

# *The Moving Picture Girls Under the Palms*

*or*

## *Lost in the Wilds of Florida*

By

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Chapter 11: To Lake Kissimmee



The staccato explosions of the motor boats, the cheers of the spectators, of whom there were many; the clicking of the camera operated by Russ, and the shouts of the picture-players themselves as they went through the “business” prescribed for this act of the play, made the scene a gay one.

“This will make a fine film,” declared Mr. Pertell, who was in the boat with Alice, Mr. Bunn, Mr. Sneed and Mr. DeVere.

“I think so,” agreed the latter. “I am glad we came to Florida.”

“Is your throat better?” the manager asked.

“Indeed yes—much better. That is, it does not pain me, but I still retain my hoarseness, as you notice.”

“Yes, and I am selfish enough to wish that it will stay with you a little longer,” the manager said. “That is, only so that you will not leave me and go back to the legitimate,” he added, quickly. “For I want you in moving pictures. I have some other plans when we finish work here, and you and your daughters will be much needed.”

“I am glad you have such a good opinion of us,” murmured the veteran actor.

“Where are we going from here?” asked Alice.

“That’s a secret,” laughed the manager. “I haven’t it all worked out myself, as yet.”

The boats sped on, the rival skippers striving to gain the lead. The men in charge of the motors, too, did everything in their power, in the way of changing the gasoline mixture, or by means of copious oiling, to get one more revolution out of their engines. But the boats seemed very evenly matched. A big wave was thrown up on either bow of each boat.

Russ, after getting pictures of the start, had gone with his camera, by a short cut, to a little promontory on shore, where he got other views of the boats racing through the water. Then he went farther on and, getting into another motor boat, took his place near the finish line, to film the end of the race.

“Oh, I do hope we win!” exclaimed Alice, to her captain.

“I’m going to do my best,” he answered, grimly, as he glanced across to where the other boat was forging through the water.

And in her boat Ruth was saying the same thing.

Each skipper had been holding something in reserve in the way of power, and now the mechanics were signalled to use this.

The boats were nearing the finish line now, for the race, for the purpose of the moving pictures, was only a short one.

But, as it happened, the captain of the boat Alice was in, got his signal a little ahead of his rival, so that he shot forward, and thus gained an advantage the other motor boat could not cut down.

“Oh, we’re going to win!” cried Alice in delight, clapping her hands as she saw Russ, in his boat at the finish line, operating his camera. “We’re going to win!”

Miss Pennington and Miss Dixon, who, with Ruth, were in the other boat, looked glum. As for Ruth she was of that gentle nature which is willing to lose, that others may enjoy even a brief pleasure, and she rejoiced in the delight of her sister.

“Well, I guess he’s got me!” regretfully admitted the captain of the losing boat. “He was a little too quick for me.”

And so it proved, for the boat containing Alice shot across the line a winner.

“I knew we’d do it!” she cried.

“Good for you!” shouted Russ.

“It’s time for you to fall overboard now, Mr. Sneed,” directed the manager. “Make a good fall, and put plenty of splash into it.”

“Oh dear!” groaned the actor. “I suppose I must!”

In anticipation of this he had donned an old suit of clothes, as had Mr. Bunn, and the latter, for one of very few times, did not wear his tall hat.

“Be ready with your rescue leap,” ordered Mr. Pertell to the older actor. “Make it as natural as you can.”

The boats had now lost headway, and were coming to a point where Russ could get pictures of the “overboard act.”

“I say!” cried Mr. Sneed, as he paused in his preparations to fall, “I have just thought of something!”

“What is it?” asked Mr. Pertell, sharply. “Quick, we are losing time, and getting out of position.”

“There are no alligators in this bay; are there?” and Mr. Sneed looked anxiously at the captain of the motor boat.

“Not one,” was the laughing answer. “You’re safe.”

“Then here I go!” cried the grouch, as he toppled overboard, having first “registered” a faint, as directed in the plot of the play.

