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MOONBERRY PIE



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STARLIGHT AND MOONSHINE And The Lost City Of The Yincas Story Three – Moonberry Pie Magic

If you remember from the previous story, Professor Dib-Dob was saved from the volcanic island by Joshua; but Captain Starlight's ship was being pulled into the centre of a whirlpool. It certainly seemed like the end for all on board...

Joshua, Lucy and Danny breathed sighs of relief when they looked at the front cover of the next comic and saw a number of pictures; so *this* Huge adventure, at least, wasn't finished yet. "It's the same as the last comic," said Danny, "With the ship caught in the whirlpool; but look at the next picture – the whirlpool's still there, only there's no sign of Captain Starlight's ship."

"No," Lucy had to agree, "And the third picture is even more puzzling. It's nearly all kind-of fuzzy yellow with just a darker shape in the background."

"Well," put in Danny, "All we have to do is open the comic to see the next drawing. Then we can find out what's going on."

The boy was about to reach out for the comic when his grandfather stopped him. "That's not how it's done, Danny," Joshua advised. "We must follow the rules of comic-book world, step by step; otherwise the magic won't work for us."

"I don't understand any of this," said Professor Dib-Dob who had been standing watching.

"It's like Granddad said," Lucy explained: "We have to do things right so that we can talk to comic-book world and also visit it from the real world."

"Can everyone in your real world do that?" asked Dib-Dob.

"Only those who believe in make-believe," said Danny. "Like the three of us; and that gives me an idea." He stretched out a hand and noticed Joshua frowning at him. "It's alright, Granddad – I'm not going to turn the page; just put my hand on the fuzzy yellow picture." He waited for Joshua's nod before flattening his hand on the comic; then called out: "Captain Starlight, Colonel Moonshine, is anyone there?"

Joshua, Lucy, Danny and now Professor Dib-Dob looked at the comic open on the kitchen table, waiting for something to happen. At first there was nothing; then a faint voice could be heard from the comic: "We're here, Danny." It was Colonel Moonshine. "And we're caught in a huge dust storm," he said, a bit louder this time. "The ship's standing on the ground; and, of course, because I thought to put wheels on it we can roll out of this cloud; but we can't until you go to the next picture. Can you do that for us?"

Danny looked to his grandfather and Joshua nodded; so Danny turned the page.

"That's it," called out Captain Starlight. "We're moving. Thank you, Danny." And so it continued, with the people in the real world looking on while the characters in the comic-book played their parts as the story unfolded in the pictures...

The ship could now be seen more clearly as it rolled slowly towards the edge of the dust storm. Captain Starlight was in the wheelhouse steering, while Moonshine was at the front looking ahead. "What's the matter with Lord Nuff-Nuff?" asked Danny. "He's sitting on the deck with his head in his hands. Is he hurt, or something?"

"Not really," Henshaw the penguin butler replied. "He's just sad that he couldn't rescue his uncle Dib-Dob."

"It's alright, Lord Nuff-Nuff," said Lucy. "Professor Dib-Dob is safe – he's here with us." Nuff-Nuff heard what she was saying and looked up. "Say something, Professor," urged Lucy.

Dib-Dob was hesitant at first; then he spoke to the comic-book picture: "Lucy's right, nephew. It's true – I am here, safe and sound. Joshua Moonberry Pied me to the real world. I imagine he will be able to Moonberry Pie me back to you in comic-book world and we can continue the search for the lost city together."

"Which will most likely be a total waste of time," moaned Henshaw. "It's lost forever, sucked into a whirlpool like us."

"Yes," hissed Dib-Dob, "And that's why no-one could find it; but we have finally stumbled on its whereabouts. Now we just have to carry on and search for the city. Hurry up and move out of the dust, Captain Starlight, so that we can see exactly where we are..." He paused to add: "Well, where *you* are, anyway; and I'll be joining you soon."

"I don't think that's such a good idea," said Joshua. "Not until we know what to expect. There may be more danger."

"Tosh!" Nuff-Nuff snorted and said confidently as he strode across the deck: "What possible danger could there be? There's absolutely nothing to worry about."

