddled toward the motor-boat, but Fred was holding the rope by which the second girl was held and consequently was unable to respond to the appeal of his friends to come to their aid.

Meanwhile the motor-boat was drifting with the current and there was grave danger that she might run aground on some one of the numerous islands.

Indeed this was just what occurred a few minutes later.

The keel of the boat now grated on the rocky bottom. Grant, who had been following the same course now obtained a precarious foothold and at once advanced to the aid of the helpless girl. He was still breathing heavily from his own exertions and his strength had not fully returned. Stumbling, slipping on the rocks, twice nearly falling into the river he managed to draw the girl up on the shore and as soon as he was satisfied that she was living he called to Fred, "Go on back and help the other fellows and I'll run up to this cottage and get some one to look after this girl."

"Give me a push, I'm almost grounded," called Fred frantically.

The engine had been reversed and the added help which Grant gave as he pushed hard against the bow sent the motor-boat back into the river. Satisfied that there was nothing more to be done Grant once more turned and as fast as he was able ran toward the cottage located fifty yards back from the shore.

In response to his appeal two women and a man at once ran toward the place where Grant had left the girl.

"Please look after her," said Grant hastily. "I want to go back to help the others. We had an accident," he explained.

The boy was rapidly recovering his breath by this time and as already he had seen a little skiff at the nearby dock, without asking permission or explaining what he was about to do he ran to the place, cast off and leaped on board. A few powerful strokes sent him out upon

the river once more and in a brief time he was near the place where the canoe was drifting.

Cautiously approaching it, he soon was able to grasp Miss Susie Stevens under her arms and draw her on board the skiff.

By this time the motor-boat had approached the spot, but Grant called to Fred, "I'll take her right ashore where I took the other girl. Wait for me out here or at the dock."

"We'll help you," called George from the canoe.

"All right," answered Grant.

Nothing more was said while the skiff and the canoe were soon swiftly towed toward the dock.

Willing hands were there awaiting their coming, for the entire household now had been aroused and was watching the events on the river.

In a brief time Miss Susie was lifted to the dock. She was still able to stand and declared sturdily that she did not require any help. However, two of the women, one on each side, were helping her, and in a brief time she was assisted to the house and taken within the cottage.

"What shall we do now, fellows?" inquired Grant blankly as he turned to greet his companions.

"We had better wait," replied George, "and take them back home as soon as they are able to go."

"I guess that's good advice," responded Grant.

Shouting to Fred he bade him bring the Black Growler to the dock and make her fast there while they waited for the more complete restoration of the girls whom they had rescued.