

A Season of Happiness



the wonderful world
of Story-Telling

MOONBERRY PIE



MP103

www.aseasonofhappiness.com

STARLIGHT AND MOONSHINE THE BOWL OF WELLBEING

“What’s Professor Dib-Dob pointing at, Granddad?” asked Danny.

The young boy was seated at his grandfather’s kitchen table along with his older sister Lucy. On the top before them was a Starlight and Moonshine comic. It wasn’t open yet and they were just looking at the front cover which had a picture and the title: The Bowl of Wellbeing.

“Well,” said the children’s grandfather Joshua, “The Professor seems to be showing Lord Nuff-Nuff and his butler Henshaw a drawing of a jewel-studded bowl. Open the comic Danny and let’s begin the story.”

As readers of Starlight and Moonshine will know, Danny is too young to read so that part is handled by his sister. The boy turned to the first page and Lucy began: “Many years ago,” she quoted from the Professor’s words, “The Bowl of Wellbeing was stolen from the island of Rinkydink by Scurvy Sid the pirate.”

“Hear that, Granddad?” chirped Danny excitedly. “Maybe we’ve got another pirate adventure, and I bet it’ll be HUGE!”

“Hold your horses Danny,” chided his sister. “We don’t know that yet. Now, Professor Dib-dob is explaining that the bowl sat in a shrine...”

“What’s a shrine?” asked the boy.

“It’s a sacred place,” explained Joshua. “It could be anything from a temple to a small casket and it was very important to the people who visited it.”

“That’s right, Granddad,” confirmed Lucy. “Apparently the bowl brought peace and happiness to the island; but Scurvy Sid didn’t care about that, only that it was decorated with many precious jewels; in particular four scarabs, one for each of the seasons. And before you butt in again Danny, a scarab is like a beetle. Anyway, it seems that ever since the pirate stole it the lives of the Rinkydink people have become increasingly miserable.”

“That was years ago,” Dib-Dob was saying. “It was thought to be lost forever along with Scurvy Sid who also seemed to have disappeared; and the Right Royal Society has asked me to find the bowl and return it to Rinkydink.”

“Next page, Danny,” Lucy ordered.

The boy turned to the second page and commented: “Now the Professor’s unrolling a sheet of paper. What’s that all about Lucy?”

“Apparently,” Lucy continued, “Just recently some sailors claim they spotted a pirate ship off the beach of an island. At least, they figured it was a pirate ship:

although it had sunk in the shallows, the masts were still visible and one was flying the Jolly Roger...”

“The skull and cross bones!” said Danny quite breathlessly. “That’s cool...”

“Will you button it Danny and let me read!” Lucy growled and waited a few seconds to make sure her brother wasn’t going to interrupt again; only then did she carry on with the story: “The sheet of paper is a map of the place that the ship sank, but Professor Dib-Dob has no idea where the island on the map is. Lord Nuff-Nuff, Dib-Dob’s nephew, isn’t worried, though: “Starlight will know,” he assured the others with confidence.

“Wherever she and Moonshine are,” droned Henshaw dismally. “They’ve been gone for ages and could be anywhere. How are we supposed to contact them?”

Joshua glanced across at his grandson. “Place your hand on the picture Danny,” he said. “I want a word with the Professor.”

Here’s the part that many of you know about; but for those who don’t, once Danny puts his hand on a picture the comic-book characters come to life and the three people in the real world can talk to them.

As soon as Danny’s hand was on the picture, Joshua spoke: “Hello Professor.” Hearing the voice, the three comic-book characters looked up. “We may be able to help locate Starlight and Moonshine,” he advised. “With luck there should be a picture of them somewhere further on in the comic.”

Typically, there were no more pictures on the second page apart from the one Joshua was talking to, plus a number of blank squares. This was because the next part of the story hadn’t happened yet; but it took only a turn of the page to find one that *had* been drawn, and it was exactly what they were hoping for - a single picture of Starlight and Moonshine on the deck of their ship. Danny placed his hand on this picture and said: “Hello Captain Starlight and Colonel Moonshine. It’s Danny here. Granddad wants a chat.”

Once Joshua explained about the lost bowl and where it might be found, Moonshine gave a little chuckle. “Hear that, Starlight? I think we may be off on another Huge adventure.”

“Whatever,” mumbled Starlight, rolling her eyes at the prospect of a disaster-in-the-making. “Better do the blow-up thing, Moonshine. If we fly we’ll be back in Gumbyland quicker.” He glanced up. “Can you tell them we’re coming, Joshua?”

What an amazing ship they have. Not only can it sail on water, but with Moonshine’s blow-up thing to inflate the balloons tied above, it can also fly. And that’s not all – there are wheels fixed to the underside enabling it to drive on dry land. How about that for a bit of comic-book wonder?