“Now get him, Mr. Bunn!” cried the manager, and there was another splash, while aboard the boats the proper bits of acting were gone through with, that the camera might catch them.

Once they were in the water Mr. Bunn and Mr. Sneed acted their parts well, and the result was a good film. Then, once more aboard the boats, a start was made for the fort, where the final act was to take place.

“I say, me deah fellah!” complained Mr. Towne, as he moved away from Mr. Bunn, who sat near him; “keep a bit off, that’s a good chap! I don’t want to wet this suit, you know.”

“Oh, all right, I beg your pardon,” spoke the other.

But Mr. Towne’s anxiety for his garments was wasted, for at that moment Mr. Sneed, taking off his coat, wrung some water from it, and of this a considerable quantity splashed on the light suit of Mr. Towne.

“Oh, I say!” the latter cried in dismay. “This won’t do, you know!”

“Humph! It seems to me it’s already done,” observed Paul, with a chuckle.

During the rest of the trip Mr. Towne was kept busy trying to dry up the wet spots with his perfumed handkerchief.

Pop Snooks, the property man, who had little to do when outdoor scenes were being made, was busy with the other moving picture camera on the fort wall, and presently, on the arrival of the company at that place, the final scenes were filmed.

“Wasn’t it a dandy race?” cried Alice, as she and her sister, with Russ and Paul, started back to the hotel.

“It was for you because you won, I suppose,” remarked Miss Pennington, in a disagreeable tone.

“Not at all,” returned Alice, promptly. “It was a glorious race anyhow. Winning didn’t count; it was all for the picture.”

“That’s the way to look at it,” said Paul, in her ear. “But, all the same, I’m glad your boat won.”

“Thanks,” she replied, as she tripped along beside him.

Miss Pennington and Miss Dixon, pausing a moment to “readjust their complexions,” as Alice said (for which she was reproved by Ruth), went on by themselves.

The company of players remained in St. Augustine several days, and many fine films resulted, the scenery lending itself particularly well to the camera.

One act in a play took place at the alligator “farm,” on Anastasia Island. There Ruth and Alice saw ‘gators in all stages, from tiny ones just emerging from the shell, to big fourteen-foot ones—regular “man-eaters” they were told.

“Ugh! the horrid creatures!” exclaimed Ruth, who could not repress a shudder.

“They aren’t very pleasant,” agreed Alice. “And to think that perhaps those two girls may be—”

“Oh, my dear! Don’t mention it! I can’t bear to think of such a thing. It’s too horrible!”

“But I suppose there must be many such as that one, in the wilds of the swamps and bayous,” said Alice in a low voice, as she pointed her parasol at a huge saurian.

“If there are any such, I don’t want to know it—or see them,” murmured Ruth, again shuddering. “Oh, I hope we don’t go too far into the wilds.”

“So do I,” agreed her sister.

That afternoon, calling his company of players together, Mr. Pertell said:

“Friends, we will leave in two days for the interior. I want to get some views along the rivers and bayous, where the scenery is wilder than it is here.”

“And where are we going, may I ask?” inquired Mr. DeVere.

“To a place called Sycamore, near Lake Kissimmee,” was the answer.

“Oh, Ruth!” exclaimed Alice, impulsively, when she heard this.

“Yes, dear, what is it?”

“Why, that’s where those two girls were from—the ones who were lost, you know!”

“Hush! Yes. You know we agreed to say nothing about it, for fear of causing undue alarm. Miss Pennington and Miss Dixon might refuse to go, you know,” she went on in a low voice, “and that would make trouble for Mr. Pertell.”

“Oh, but isn’t it a strange coincidence?” remarked Alice.

“It certainly is. But perhaps the girls have been found by this time.”

“Our destination will be Lake Kissimmee,” proceeded Mr. Pertell. “We will take some pictures on the lake, some on the Kissimmee River, that connects the lake of that name with Lake Okeechobee, and then we’ll go a little way into the wilds, on various streams.”

Ruth and Alice looked at each other apprehensively.