His butler Henshaw held him back and said: "Perhaps with the exception of that." He was pointing to some feathers that had just appeared at top of the rope ladder that was still hanging over the side of the ship. The feathers rose higher and it could be seen that they were part of a native head-dress; and the face of the man wearing it looked fearsome indeed, decorated as it was with tattoos.

"Instead of us finding them, they've found us," declared Dib-Dob. "I'd say that man's a Yinca; and I'd imagine he isn't alone."

It was obvious Captain Starlight and the others were in deep trouble. The native Yincas eventually boarded the ship and took everyone on board prisoner. Next they were bustling their captives through a jungle, and finally out into an open clearing. "That must be the city of the Yincas," suggested Dib-Dob.

"Doesn't look much like a city," said Danny. "It's just a bunch of mud huts."

"But there is a very big one on the far side," put in Lucy, "And out front there's one of those pole things with feathers and stuff hanging on it."

"A totem pole," observed Joshua.

"I have to admit to being a little disappointed," said Dib-Dob. "I was expecting glorious buildings and a magnificent temple."

"Well, although it's clearly a shame for you, Professor," said Joshua, "I'm more concerned about that." He pointed at the comic, in particular to a drawing of a large pond on one side of the compound. Then there was a close-up of the water showing floating lily pads; and amongst them a pair of dark, evil eyes just above the surface.

"It looks suspiciously like a crocodile." As the captives were herded closer to the pond, the dark eyes stirred and a huge mouth lined with sharp teeth opened wide.

Dib-Dob remembered something: "Legend has it that the Yincas sacrificed their enemies to the Great God Karkit."

"That must be him in the pond," commented Danny. "Good name – Karkit."

"Not for our friends," said Lucy, becoming quite distressed. "We have to do something, Granddad!"

"And we will," said Joshua. "Fetch me the bedspread from the washing line, Lucy. And I'll need your Star Wars laser sword, Danny." Seeing the boy was about to question the order, Joshua added: "Don't ask, just go, and quickly – there's no time to lose."

While the real-world people were getting organised, the captives of the Yincas were trying to think of ways to escape. "There are lots of them, Starlight," whispered Moonshine, "So whatever you come up with had better be huge."

"I'm starting not to like huge anymore," grumbled Lord Nuff-Nuff.

"If you hadn't insisted on coming," grated Henshaw, "Neither of us would have had to worry about it and we wouldn't be in this mess."

"I know, and I'm sorry, Henshaw," moaned Nuff-Nuff. "It seems we are doomed to be a scaly monster's lunch."

"Look on the bright side," encouraged his butler. "It could be a vegetarian."

"I doubt that," said Starlight as the crocodile opened its mouth again and swished its tail. Turning to face where she hoped the real world was, she pleaded: "We desperately need some help now, Joshua; we really do."

"Hold tight, Captain Starlight," said Danny, "We're coming to save you."

"Not you, Danny," Joshua muttered as he concentrated to close a safety pin to hold the bedspread which he had draped over his shoulders like a large cloak. Then he was speaking to Dib-Dob: "You have the Pie. Do you remember the words?"

Dib-Dob nodded. "I only hope I can speak enough of the Yinca language to make myself understood."

"Just keep it simple," advised Joshua. "The main thing will be the magic; and the play-acting. Hopefully, together they will be enough. Are you ready?"

"As I ever will be," said Dib-Dob. Holding up the cookie, he called out: "Moonberry Pie!"

A crowd of Yincas had gathered around the pond and was obviously excited to see their enemies about to be sacrificed to Karkit. They were stamping, and chanting and waving spears in the air; then they stopped as a man suddenly and miraculously appeared in the compound. "It's Uncle Dib-Dob," exclaimed Nuff-Nuff in surprise.

Dib-Dob raised his hands above his head; and in the Yinca language called out: "This sacrifice must not take place. Your Great God Karkit is false. There is one much greater, and he is not pleased. Release your prisoners, or face the wrath of The Mighty Josh!"

"That stopped them," observed Danny.

