

THE ADVENTURES OF SWAMP DOG SAM

Chapter One

INTO THE SWAMP

B-A-N-G!

A scraggly man in muddy boots kicks his car door.

“Blasted pile of junk... stay shut!”

SCRE-E-E-ECH! He opens the trunk to grab a big, blue box. It wobbles in his arms. Howling and barking come from the container.

“Shush up!”

K-E-R-P-L-U-N-K! The box hits the ground. The man kicks it down a rocky hill, then jumps back into his clunky old car. As the vehicle sputters off down the Great Dirt Road, the man yells, “And don’t you dogs come back!”

B-A-M!

The box hits a tree, sending three mutts flying. They disappear into the Georgia swamp. Yelps and howls echo through the bog.

The box wiggles again. “Mmm... mm... mmm.” A puppy peeks over the edge. Cypress trees look like monsters with furry clothing.

“A-R-O-O... R-O-O... R-O-O!” howls the pup.

“You make a lot of fuss for such a scruffy, little critter,” says a turtle.

“I’m no critter. I’m a dog. My name’s Sam.”

“Nice to meet you, Sam, but you’re kinda LOUD!”

“Sorry! I do that when I’m scared.

Hic-c-c-cup! That happens too, when I’m spooked. It just creeps up, out of my throat.

What kind of animal are you? What’s your name? Where am I?”

“Slow down there, fella. I’m a tortoise. My name’s Husk. Don’t ya know you’re in the swamp?”

“Oh yeah, that part’s comin’ back to me now. I was in a box with my three brothers and *B-A-M!* We smacked into this tree, right here.”

“I know. I was in this very spot when you landed... a few minutes ago.”

“Is that all? I feel like I’ve been here all day. My brothers flew out into the swamp and I don’t know where they are. What’ll I do now?”

“That’s a problem,” says Husk. “The way I see it, you have two options. You can crawl outta your box and go find your brothers, or you can wait for them here with me.” Husk sticks his head all the way out of his shell. “What’s it gonna be?”

“Ding-da-a-a-a-n-n-ng!” rowls Sam. “I can’t carry this box on my back like you, so I think I like option two. I’m not getting outta this box. No way. I’m not gettin’ outta this box. Not gonna happen. I’m not leavin’ this box.”

“Well, since you’re sticking around, tell me about yourself.” Husk inches closer to Sam.

“I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for Mister. He was my owner... and not a very good one! I did something to make him really mad. If I have to tell the truth, I BIT him!”

“I’m surprised you’re still alive! Why did you go and do that?”

“Cause he was mean and deserved it! Mister couldn’t catch me, so he rounded up my brothers and threw ‘em into this box. When I came back to find ‘em, he tossed me in here too.

Mister threw our box into the back of his car and the next thing we knew...

R-E-E-E-K!

We stopped.

W-H-A-M! B-A-M! S-Q-U-E-A-K!

He grabbed our box out of the trunk. We started growling, howling, yelping! Mister started yellin’ at the top of his lungs, ‘It’s all your fault, you miserable mutts! Shush up!’”

“Well, that’s just ugly,” snaps Husk.

“I think we made Mister lose his balance ‘cause he dropped our box. The top flap opened and I could see Mister’s face. It was redder than the rag in our box. My tummy did a flip. He started laughin’ and said, ‘Welcome to the HOKEE POKEE SWAMP!’”

OKEFENOKEE SWAMP

FUN FACTS

(Small sampling of the real animals in the story)

***Who is the most famous alligator in the Okefenokee Swamp? OSCAR!**

He was a real alligator that lived to be about 100 years old, which is rare for alligators. Oscar's bones are on display at the Okefenokee Swamp Park Visitor Center in Waycross, Georgia. Don Berryhill is responsible for piecing Oscar's bones together.

Did you know Oscar was hunted for his hide? To protect Oscar and other alligators from poachers, Franklin D. Roosevelt designated the Okefenokee Swamp as a federal wildlife refuge in 1937.

Did you know Oscar's bones contain shotgun pellets? Oscar managed to survive! He was one tough gator!

What kind of animal is Freddie? ALLIGATOR! This animal is a reptile and cold-blooded which means its body must adapt to its environment. Alligators must warm in the sun and cool down in the shade or water. A female alligator can lay a clutch of thirty-to-sixty eggs, covering them with vegetation and water which the sun heats. The mother alligator hears the peeping noises of her babies and will uncover them. They are about six inches long.

Did you know the mama alligator will protect its young for up to two years? When the babies hatch from their shells, the mother will gently carry her young inside

of her mouth to the water and protect her babies from predators, (racoons, bobcats, birds, and even other alligators) until they can fend for themselves.