Now that Starlight and Moonshine had been contacted it was time for Danny to turn back to the previous page; and, sure enough, more new pictures had appeared. Moonshine was turning the blow-up wheel and the ship was lowering down to the sea just off Gumbyland. In the next picture it was moored at the jetty. Professor Dib-Dob was hurrying up the gangplank to board the ship while Lord Nuff-Nuff and Henshaw followed. As usual they were arguing. “I don’t see why we have to come,” Nuff-Nuff was complaining.

“*You* don’t have to,” Henshaw sneered, “But *I* do because, being a penguin I can swim underwater and get the bowl from the sunken ship; so I’m the best person for the job.”

"You are also my butler," Nuff-Nuff reminded him. "If I stay and you go there'll be no-one to cook my meals, and make my cocoa, and..."

"Have you ever thought of doing things for yourself once in a while?" droned Henshaw.

"I'm a Lord," stated Nuff-Nuff irritably. "Lords don't *do* things – they employ argumentative giant penguins to do *for* them."

"Hear that, Brunswick?" Henshaw said to his little mouse-friend perched on his shoulder. "We have to do everything while he sits around criticizing..."

Dib-Dob was scowling down the gangplank at them and grated: "Will you two stop bickering and get on board?" Then he added a hopeful: "*Please*..."

Lucy had a big grin on her face. "They never change, do they?" she said with a chuckle. "It's going to be an entertaining voyage."

As it happened, readers of the comic didn't have to put up with a continuing Nuff-Nuff and Henshaw sniping contest. Captain Starlight ordered Moonshine to do the blow-up thing; then they were off and, as happens in comic stories, in the next picture they had arrived at the island and the ship was coming down from the sky to settle on the sea near the sunken pirate vessel. Dib-Dob was saying: "When you're ready Henshaw. The bowl is likely to be in Scurvy Sid's cabin."

"Ooh, look," said Danny pointing at the next two pictures. "There's Henshaw swimming underwater towards the sunken ship; then he's inside it. That's really dark and spooky. Do you reckon he'll find some bones of dead sailors?"

"Trust you," snorted Lucy. "And I very much hope not. That's the last of the pictures on this page, Danny. Turn over."

Once he had, Danny said: "Henshaw's returned to Captain Starlight's ship. What's he saying, Lucy?"

"Just that there was no sign of the bowl," commented his sister, "And he's wondering if Scurvy Sid managed to get off his ship before it sank and maybe took the bowl with him."

It seemed they'd had a wasted trip and were preparing to leave when Moonshine spotted something. "There's a rowing boat on the beach. What if Scurvy Sid used it to take the bowl along with his other treasure? Being a pirate he was bound to have some," he added hopefully. "In which case it and the bowl could be on the island somewhere." He picked up his telescope and aimed it at the back of the beach, sweeping it slowly along a cliff face. Then he stopped panning. The next picture was a view through the telescope eye-piece and it looked like a big hole. "That could be a cave," he reported eagerly. "Worth a look, I'd say."

Starlight sailed her ship to the beach then continued onto the sand using the wheels. As Moonshine suspected, the hole was indeed a cave and the five of them were starting into it, stopping just inside the entrance. "It's really dark in here," moaned Nuff-Nuff. "I don't suppose you thought to bring a lantern, Henshaw?" When there was no reply he muttered: "Typical."

"Hey Granddad," said Danny, "I could take them a flashlight. What do you reckon?"

Joshua pondered for a moment or two, finally deciding: "I don't see the harm. There doesn't look to be any sign of danger. Okay, Danny. Take the emergency lantern from the shelf over there. It's got a very strong beam."

Bringing the lantern back the boy switched it on and shone it straight into his eyes. "Woah, that's really bright." Picking up a cookie from the table he asked: "I do it now, Granddad?"

Danny was meaning a truly special trick the people in the real world could do. The cookie might just look like a biscuit with currants in, but it was much more than that. It was their way of actually going into comic-book world to become part of the story...

With the lantern in one hand and the cookie in the other, Danny called out the magic words: "Moonberry Pie!" He was instantly flying through the rainbow sky and tasting sweet berries; then he was there in the picture right behind the comic-book characters. "Hey, guys," he chirped.

Starlight turned in surprise. "Danny! What are you doing here?"

The boy waved the lantern. "I've brought you some light." Hearing Danny's voice, Brunswick ran to him. Slipping his Moonberry Pie into a pocket Danny scooped up the little mouse. "Hello Brunswick," he said cheerfully. "I've missed having you at home." He had a thought: "Er-um... Henshaw, would I be able to take Brunswick back with me for a while? It would be like a holiday for him."

