

The Moving Picture Girls Under the Palms
or

Lost in the Wilds of Florida

By

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Chapter 2: To the Rescue



“Lower a boat!”

“Throw him a life preserver!”

“Stop the ship!”

Wild and excited were the cries that followed the accident. Russ and Paul were among the first to act, the former getting a life preserver from one of the racks, while Paul caught up one of the round, white life rings and tossed it far out toward a commotion in the water that indicated where Mr. Towne had disappeared. They had to throw the articles toward the stern of the steamer, as she was in motion, and Mr. Towne was soon some distance astern.

“Stop the ship!” repeated scores of voices, when the nature of the accident was understood.

Discipline and boat drill were at a high state of perfection aboard the steamer, and soon, with a warning blast of her whistle, the craft trembled under the power of her reversed engines.

“Lower away a boat! Smartly, men!” called one of the officers, as he ran up to the davits whence hung a life-boat.

And while preparations are under way to rescue the unfortunate actor, may I take just a few moments to acquaint my new readers with something of the former books of this series?

The initial volume was entitled “The Moving Picture Girls; Or, First Appearances in Photo Dramas.” In that was related how Hosmer DeVere, a talented actor, suddenly lost his voice, through the return of a former throat ailment. He was unable to go in his part in a legitimate drama, and, through the suggestion of Russ Dalwood, who lived in the same apartment house with the DeVeres, in New York, Mr. DeVere took up moving picture acting.

His two daughters, Ruth, aged seventeen, and Alice, aged fifteen, also became engaged in the work, and later they were instrumental in doing Russ Dalwood a great service in connection with a valuable patent he had evolved for a moving picture machine.

The second volume was called “The Moving Picture Girls at Oak Farm; Or, Queer Happenings While Taking Rural Plays.” In that book was told how the acquaintance was made of Sandy Apgar, who ran a farm in New Jersey. As Mr. Pertell was looking for some country scenes to use in connection with his moving picture dramas, he took his entire company out to Oak Farm, hiring it from the Apgars.

A curious mystery was solved by the girls, and other members of the company—a mystery that involved the happiness of the old couple who owned Oak Farm, but were on the verge of losing it.

“The Moving Picture Girls Snowbound; Or, The Proof on the Film,” was the title of the third book. As its name indicates, the girls and other members of the company were really snowbound. After the summer at Oak Farm, and the fall spent in New York, Mr. Pertell decided to make some dramas in the backwoods of New England, where there was much snow and ice. And for a time there was almost too much snow, for Elk

Lodge, where the company of players was housed, was almost buried by a blizzard.

Before going to the backwoods, Mr. DeVere had been much annoyed, and alarmed, by an unjust demand, and how a certain illegal suit against an electric car company was called off, through a discovery made by Ruth and Alice, you may read of in the book.

Russ got “the proof on the film” and when this moving picture was shown privately it caused Dan Merley’s lawyer to say:

“You win! We are beaten!” And Mr. DeVere was at ease after that.

Many beautiful films were made at Elk Lodge, and some wonderful pictures of snow and ice scenes resulted from the trip to the backwoods. Then the company returned to New York, and now we find them en route for Florida, when the accident to Mr. Towne occurred.

Mr. DeVere and his two daughters lived in the Fenmore Apartment house, in New York City. Across the hall lived Mrs. Sarah Dalwood, and her sons, Russ and Billy, the latter aged about twelve. The Dalwoods and the DeVeres became very friendly, and Russ thought there never was a girl like Ruth. Paul Ardite, the younger leading man of the Comet Film Company, thought the same thing of Alice.

Frank Pertell was the manager and chief owner of the film company. He had a large studio in New York, where all indoor scenes of the plays were enacted, and where the films were made for rental to the various chains of moving picture theaters throughout the country.

He engaged many actors and actresses, but only the principal ones with whom the stories are concerned will be recounted.

Wellington Bunn and Pepper Sneed were the ones who made the most trouble for the manager. Mr. Bunn was an former Shakespearean actor. With his tall hat and frock coat—which costume he was seldom without—Mr. Bunn was a typical tragedian of the old school.

Mr. Sneed was different. He had no particular ambition toward stardom, but he disliked hard work, and he was rather superstitious. Then, too, he was always looking for trouble and often finding it. In short, he was the “grouch” of the company.

Mrs. Margaret Maguire was a motherly member of the troupe. She played “old woman” parts with real feeling, perhaps the more so as her two grandchildren, Tommy and Nellie, were dependent upon her. The youngsters usually went with the company, and were taken on the Florida trip. Occasionally they acted small parts.

Carl Switzer was the German comedian, and was a first-rate actor in his line. His jollity proved an offset to the gloom of Mr. Sneed.

Pop Snooks, the efficient property man, has already been mentioned. His work was easier when the company was on the road, as there the natural scenery was depended on to a great extent.

Pearl Pennington and Laura Dixon were former vaudeville actresses who had gone into the “movies.” Some said it was because they failed to longer draw on the stage. Whether or not this was so, it was certain that the two had very large ideas of their own abilities. They cared little for Ruth and Alice, and the latter had few interests in common with Miss Pennington and Miss Dixon. Paul Ardite has been mentioned. With the exception of Mr. Towne the players had been associated together for some time.

But, just at present Mr. Towne was “disassociated” from the others.

“Oh, can you see him?” cried Ruth, as she clung to Alice. “I—I can’t bear to look!”

“Of course I can see him!” Alice returned. “He’s trying to swim. Oh, he has grabbed the life ring!”

“That will keep him up,” spoke Paul. “Are they lowering the boat?”

“There she goes!” cried Russ. “Ha! I’ve got an idea. I’ll film this, and Mr. Pertell may be able to use it in some drama.”

He hurried to where he had set down the small moving picture camera, and while the boat was being lowered by the sailors Russ got views of that.

Then he moved closer to the rail, and took more views as the small craft was sent away under the force of the sturdy arms of the rowers.

“This will be great!” Russ cried.

“Oh, but it seems so cold-blooded!” murmured Ruth. “To take a picture of a drowning man.”

“I don’t think he is drowning,” Paul observed. “He has the ring, and that will keep him up until the boat reaches him. They are almost to him, and he seems able to swim well.”

“That’s good,” declared Alice. She had not turned her head away as had her sister. In fact, in spite of being two years younger than Ruth, Alice often showed more spirit. She was of an impulsive nature, and Mr. DeVere used to say she was very like her dead mother. Ruth was tall and fair, and of a romantic nature. Alice was more practical.

“There! They’ve got him!” cried Paul, as the boat came up to the actor in the water.

“That’s good!” sighed Ruth. “Oh, I was so alarmed. I think I will go below, Alice, when they bring him on deck.”

“You don’t need to,” said her sister. “He’s probably all right, except that his fine clothes are spoiled.”

“That’s so!” chuckled Russ, who was industriously grinding away at the handle of the camera.