



## **The HUGE Adventures of Starlight and Moonshine**

by Dave Hawkins

### **Story One THE HEROES RETURN**

Joshua was old, but he wasn't always so. Once upon a time he was a small boy, and he was reminded of this while he was tidying the garden shed. There, in a cardboard box, he found some old comic books and began to look through them. He paused at one that had a special meaning for him; at least it used to have when he was a child. The Huge Adventures of Starlight and Moonshine were a wonder to him all those years ago. His favourite comic-book heroes were different because he not only talked to them as if they were real people; but somehow he was also able to become a part of the story and share their adventures. It was as if he had stepped through a magic window and into the comic book.

Now, of course, he knew that was just make-believe. Joshua sighed and smiled over those happy memories as he started to put the comic back into the box. Suddenly, the pages began to rustle, then they flew open. The old man was puzzled. There was no wind in the shed, so what had made that happen? Glancing at the open page, he began to read the story. Although he was sure he would remember it because he had read all of them over and over, this one was new to him. Starlight and Moonshine weren't even on an adventure. They seemed rather glum and Moonshine was asking the question: "Why aren't we having a fun time, Starlight?" To which Starlight replied: "Because children don't read comic books anymore. They are more interested in videos and computer games. If nobody reads about our adventures, they can't happen."

This puzzled Joshua, especially the bit about computers and videos. When he was a child there were no such things. How was it possible they were mentioned in a comic that was nearly as old as him? The open page fluttered, then turned to the next one where Starlight stood with her hands on her hips looking a bit annoyed. "This comic may be old, but we aren't! We know what things are like these days and we want to be out there, discovering more things." The next picture made Joshua's hair stand on end. Moonshine's face filled the frame and it was very serious as he pleaded: "Can't you help us the way you used to, when you believed in us?"

Without realising that he was speaking to a comic book, the old man said: "I was young then. Look at me now. I'm an old man and I've stopped believing in fairy tales and magic. I'm sorry. I simply can't help you."

Starlight jumped into a new picture that Joshua was certain wasn't there a moment ago. "Maybe YOU can't, but your Grandchildren can – Lucy and Danny will believe in us. They can bring us to life again. All you have to do is take us to them."

That night, Lucy was sitting on Danny's bed and they were both staring down at the comic laying on the covers. "Do you think what Granddad said was true?" asked Danny.

His sister paused for a moment, then replied: "He doesn't usually tell fibs. Anyway, it won't hurt to look. I'll read the words. You just follow the story with the pictures."

Lucy hadn't really noticed before, but the front page only had one. Moonshine and Starlight were standing on the deck of what appeared to be a strange sailing ship, except it didn't have sails. Instead, floating in the air above it and tied by ropes were three large balloons. Lucy began reading the words under the picture: "Well, Starlight, said Moonshine..."

"He's quite round," interrupted Danny, "And he's wearing a soldier's uniform."

"An officer's uniform," added Lucy, "And with all those medals he must be very brave and important. Now, can I get on with the story?" She waited a few seconds, then continued. "Moonshine carries on to say: I feel we are about to start a new adventure. And Starlight says..."

Danny spoke again: "Starlight has a hat like a ship's captain. Why isn't she called Captain Starlight?" He touched the picture with his fingers. "You are now Captain Starlight."

His sister was becoming a little tired of the interruptions. "Do you want me to read the story or not? Starlight is just Starlight. If you could read at all you'd know that by the words..."

The young girl frowned as her eyes moved back to the front page of the comic. The picture had changed a bit, and the words had a lot. Starlight was now wearing a sea-captain's jacket as well as the hat, and she was saying: "Thank you for that, Danny. I've always wanted to be someone special." Lucy read this as she now saw it, but her voice was very quiet, almost a whisper. She turned to Danny: "You do realise your name's in here. It wasn't before, I'm sure of it."

Her younger brother shrugged. "That's because I believe. Granddad said it would happen, if we believe. Starlight and Moonshine will come alive; they'll be real people, but only to us. I can prove it, if you aren't too scared of magic."

"Okay then, smartypants," Lucy challenged. "Go ahead and show me."

Danny pointed at the picture. "How does Starlight look now that I've made her a Captain?"

Lucy thought about it and replied: "She seems much happier. Proud, even."

"And what about Moonshine?" her brother asked.

"Not too pleased," said Lucy.

“Alright, said the boy, placing his hand over the comic-book picture. “How would you like to be called Colonel Moonshine?” He took his hand off the picture and looked at it. Moonshine seemed to be standing taller and had a big smile on his rosy face. “What is he saying now Lucy?” asked Danny.

Lucy took a deep breath and said: “Colonel Moonshine thanks you very much and says he has waited a long time for recognition.”

“What’s recognition?” asked her brother.

“I don’t know, but I think it matters to Moonshine.”

“COLONEL Moonshine, if you please,” said a gruff voice which sounded as if it came from the comic page.

“Now do you believe?” Danny asked his sister.

Lucy’s eyes were popping as she was forced to admit: “I guess I have to. It does seem odd, though, being able to talk to comic-book heroes.”

“Doesn’t that have a nice ring to it, Colonel Moonshine?” said Starlight’s voice from the comic. “Heroes, I mean. I think Lucy and Danny deserve something in return for their belief in us. I think we should invite them to come on our very next adventure with us.”

“But how can we do that?” asked Lucy. “We are here and you are there. We can’t just climb into your picture.”

“Hrrumph!” snorted Moonshine. “After all you’ve seen and heard, you still won’t believe in the unbelievable!”

“Don’t be hard on them, Moonshine,” said Captain Starlight, “It takes time. When we show them that it can be done, then they will know that anything can happen if you want it to.”

“But when will that be?” asked Danny, sounding impatient.

Starlight’s head turned in the picture to face towards Danny’s bedroom door. “Not now. Someone’s coming. And remember what your Granddad told you – nobody else must know about us. Hide the comic. Quickly!”

Danny stuffed the comic under his pillow just seconds before their mother came in. “Off to your own room, Lucy,” she said, “It’s time you were both asleep.” Lucy followed her mother out, pausing in the doorway before leaving to give her younger brother a smile and a wink.

Danny waited for the door to close, and a minute more. When he was sure his mother wouldn’t return, he lifted up the pillow and took out the comic. “Are you still there?” he asked in a whisper.

“My word we are,” said Colonel Moonshine.

“So,” said Danny, “Can I come into the picture with you?”

“Not right now, Danny,” said Captain Starlight. “We must wait for Lucy. Tomorrow night would be best.”

Moonshine was starting to get excited. "Are we soon to have a new huge adventure?"

"Perhaps," answered Starlight.

"And will we be having fun?"

"Why don't you ask Danny?" said Starlight.

"Will we, Danny?" asked Moonshine, "Do you believe we actually will be?"

"Oh, yes," replied the young boy almost breathlessly, "And from now on the comic will be called the Huge Adventures of Captain Starlight and Colonel Moonshine with Danny and Lucy."

"I quite like that," said Starlight.

"So do I," added Moonshine, "Quite a bit more, I think."

Danny smiled as he slipped the comic under his pillow. "And I know I am going to, heaps and heaps," he murmured quietly, then switched out the light. "Goodnight Captain Starlight and Colonel Moonshine. See you tomorrow night."