"Not a problem, Danny," replied Nuff-Nuff's giant penguin butler. "But first can you light our way into the cave?"

With Danny in the lead shining the torch beam ahead the others followed close behind; except for Brunswick who went scuttling off further into the cave, a mouse on a mission. They were soon to discover what had attracted his attention. He had made it to the back of the cave and had climbed up on something. As soon as the light shone on it they all stopped dead in their tracks and gasped. "It's a skeleton," hissed Danny unnecessarily.

It certainly was. The gruesome figure was seated on a rock, and judging by the clothing it was a sea captain, or had been once. "Must be Scurvy Sid," said Professor Dib-Dob. "And there on his lap it looks like the Bowl of Wellbeing. We've found it!"

Danny approached warily, trying to ignore the scary manic grin of Scurvy Sid's face that was now just a skull, rather focusing on the little mouse which was running back and forth around the bowl. "What are you looking for Brunswick?" he asked. The mouse stopped for a bit, stood up on his back legs and pawed at a scarab with his front ones. "It's not a biscuit," Danny told him. "You can't eat it."

Brunswick ignored the boy and ran back to the far side of the bowl. Danny had to move so that he could see what Brunswick was about. Same as before, he was standing upright and pawing, this time not another scarab but a hole where one had once been. "Professor Dib-Dob," Danny called. "We may have a problem..."

More than one, it seemed. Suddenly the ground beneath them started to shake. "Earthquake!" warned Moonshine. "I knew this adventure was going to be huge."

The shaking continued to increase. Stones and rocks began falling from the roof causing panic. "Grab the bowl, Danny," shouted Dib-dob; but the boy had gone off, following Brunswick who had scuttled to another part of the cave. The Professor groaned and ordered: "Henshaw – the bowl, quickly! We have to get out of here before the roof comes down!"

The next picture was of the outside of the cave. Clouds of dust billowed from it almost enveloping those who had managed to escape. "I can see all of them," said

Lucy, "Except for Danny. He must still be in the cave! And look – another picture is starting to appear."

It confirmed Lucy's fears. There was Danny crouched down against a wall of the cave while the roof continued to collapse adding to the pile of rocks already mounding up on the floor. Fortunately, Danny had his wits about him. "I'm coming home!" he shouted, then raised a hand holding his cookie in the air and called out a loud, desperate: "MOONBERRY PIE!"

In an instant he was back in real world, standing before the table and looking down at the comic. The others were still on the beach, coughing and spluttering from the dust cloud. "Where's Danny...?" said Starlight, pausing to catch her breath as a huge chunk of the cliff broke and crashed down onto the beach.

"Get off the island NOW!" commanded Joshua.

"But Danny..." Moonshine began.

"Don't worry about me," the boy said to the comic-book characters. "I'm home safe." Placing a gentle hand over his top shirt pocket he added: "And I've got Brunswick with me."

A mad scramble ensued as the five comic-book characters hastily boarded the ship which was now shaking violently. "Do the blow-up thing, Moonshine!" ordered Captain Starlight, "Before our ship falls to bits."

A hurried turn of the blow-up wheel had the ship rising into the air; and only just in time. A large crack was opening on the stretch of beach where it had been standing. "That was a close call," said Colonel Moonshine. "Get us away from here Starlight before something else goes wrong." Unfortunately it did. The Captain steered her ship over the open sea and it should have continued in the same direction, but instead it began turning around in a circle. "What are you doing Starlight?" shouted Moonshine.

"It's not me," Starlight rasped back through gritted teeth as she strained to turn the steering wheel. "For some reason it won't move."

"I might know why," put in Professor Dib-Dob. "Look at the bowl, in particular the hole where the missing scarab was. It's glowing, and whichever way the ship turns, the bowl does too so that the glowing hole always faces the island. This may sound crazy, but I think it wants us to go back for the missing scarab."

"They daren't do that!" said Lucy. "And even if they did, they'll never find a small beetle amongst all that devastation."

"They won't have to," said Danny holding up the scarab. "Brunswick found it. Maybe I can Moonberry-Pie it to the ship so Captain Starlight can steer properly...?"

Although not happy about it, Joshua agreed to let Danny return to comic-book world. "But only *you*, Danny. Brunswick can stay here with us. And as soon as you've delivered the scarab, come straight home."

Joshua, Lucy and Brunswick had their eyes glued to the comic. Following the usual magical routine, the boy from the real world appeared on the ship. He handed the scarab to the Professor, said his goodbyes and chanted: "Moonberry Pie!" The next second he was there in the kitchen again. "Mission accomplished," he said as they watched Starlight's ship heading out to sea without a problem. "Now, Brunswick; I think you deserve something to eat. How about a cookie? Just an ordinary one, though, eh?"