

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!”

The box flips, tumbles, and rolls into the Georgia swamp. B-A-M! It hits a tree, sending three mutts flying. 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 is Sam."

"Nice to meet you, Sam, but you're kinda LOUD!"

"Sorry, I do that when I'm scared. It just creeps up, out of my throat.

Hic-c-c-cup! That happens too, when I'm spooked. What kind of animal are you?

What's your name? Where are we?"

"Slow down there, fella. My name is Husk. I'm a tortoise. Don't ya know you're in the swamp?"

"Oh yeah, that part's comin' back to me now. I was in my box with my three brothers and B-A-M! We smacked into this tree, right here. My brothers flew out. I haven't seen 'em since. What do I do now?"

"That's a problem," says Husk. "The way I see it, you have two options. You can crawl outta your house 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 my home 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, how did you get here?” 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! That’s ‘cause he was mean and deserved it! When he couldn’t catch me, he rounded up my brothers and threw ‘em into this cardboard box. I came back to find them. That’s when he caught me and tossed me in here too. I started yowling so loud that my brothers joined right in.

Mister threw our box into the back of his car and the next thing we knew... R-E-E-E-K! We skidded to a stop. W-H-A-M! B-A-M! S-Q-U-E-A-K! He grabbed our box out of the trunk. We started G-R-O-W-L-I-N-G... H-O-W-L-I-N-G... Y-E-L-P-I-N-G!

I think we made Mister lose his balance ‘cause he dropped our box. The top flap opened and Mister’s face was redder than a tomato. He started yellin’ to the top of his lungs, ‘It’s all your fault, you miserable mutts!’ B-O-O-M! He kicked our box and hollered, ‘Welcome to the HOKEE POKEE SWAMP!’”

Chapter Two

BROTHERS

“Don’t mean to correct you, Sam. But *THIS* is the OKEFENOKEE SWAMP. And since it’s my home, I like to think it’s a wonderful place to live.

“Well... since *THIS* is my new home too, I will learn to say it right. O-KEE-PA-PO-KEE.”

“O-KEE-FEN-NO-KEE Sam. Keep trying, you’ll get it.”

“O-KEE-MA-NO-KEE? O-KEE-RA-NO-KEE? O-KEE-FEN-O-KEE!” Is that it?

“You got it, Sam! And you’re going to love it here too.”

“I’m not so sure about that, Husk! But I guess I will have to try because the last thing Mister ever said was, ‘Don’t come back!’”

“I’m here in this ole box, all by myself. I’m hearing things, all kinds of things, slithering sounds, crackling noises. Did you hear that? That sounds like a dog barking. L-I-S-T-E-N. There it is again.”