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**STARLIGHT AND MOONSHINE  
And The Lost City Of The Yincas  
Story One – A Message in a Bottle**

Lucy and Danny were spending a week of the school holidays with their grandfather, Joshua. It was promising to be an exciting time for all because they had decided they would have a comic-bookathon. The idea was to read through a stack of Starlight and Moonshine comics one after another which, for the three of them, would be like actually going on a comic-book world cruise with their two heroes. As usual, Lucy was reading the words, whereas her brother Danny was still too young and hadn't learned to read yet, so he was just looking at the pictures. "Where are Captain Starlight and Colonel Moonshine?" he wanted to know. "So far all we've got are pictures of Lord Nuff-Nuff and Henshaw."

"Be patient, Danny," advised Joshua. "Mind you, I was wondering that too; but we've only just started this comic. No doubt they'll come into it soon. Carry on reading, Lucy."

Lucy continued to explain: "Henshaw is opening a piece of paper he said he found floating on the sea in a bottle. Now he's spreading it out on the table."

"What's on it?" asked Danny. "It looks blurry."

"I think it's some kind of message," explained his sister. "It must be important, though, because Lord Nuff-Nuff is pushing Henshaw out of the way for a closer look. He's getting very excited; and he's saying:

"My, my, this is a worry, Henshaw. You do realise what we have here?"

"A dirty old piece of soggy paper?" suggested his butler in a bored tone.

"Much more than that, you silly penguin," declared Nuff-Nuff. "This soggy piece of paper, as you put it, is a desperate plea from none other than my uncle, Professor Dib-Dob, who went off in search of a lost city."

"Who would be careless enough to lose a city?" queried Henshaw.

Lord Nuff-Nuff groaned. "It's not lost as in *lost*," you stupid butler. "It just can't be found because no-one knows where to look for it anymore. At least," he added, "Not until Uncle Dib-Dob apparently discovered its location. Anyway," he continued, "According to the message, it seems his crew mutinied and took over his ship. Now someone called Filcher is forcing him to guide them to the lost city. Who's Filcher?" Nuff-Nuff muttered to himself, frowning deeply.

Danny was getting impatient with all of the talking and reached out to place a hand on the comic; which was his way of talking to the characters in a particular picture of the story. "We have to rescue your uncle, Lord Nuff-Nuff," said the boy to the comic.

Hearing the voice, both Nuff-Nuff and Henshaw looked up. "Is that you Danny?" asked the penguin butler.

*Now, it should be explained what was happening here for those readers who are new to The Huge Adventures of Starlight and Moonshine. Danny, Lucy and Joshua are quite special people*

*who can not only talk to the characters in the comic-book pictures; but they can also whisk themselves into comic-book world to become part of the stories, as you will see very soon...*

"Yes, Henshaw," Lucy replied to the penguin's question. "We're all here, Granddad too; and if we are to rescue Professor Dib-Dob we need to contact Captain Starlight and Colonel Moonshine."

"I can send Beryl, the giant seagull, with a note," offered the butler, "But the problem is that we don't know where the Professor's ship is. Even Starlight won't be able to find it without a map..."

"Ah, there is a map!" declared Nuff-Nuff, reading the words at the bottom of the message. "It says so here..." Then he sighed as he turned the piece of paper over. "Oh, dear. Uncle Dib-Dob says he did hide the map, but Filcher found it. Who *is* this Filcher person?" he mumbled.

"This is not good," exclaimed Joshua, becoming very concerned. "If they have the map to the lost city, they really don't need Professor Dib-Dob."

"They might just chuck him overboard," said Danny casually.

"You really are a doom and disaster monger!" his sister rasped at him.

"Well, it's true," insisted Danny. "What's a monger, anyway?"

Right at that moment a beeping sound from the laundry caught Lucy's attention and she ignored Danny's question. "That's the wash finished Granddad," she said. "We should hang it out now before it creases." Rising from the chair, she was on her way out when she turned to see her brother still sitting at the table. "Come on, Danny."

The young boy glanced at his sister, sneered; then went back to looking at the comic in front of him. "I'll stay here and make sure nothing happens in the story while you two are doing boring house stuff."