"Not for long, though," said Lucy. "They're glaring at the Professor, and they look pretty mean. Put your hand on the comic so we can do the wail like Granddad said." Her brother placed his open palm on the latest comic-book picture; and together the two children began howling and crying as loud as they were able.

The Yincas' expressions changed. Some were puzzled while others were clearly frightened, turning wide eyes to the sky in search of the strange wailing that echoed around them. "Hear the spirits," Dib-Dob called across the compound.

"They are not happy. Release the prisoners now, or I shall call on the spirits to summon The Mighty Josh!"

The mob of advancing Yincas had already halted in their tracks and seemed unsure. Two in the front row, however, decided they were going to defy Dib-Dob's warning and started moving again. "Do it, Professor," said Lucy to the comic, "And don't forget the glitter."

Raising his clenched fists higher in the air, Dib-Dob sang in his best mystical voice: "Oh Mighty Josh, by the power of the spirits I summon you to this place of wickedness!" For some reason the next part of the plan didn't follow as he expected; then Dib-Dob remembered the glitter. Swinging one arm out sideways, he opened the fist and cast a shower of Christmas glitter in the air; adding as an afterthought: "Show yourself Mighty Josh!"

Taking a deep breath, Joshua called out the words: "Moonberry Pie!"

It couldn't have worked better had it been a magic show on stage. Joshua appeared right in the midst of the falling shower of twinkling glitter. The Yincas gasped at the sudden appearance of yet another stranger, this one wearing a colourful cloak laced with gold thread; and what was that he was holding in his hand – a weapon of some kind; or a magic wand even? The two natives who were braver than the others were suddenly not so brave anymore and took some backward steps; the rest followed suit. "You have been commanded to release the prisoners," roared The Mighty Josh, "But I see they are still tied." Joshua let out a growl of disapproval. "Obey this instant, or I shall punish you all!"

Nobody moved. The Yincas just stood there looking from one to another frowning. "They don't understand your words, Joshua," whispered Dib-dob. "Let me try." Stepping aside slightly, he indicated Joshua with a hand as he spoke to the natives: "The Mighty Josh speaks in a tongue that is foreign to you. What he tells you is that you must free the prisoners now, or he will strike you down with his sword of infernal light." He nodded at the man beside him, and Joshua took the cue, pressing the switch on Danny's light sabre. It burst into life, glowing brightly. For a bit of showmanship, he advanced a few paces, swishing the tube of light from side to side; then pointed it at Starlight's group as a sign.

It didn't take long to untie the prisoners who moved to where Joshua and Dib-Dob were standing. "You have to get going now," Joshua said to them. "Give me your Pie, Professor, and go with them. I'll attempt to hold the Yincas here; but it may not be all that long. They're starting to fidget. Go quickly."

Lucy and Danny watched from the kitchen as their four friends and Dib-Dob ran into the surrounding jungle and disappeared from sight. Meanwhile, their grandfather was keeping the Yincas at bay with the occasional step forward and a swish of the laser sword. It was, of course, only a toy; but although the Yincas didn't know this they were perhaps reasoning that there was only one Mighty Josh with a magic sword, whereas there were many more of *them* with spears and clubs. Their pace quickened. Joshua waved the sword. The light went out.

"Um-ah," exclaimed Danny. "The batteries have gone flat."

Joshua knew this only too well. Holding up the cookie Dib-Dob had given him, he called out: "Moonberry Pie!"

"Phew!" hissed Danny as his grandfather appeared in the kitchen. "That was a bit hairy."

"At least Granddad held the Yincas back for a while," said Lucy, "But they're on the move now, running towards the jungle. Turn the page, Danny. We need to see how Captain Starlight and the others are doing."

The first picture on the next page showed their friends running out of the far side of the jungle and heading for the ship. The second drawing was cause for concern because; although Starlight, Moonshine and Dib-Dob had reached the ship, Nuff-Nuff and Henshaw had fallen behind. To make matters worse, a mass of Yincas was just appearing from the jungle.

