

CHAPTER IX

SANDY SCARED STIFF

"Now where're you going after fish?" Sandy asked, as he started away with Chet. "You've been here longer than I have, so I suppose you know where the good fishing grounds are."

"The waters of the Everglades swarm with all kinds of fish," the boy replied. "We won't have to go farther than the mouth of the creek you mentioned a short time ago in order to get all we need for dinner."

"And we don't want to be very long about it, either," Sandy suggested, "for I'm about half starved. It seems that all our meals have been interrupted lately."

"Did you know that Mickey Murphy in Chicago?" Chet asked, as the boys paddled along. "He looks rather familiar to me."

"You might have met him at some Boy Scout clubroom," replied Sandy. "He is first class scout in the Beaver patrol."

"That's your patrol, isn't it?" asked Chet.

"We all belong to the Beavers," was the reply, "and Will is Scoutmaster. Strange we should pick up a member of our own patrol down here in the Everglades, isn't it?"

"Strange things happen in this merry old world of ours," Chet said, "but here's the fishing ground," he added, "and we'll now devote our attention to bass."

The boys were fishing with the minnows which had been caught earlier in the day, and the bass were not easily seduced by their limp forms, so Sandy began casting about for some other method of procuring a dinner.

The lads fished for some time before they saw any indications of success, but they finally secured three good sized bass and started for camp. When they came within view of the landing they saw a mighty commotion in the water and paddled close to the shore.

"There is something doing at the landing now!" Sandy exclaimed. "Look here," he continued, "we haven't been on this island twenty-four hours yet, and we've been captured, and had our boats stolen, and discovered two Boy Scouts from Chicago. I wonder what will come next.

"Look!" exclaimed Chet. "The channel seems to be full of alligators!"

"Me for the shore then," declared Sandy.

The boys drew their canoe up some distance from the landing and made their way through the thicket toward the bald spot where the tents had been set up. They both understood why the alligators were in the channel at the landing. They knew, too, that the saurians had saved them the trouble of burying the two outlaws!

"It's rotten to meet a death like that, and then find such a burial!" Sandy exclaimed, as the boys moved toward the tents, now just coming into view. "And yet the fellows got only what was rightfully coming to them."

"Do you really think," asked Chet, in a moment, "that the men killed by the Seminole were members of the Revell gang of wreckers?"

"I hope they were," replied Sandy, "because you see," the boy went on, "if the wreckers we have been talking about ever since Mickey's arrival have actually appeared, and have been put out of the way, then we shall have nothing more to keep us stirred up during our vacation."

"There's something in that!" Chet answered.

"If the men slain by the Indian were only swamp robbers, why then we've got the Revell group yet to meet, that is, provided they get the notion into their heads that we came here for the purpose of interfering with their present occupation of wrecking vessels and murdering members of the crew."

"What do you think about this lost heir matter?" was the next question.

"President Herrick undoubtedly knew what he was about when he sent a messenger into the Everglades to find us," replied Sandy.

"This Albert Hoover may not be in the Everglades at all; may not be associated with the members of the Revell group at this time; but the chances are that President Herrick has almost positive proof that the boy shown in the portrait is really the boy in demand in Chicago just now."

"Yes," Chet agreed, "such men as President Herrick usually figure a proposition of this kind out in the right way. "Still," he went on, "even if the Revell outlaws came into the Everglades at about the time indicated in the des-

patch, they may not be within two hundred miles of us at this time!"

"But the people about Lake Okeechobee are certain that the men who asked for Lost Channel on the date indicated in the despatch were members of the Revell gang!" declared Sandy. "They say, too, according to the letter, that there was a boy with them answering the description given of the boy in the president's letter."

"Huh!" grinned Chet. "They might have asked for Lost Channel and gone in exactly the opposite direction!"

"That's very true," agreed Sandy, "and so, after all, we may not have any more occasion to use our automatics or you to use your cayenne pepper."

Chet laughed at the remembrance of the incident on the island where he had been found by Tommy, and the two boys quickened their pace as they came to the edge of the thicket facing the tents.

It seemed to them as they stood looking over the white circle of sand for a moment that the camp was remarkably quiet. The fire had burned low, and birds and creatures of the thicket were moving about on the sand where provisions had been spilled or tossed away.

"Now, where do you think the boys are?" asked Chet.

"I don't know," replied Sandy. "We never succeed in keeping anyone in camp. While on Lake Superior, we ran away from each other, and sneaked out in the night, and paddled away

In boats, until more than half the time there wasn't anyone in camp but a boy with his arm broken."

"That must have been a fine trip!" Chet remarked.

"Glorious!" answered Sandy. "There are rocks on the south shore of Lake Superior which look as if they had been painted in colors, and there are pictures which seem to have been drawn by expert artists. When white men came to that section, nearly four hundred years ago, the pictures were there, looking, so far as tradition states, exactly as they do today."

"I'm going up there some day!" Chet declared.

While the boys discussed the various trips to which the Boy Scout Beaver Patrol had agreed, birds eating crumbs from the sands on the other side of the fire flew away in alarm.

"Here come the boys," I reckon," Sandy whispered. "Suppose we remain here for a few minutes and give them a scare."

"I'm game for it!" replied Chet.

While the boys waited, expecting to see Will and George make their appearance from the thicket, possibly carrying something in the way of game, a soft step sounded behind them, and turning, they faced the Seminole, who was signalling them not to approach the open space.

Then three figures stepped into the sand-paved circle, but they were not those of the boys who belonged in the camp.

"There's the Revells, if anybody should ask you!" whispered Sandy.