"You're just lazy," grumbled Lucy as she and Joshua left the kitchen. Once they were in the garden and hanging the clothes on the line, she commented: "I don't know how Danny expects to understand what's happening in the story when he only has the pictures to go by."

"He might be able to work some of it out," said Joshua, "But I daresay he'll have a few questions for us." Hanging the washing didn't take too long and they were soon walking back into the kitchen. Danny was nowhere to be seen. Joshua frowned and asked: "Where's he gone?"

"Maybe to the toilet..." Lucy started to say; then she pointed at the table. "More to the point, where did that bird come from?"

They both stared. Standing on the table top right in front of the comic was a brightly coloured parrot which merely glanced at them and carried on nibbling at something it was holding in its claw. "It doesn't seem afraid of us," said Joshua. "Maybe it's someone's pet and it escaped; probably flew in through the open back door."

Lucy stepped a little closer. "Hello, bird. What's your name, then?"

The parrot stopped nibbling to look at her and actually spoke, repeating most of Lucy's words: "Hello, bird. What's your name?" after which it added: "Chumley's a pretty boy."

Joshua was by Lucy's side. "I guess his name's Chumley. We should advertise that we've found him. I'm sure his owners will be worried."

"What's that he's eating?" asked Lucy. "It's a cookie of some kind..." Suddenly she realised. "Where did he get that from? It looks like a Moonberry Pie..."

Following a little screech, Chumley copied her words: "Moonberry Pie," and the next instant he disappeared right before their eyes.

"Oh, dear," said Joshua, "I have a horrible suspicion I know what's gone on here. I'm thinking Danny couldn't wait to find out what was happening and Moonberry-Pied into comic-book world."

*For the benefit of our new readers, this is what was hinted at earlier. The Moonberry Pie looks just like an ordinary cookie dotted with currants; but it is far more than that. By holding one*

*and saying the words: "Moonberry Pie," Joshua, Lucy and Danny can transport into comic-book world in a flash. Now, let's continue with the story...*

"But what about Chumley?" asked Lucy. "Danny wouldn't have given him his Moonberry Pie."

"No," confirmed her grandfather, "But the bird could have pinched it. If Danny had said the words, just like you did, Chumley would have repeated them and Moonberry-Pied back here."

"So," pondered Lucy, "Danny must be stranded somewhere in the story."

"Very likely," said Joshua, "And without his Moonberry Pie he can't come home. Our problem is to find out exactly which picture he's in." Glancing down at the open comic on the table, he said: "He must have turned the page to a part of the story we haven't read yet; and here it is," he declared, pointing at a picture of Chumley sitting on a wooden perch in the wheelhouse of a ship.

"I see the bird," said Lucy, "But there's no sign of Danny; and why did he Moonberry Pie there? I bet he was after the map, silly boy." Her hands went up to her face and she whispered, a tremor of fear in her voice: "What if we can't find him, Granddad?"

Joshua gave a big sigh. "Then Danny is in trouble, really big trouble. Now we have to think of a way to save both Professor Dib-Dob AND Danny!"

In the meantime, Captain Starlight's ship was far away out at sea when Beryl the giant seagull landed and offered the note in her beak. Colonel Moonshine took it and read the message; then called out: "We have a job, Starlight. Set course for Gumbyland. The note's from Henshaw and it says they desperately need our help; and," he added excitedly: "Henshaw says the situation is bad and really huge; and you do know how I love HUGE."

Up to that point, the ship had been sailing on the sea, as ships do; but Starlight's vessel was different. "Blow up the balloons, Moonshine," she ordered. "We must get to Gumbyland as quickly as we can." Moonshine turned a wooden wheel to do what he called the blow-up thing, and the balloons that were floating just above their heads began to fill with air. The ropes holding them tightened and soon the ship was lifted out of the water and was flying through the sky. Amazing, perhaps, but that's how things can happen in comic-book world.

