

A Season of Happiness



the wonderful world
of Story-Telling

MOONBERRY PIE



MP106

www.aseasonofhappiness.com

STARLIGHT AND MOONSHINE MAMMA ZEETA'S REVENGE

Lucy and her mother were sitting in the car outside Joshua's house. Young Danny wasn't with them – he'd been dropped off at his grandfather's before they went to the supermarket because he didn't like shopping and tended to make a nuisance of himself. Lucy opened the passenger door and prepared to step out. "Can you give me a hand to carry the stuff, Mum?" she asked. "There's too much to take in one go."

"Of course," answered Margaret. "I want to see your granddad about something anyway. "And," she added sternly, "To make sure Danny is behaving himself."

The pair collected up the shopping bags from the back seat and trudged towards the garden gate. "Danny always behaves himself when he's with Granddad," Lucy assured her mother. "Well, most of the time he does." Reaching the front door she barged it open and called into the house: "We're back."

The reply was strange. It was Danny's voice coming from the kitchen and he sounded desperate: "In here quick, Lucy!"

The girl hurried along the hallway and into the kitchen. There she found her grandfather sitting at the table while her brother was on the far side of the room. "What's the matter?" Lucy demanded to know. "What's happened?"

Just then their mother entered and it was obvious to her that something was wrong. Her father Joshua was unmoving and simply staring vacantly. "Dad?" Margaret enquired, "Are you alright?" His only response was to turn his head to gaze at his daughter as if he didn't recognise her. She directed her next question to her son: "Danny, what's going on here...?" Margaret had just noticed something peculiar in front of Danny. It resembled a vague shadow, except that it kept fading and reappearing. "What is *that*?" She pointed at the strange shadow-like image on the wall before Danny. He had Brunswick the little mouse in his open palm and extended his hand towards the oddity. As he did so it shivered and faded.

Lucy recognised the shape immediately and gasped: "Mamma Zeeta! She's back!"

"Too right," her bother confirmed, "And she's stuck a hex on Granddad!"

Lucy frowned. "But how can she be here? This isn't comic-book world where she belongs."

"Look on the table, Lucy..." He paused to thrust his hand with Brunswick on it forward again and snarled: "Clear off or Mighty Mikmow will eat you!"

Lucy walked to the table and peered down. There sitting in front of Joshua was the three-pointed star from Mamma Zeeta's altar. Danny called back over his shoulder: "Granddad was trying to figure out what to do with it when Mamma Zeeta appeared out of nowhere and did her voodoo bit."

Margaret had been standing quite still trying to take in the scene and was totally confused. "I can't get my head around any of this. Hexes and voodoo; and that *thing* over there that keeps coming and going. What's it all about?"

"Black magic," declared Danny in reply to his mother's question before addressing his sister: "We've got to do something Lucy. I don't reckon Brunswick can hold Mamma Zeeta off forever."

"Brunswick?" queried Margaret. "What does a mouse have to do with whatever's going on here?"

"The Voodoo Witch is afraid of Brunswick," stated Lucy.

"*What?* Frightened of a little *mouse*?"

"He's more than that to her," Lucy explained. "As far as Mamma Zeeta's concerned Brunswick is the Mighty Mikmow, a powerful sort-of spirit. She has to do what he says or risk being eaten by him."

"That's ridiculous!" exclaimed her mother, then she had a thought: "This Mamma What's-her-name is from comic-book world, isn't she? I seem to remember going there myself."

"When me and Dad got stuck on the Amazing Roller Ghoster," said Danny. That gave him an idea: "Hey, maybe Captain Starlight and Colonel Moonshine can figure out what to do...?"

"Or Professor Dib-Dob," suggested Lucy. "I'm thinking we have to get Granddad and the artefact back to Mamma Zeeta's place. If we put the star on her altar, Brunswick can force her to lift the hex; but to get there we need the 'Befuddled' comic. I'm going to the shed to find it; in the meantime you keep doing what you're doing with Mamma Zeeta, Danny."

In a short while Lucy returned with the comic and opened it on the table. "We can't afford to waste time," she said, "So I'm going straight to the bit where everyone's in Mamma Zeeta's house." The girl began turning pages and frowned. "This is odd. All the picture squares are blank except for the one in the Voodoo Witch's house. It shows Captain Starlight, Colonel Moonshine, Professor Dib-Dob and Lord Nuff-Nuff. His penguin butler Henshaw is there too, but he shouldn't be – he was on his way through the jungle with the lunch basket. And there's no sign of Granddad or Mamma Zeeta."

"That's because they're here with us in the real world, Lucy," said Danny.

"And so is the three-pointed star which needs to be put back on the altar," said his sister. "I only hope we can get Granddad, Mamma Zeeta and the star there. We need to force Mamma Zeeta to lift the hex off Granddad; then maybe we can figure out what to do next."

A stumbling block was who should go with Joshua into comic-book world. Lucy was in the kitchen whispering to her mother so that Mamma Zeeta couldn't hear: "We only have three Moonberry Pie cookies, so we can't all go; and Danny will have to be there with Brunswick to make it work. Granddad must have his own cookie and I want you to take mine and hold his hand. Will you be okay with that, Mum?"

Margaret wasn't all that sure, but she eventually agreed. "Right," continued Lucy, "I'll stay here with the comic just in case."

"In case of what?" Margaret asked warily.

Lucy hesitated to answer at first, not wishing to worry her mother. "What we'll be doing is changing an old story by putting in a new bit. That may cause problems." Returning to the table she placed a hand on the picture in the comic and spoke to it: "Hello everyone, it's Lucy here."