Lord Nuff-Nuff cast a glance behind him. "They're catching up, Henshaw," he gasped, puffing and blowing. "What can we do?"

"Running faster might be a good idea," the penguin butler suggested.

"I'm not built for running, not at any speed," complained Nuff-Nuff.

"And the best I can do is a pathetic waddle," put in Henshaw. "Looks like the game is up for us."

"I think you're right, Henshaw," gasped Nuff-Nuff. "I'm sorry I've been so mean to you all these years."

"No you're not," panted Henshaw.

"Probably not," Nuff-Nuff admitted. "Why do you have to be right all the time?"

"Stop arguing, you two!" ordered Danny to the comic-book characters. "And hurry up!" When it was clear that the pair were doing the best they could and it wasn't good enough, the boy scowled, snatched up a cookie off the kitchen table, placed his other hand on the comic and called out: "Moonberry Pie!"

He was there in comic-book world in an instant, much to the dismay of his sister and grandfather. They could only watch as young Danny turned to face the oncoming Yincas and began waving his arms in the air. He was shouting: "Stop, or I will do something magic to you!" The native mob didn't understand a word; but they stumbled to a halt anyway. They might have stayed that way for a minute; but it was hard to tell because time in comic-book world was different to the real world.

Nuff-Nuff and Henshaw had just made it to the side of the ship when the Yincas decided to test Danny's threat. Seeing them coming at him, he shot a quick glance behind to check on the situation at the ship before saying the magic words: "Moonberry Pie!"

Joshua gave a heavy, relieved sigh as his grandson appeared in the kitchen beside him. "That was very brave, Danny."

Lucy added with a snarl: "And incredibly stupid!"

Danny wasn't listening: he was more interested watching Henshaw being helped onto the ship. Captain Starlight was already in the wheelhouse and was calling back: "Pull up the rope ladder, Moonshine." Tilting her head towards the real world she said: "Can we have the next picture please, Danny? We need to get moving."

"Do it Danny," ordered Lucy, "And do your hand thing too. They need some extra luck; but it might not be enough. The only place they can go is back into the dust storm. After that, who knows?"

"I heard that, Lucy," Captain Starlight called loudly so that she could be heard above the roaring wind. "When we first came out of the storm, I noticed that the dust spins faster towards the centre; and it seemed to be climbing up into the middle of those swirling clouds in the sky. That's where we are heading, and I just hope my guess is right that it will take us back up to the whirlpool."

"And what then, I wonder?" whispered Joshua.

The ship was momentarily lost to sight as it rolled deeper into the dust storm. A few more metres and it began spinning round and round, climbing higher and higher up inside a dusty tunnel. Up and up it went until, finally, it was being spat out of the centre of the whirlpool like an orange pip. Once high in the sky, a sea breeze filled

the sails and carried the vessel well clear of the swirling water before dropping it back down to the calm sea.

Captain Starlight steered them well clear of the whirlpool and was intending to follow Dib-Dob's map, taking them back the way they had come. When they reached the point where the volcanic island should have been, there was no sign of it. "I guess it must have blown up and sunk," said Starlight.

"And why not," declared Moonshine. "That's what happens in really HUGE adventures. And well done to you, Starlight. You've saved us yet again."

"I knew all along she would," said Nuff-Nuff. "I told you there was nothing to worry about, Henshaw."

"Whoever said I was worried?" droned Henshaw to himself.

Dib-Dob had overheard and said: "Well I was. As for the Lost City of the Yincas, I think it might be best if it stayed lost." Going to the wheelhouse, he took the map from the chart table, went out on deck, tore it into little pieces and tossed them into the air to be carried away by the wind. Finally, turning to the wheelhouse he said: "I think we've all had enough of huge adventures for now. Take us home Captain."

"Does that mean no more searches for lost cities?" asked Nuff-Nuff hopefully.

Dib-Dob's head rocked from side to side and he shrugged. "Actually, I did hear tell of this giant, golden..." His words faded when he noticed the looks of disapproval on the faces of the others; so he concluded: "Well, maybe we can talk about that later, hmm...?"

Needless to say, nobody was game to reply.