But, of course, Starlight and Moonshine were still a long way from Gumbyland; and without their suggestions on how to solve the problem of Danny and Nuff-Nuff's Uncle Dib-Dob, Lucy and Joshua were having to work it out for themselves. The last picture on the page of the comic showed Chumley the parrot still on his perch finishing off what was left of Danny's Moonberry Pie. Lucy turned to the next page which showed a man dressed in a military uniform glaring down at a chart table. "I wonder if that's Filcher?" queried the girl. "He looks very angry, and he's shouting at the crew..."

"How could a boy steal the map?" he was bellowing, growing red in the face. "And you claim he just appeared, which is nonsense – he must be a stowaway. Why didn't someone try to stop him? Anyway, the main thing now is to get the map back. Scour the ship and find the young bilge rat! I want that map! As for the boy, I need him alive; at least until I've questioned him."

"They know about Danny," hissed Lucy unnecessarily, "And I don't fancy his chances."

"At least that means he's still on the ship," commented Joshua, "Well, hopefully. We have to find him before Filcher does. What's in the next picture, Lucy?"

"It's another one of Filcher, out on deck this time," said Lucy, "And he's shouting at the men..."

"Hurry up!" growled Filcher. "Break that door down. I want the map!"

"Ooh, look, Granddad," said the girl pointing at the following drawing. "It's showing the inside of a cabin and there's Danny talking to someone."

“Professor Dib-Dob, perhaps?” suggested Joshua. “He’s wearing a safari suit like a lot of discoverers do, so it’s probably Lord Nuff-Nuff’s uncle.” Speaking close to the comic, he said: “Danny - it’s me, Granddad.”

Hearing the voice, even though he was now in comic-book world, the boy looked up. “Thank goodness for that,” said Danny. “You have to get us out of here before Filcher’s men bust the door in.” He waved a piece of paper in the air. “I’ve got the map. Just bring us home, please.”

“It’s my guess this Filcher is a rival explorer,” Joshua mused. “And he’s probably after stealing treasure from the lost city; always assuming there is a city and it has treasure.” He sat back and sent his granddaughter a worried look. “I think the only way, Lucy, is for you to take my Moonberry Pie and use your own to go into comic-book world. I’m hoping that if you give Danny my cookie; then, with you both having Moonberry Pies, by holding the Professor’s hands and saying the magic words, with luck that should bring the three of you back here. But waste no time - you have to do it quickly, or you could all be caught! And I will be in huge trouble with your mother,” he added with a groan.

Taking his Moonberry Pie from a wooden box on the table, Joshua handed it to Lucy. “Just remember,” he warned, “if anything happens, I won’t be able to help; so be quick and very careful.”

Lucy nodded. “I promise; and don’t worry Granddad: we’ll be home before you know it.” Looking down at the picture of the ship’s cabin, she asked: “Did you hear the plan, Danny?”

“Yes,” replied the boy, “And I’ve told the Professor what we have to do; so we’re ready...” He broke off at the sound of a thump as an axe head splintered a panel of the wooden door. “Come on, Lucy!” he urged. “They’re almost through!”

“We’ll be back in a flash, Granddad,” she declared; then, holding up the cookie, she called out: “Moonberry Pie!” In the next instant she was flying on a warm breeze through the rainbow sky, and there was the taste of sweet berries in her mouth. It lasted but a second and she suddenly appeared in the comic picture with Danny and Professor Dib-Dob.

The moment Joshua saw this from his kitchen, he ordered: “Give Danny my Pie, Lucy; then all hold hands and say the words. Quickly now, before the door gives way.”

The children followed their grandfather’s instructions; and Lucy was saying: “On the count of three, Danny – One... Two... Three.”

And with that, both of them called out: “Moonberry Pie!”

Nothing happened.

Joshua turned the page to see what came next and simply gasped. “Oh, no! This is the last page of the comic,” he whispered to himself. “There’s just a message advertising the next episode...”

**Without his Moonberry Pie, what can Joshua do to bring Lucy and Danny home before Filcher captures them? Are his grandchildren stranded in comic-book world forever?**

**Maybe Starlight and Moonshine can think of a way, but will they arrive in time?**

**Whatever else you do, don’t miss story two in next month’s HUGE Starlight and Moonshine adventure!**