The comic-book characters all looked up and they seemed puzzled. "Do you have any idea what is going on Lucy?" asked Colonel Moonshine. "We must have come here for something, wherever here is, but we can't remember what."

"And I recall I had a three-pointed star," said Professor Dib-Dob, "But it seems to have vanished."

"I'm certain Joshua was with us a second ago," put in Captain Starlight, "But he's gone too."

"Never mind all that," grumbled Nuff-Nuff. "Where's the lunch you were supposed to be bringing, Henshaw; or did you eat it on the way?"

"Don't be ridiculous!" snapped the penguin butler, "There was far too much for one person. Although I think I know someone who might have managed it."

"That's enough, you two!" barked Lucy. "We need to get this done. You can argue all you like once it is. Now get ready. Mum and Danny are coming to you with Granddad so that Mamma Zeeta can un-hex him," Lucy explained.

"Who's Mamma Zeeta, and what on Earth is hex?" muttered Lord Nuff-Nuff.

"A hex is a magic spell," said Henshaw. "Don't you know anything? With a bit of luck she'll stick one on you and I might get some peace..."

Ignoring the bickering, Lucy addressed the others in the kitchen: "Danny, as soon as Mamma Zeeta fades put Brunswick in your pocket, grab the star and hold your cookie in the other hand. Are you ready for this, Mum?"

"I'm holding your granddad's hand. He's got his cookie and I've got yours," Margaret confirmed. "Just do the countdown Lucy."

Lucy waited for Mamma Zeeta to fade again before counting: "One, two, three."

Margaret and Danny called out: "Moonberry Pie!" and instantly they were whisked through the rainbow sky to appear in the comic-book picture with the others.

Lucy spoke to the picture: "Someone take the star from Danny and place it on the altar."

"That's my job," said the Professor, then: "Funny, but I seem to remember doing this not so long ago." Once Dib-Dob was close to the altar the artefact began to warm up and was dragging his hand towards the three-pointed-star indentation on the top of the altar; then it simply jumped from his hand to sit in the indentation.

As before, everything went black for a second; then there was a bright flash and a crack of lightning. Next, the room was flooded with an eerie green light and the buzzing hum started. When it was at its loudest a shape began to materialise on the throne facing the altar; and in a moment, Mamma Zeeta was back. The instant she was, Lucy ordered: "Do your thing with Brunswick, Danny."

The next picture square filled in as Danny took the little mouse from his top pocket and held it towards the Witch. Putting on his deepest, growly voice he commanded: "Take the hex off Granddad or Mighty Mikmow will eat you." Mamma Zeeta shivered, scowled then stood up and walked to face Joshua. She paused

briefly before reluctantly wagging the bone with the hair in front of Joshua. She hesitated again. "Do it!" snarled Danny, "Or I'll chuck Mikmow at you!"

With a heavy sigh she touched Joshua twice on the forehead with the charm-stick. Awakening from the trance he gazed around and obviously had no idea where he was nor what had happened to him. Danny ordered Mamma Zeeta back to her throne then looked up. "What now, Lucy?"

"I'm not sure," she said to the comic-book picture. "If we take the star from the altar, Mamma Zeeta will be sent into exile; but she might reappear wherever the artefact is, and whoever has it will be in big trouble like Granddad."

Before coming to comic-book world Lucy had given her mother a quick explanation about Mamma Zeeta's hold over the people on her island. Margaret was mulling this over and had not spoken until that moment: "I think I may have an answer," she said. Walking to stand before the altar, she spoke to the Voodoo Witch: "The way I understand it, you aren't your proper self unless the artefact is with you. Now, we could leave the star where it is so that you can stay here." Mamma Zeeta's face lit up and she produced an evil leer. It dropped instantly when Margaret added: "But there are conditions. First, you must promise not to hex anyone ever again; and second you must also be kind to your people and only use your voodoo magic to do good things for them." She waited to let that sink in before asking: "Well? What do you say, Mamma Zeeta?"

It took a long minute for the witch to decide. Finally she nodded uncertainly. "Couldn't I just stay in practise and hex someone once in a while?"

With the exception of Joshua, all of the others including Lucy shouted: "NO!"

The Voodoo Witch breathed a heavy sigh. "Oh, alright I agree to your terms. No more hexing."

"And do good voodoo stuff, right?" said Danny.

Mamma Zeeta tutted. "If I must."

"You'd better." Said Lucy sternly to the picture, "Or we'll return and take the star again."

"I don't think I'd fancy coming back here," commented Captain Starlight quietly.

"Where's your sense of adventure, Starlight?" chirped Colonel Moonshine. "You have to admit the voodoo story was pretty Huge. Not that I remember much about it, but I imagine it was."

"Time for you to bring Granddad home, Mum," Lucy said to the picture, "And everyone else should go back to your ship, Captain Starlight, so that you can sail off to Gummyland."

"Can I go with them?" pleaded Danny hopefully.

"Definitely not, young man," declared Margaret sternly. "You're coming with us."

"What about Brunswick?" asked the boy.

It was Professor Dib-Dob who answered the question: "Might be best if you keep Brunswick with you, Danny: in case Mamma Zeeta goes back on her word."

Soon enough, Margaret, Joshua, Danny and Brunswick had Moonberry Pied back to the real world. Joshua was still a bit vague and stared down at the kitchen table top. "I'm sure I put that three-pointed star on here," he said with a frown. "I wonder where it is?"

"Back where it belongs, Granddad," said Lucy. "Don't you worry about it."