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STARLIGHT'S AND MOONSHINE'S HUGE MOONBERRY PIE CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Christmas was approaching in comic-book world exactly the same as it was everywhere else. Starlight and Moonshine had been helping Lord Nuff-Nuff to get ready. Each year, the people of Gumbyland were invited to Gumbyland Manor where they would each be given a present and loads to eat. Because there would be many visitors, the dining-hall inside the Manor House was too small; so tents were put up on the lawn out the front. Colonel Moonshine was carrying tables to set up in the tents, while Lord Nuff-Nuff's Butler Henshaw, who looked very much like a large penguin, was bringing the chairs; and he was complaining as usual: "I don't know how I can be expected to do all this, AND the cooking!"

"You have ME to help," Moonshine reminded him, "And later, Lucy and Danny will be here. When they arrive, Danny can be with me, and I'm sure Lucy will be only too pleased to do some of the cooking."

"I thought they'd be here before now," grumbled Henshaw, "And where's Captain Starlight?"

"Right here," called Starlight as she walked across the lawn towards them. "I need you Moonshine. We have to fetch the Christmas tree. And before you start moaning, Henshaw," the Captain added, "Lord Nuff-Nuff's coming to give you a hand."

"Oh, wonderful!" groaned Henshaw, "I can just imagine how much help he'll be."

Leaving Henshaw muttering to himself, Starlight and Moonshine returned to the ship and set off for the forest where the Christmas trees grew. "We need quite a big one, Moonshine," said the Captain.

"Not just big," said Moonshine, puffing his chest out, "Only a HUGE one will be good enough."

"Right you are," said Starlight, "You keep a lookout, and when you see one, let me know."

Lucy and Danny knew none of this. They had been busy themselves, preparing for Christmas at home, as well as helping in the town. Decorations had to be put up around their

house, and also in the streets. "Isn't this exciting?" said Lucy, taking some tinsel from her brother and starting to twist it around a light-pole.

"What I'm really waiting for is the Christmas tree," said Danny, "It's always a big one, so big that they have to use ladders to put the decorations on it."

"Yes," agreed Lucy. Hearing the sound of a truck she said: "I think that could be it. Let's go and see."

Lucy and Danny weren't the only ones waiting for the tree to arrive. Everyone in town seemed to be rushing to the truck which had stopped by the green in the centre of town. A deep hole had already been dug in the grass, deep enough so that when the trunk was buried, the tree wouldn't fall over. People stood around waiting and someone said: "Where's the tree?" This wasn't such a silly question because usually the Christmas tree was so big that branches could be seen hanging over the sides of the truck. This time, however, there was no sign of it. The truck driver came round to the back of the truck, unclipped the flap and dropped it down. Reaching in, he pulled out a tree that was no bigger than the one Lucy and Danny had at home. "Sorry, folks," said the driver, "That fire we had last summer burnt all the big ones. This is the best I could find."

It really was a disappointment. Lucy and Danny were talking about it when they got home. "That tiny little tree in the middle of the big lawn looked stupid," said Danny.

"It really is such a shame," said Lucy, "I wish we could do something."

"Yess!" said Danny, "That's it - I can wish the tree into a big one, just like I changed things in the comic-book."

"But that can only change things in comic-book world, Danny," Lucy reminded him. "It doesn't work the same in our world."

"Well, I'm going to try anyway," said her young brother, pulling the comic from under his pillow. Opening it to the page they had been reading last, they were both able to see a picture of Captain Starlight's odd-looking ship. Hanging from three balloons above, it was flying through the sky; and there, tied underneath with ropes was a Christmas tree that was even longer than the ship itself. "See," said Danny excitedly, "There are really huge Christmas trees in comic-book world. All we have to do is figure out how to bring one here."

Colonel Moonshine must have heard, because he was in the next picture that appeared in the comic, and he was standing on the deck of the ship. "We've been talking about that," he said, "And Starlight has come up with an idea."

"How could you do that so quickly?" asked Lucy in surprise, "We've only just mentioned it."

Starlight was now in the picture just behind Moonshine. "I thought you'd have realised by now," she said with a smile.

"Quite right," said the Colonel, "Things happen in comic-book world when they need to happen; so we hear what we need to hear when we need to hear it," Moonshine added. "Does that make any sense?"

"It makes a lot of sense to me," said Danny.

"And we think what you said about the wishing was right, Danny," said the Captain, "But you will have to come here to make it work."

Lucy and Danny each took their Moonberry-pie cookies in their hands and said the words together: "MOONBERRY PIE!" As they had before, they floated through the rainbow sky and moments later found themselves standing on the deck of Captain Starlight's ship. "First," said Starlight, "We have to take the tree to Gumbyland Manor because we'll need the help of Lord Nuff-Nuff and Henshaw."

"I suppose they're still arguing," said Lucy.

"More than usual," said Moonshine, "And they'll be complaining even more still when they find out what they have to do."

Colonel Moonshine was quite right. They were all on the front lawn of Gumbyland Manor where the tree had been set in the ground and was now standing up. "You say we're going to give my tree to Lucy's and Danny's town," moaned Nuff-Nuff, "What kind of a Christmas will we have without a tree?"

"Didn't you hear what Captain Starlight said?" groaned Henshaw, "She'll get you another tree, even bigger than the one you've got now. Then, I suppose, you'll complain that it's TOO big!"

"Enough of that," said Starlight, "We have something to do that can't wait and is very important. Do you have your Moonberry Pies?" They all said they had. "Okay, what I want you to do is stand around the tree in a circle."

Lucy said: "Is this going to be like ring-a-ring of roses?"

Hearing this, Nuff-Nuff grumbled: "I hope not. I'm not really much good at dancing."

"He's not much good at anything else, either," muttered Henshaw under his breath.

"No need to panic, Lord Nuff-Nuff," said Moonshine, "This will be more like ring-a-ring of Christmas-tree."

"And we won't be dancing," added Starlight, "What we will be doing is holding onto our Moonberry pies with one hand, while holding onto a branch of the tree with the other."

"Then," said Danny excitedly, "I know what we have to do next."

"Not until we get the signal from Lucy," said Starlight, "And all together, mind. Go ahead, Lucy, as soon as you're ready."

"Ay-ay, Captain," said Lucy, giving a smart salute. Then, raising her voice so that those round the other side of the tree could hear, she called out: "One, Two, Three..."

And all together they shouted: "MOOONBERRY PIE!"

In a flash, the six friends were no longer standing on Lord Nuff-Nuff's lawn, but were on the grass in Lucy's and Danny's town. And what was more important - they still had hold of the huge Christmas tree. Henshaw saw the little one stuck in the ground. The town-people had decorated it the best they could, but it looked quite silly in the middle of the huge lawn. "Dear, oh dear," he said, "What a sad excuse for a Christmas tree."

"I quite agree with you, Henshaw," said Lord Nuff-Nuff, "So you can see I was quite right to suggest giving the town my own Christmas tree. And before you start arguing as usual," he added, "I'm sure Captain Starlight can get us another in time for Christmas. Isn't that right, Captain?"

"Absolutely," said the Captain with a big smile, "Your wish is my command, Your Lordship. Now, if you're all ready, I think we'd better Moonberry-Pie back to comic-book world before someone sees us."

Lucy gazed around at the odd-looking group and said with a huge grin: "If anyone did, they'd probably think they were dreaming."

**Read MORE stories about Lucy and Danny in the
Six-part series of The HUGE Adventures of Starlight and Moonshine**