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MOONBERRY PIE



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STARLIGHT AND MOONSHINE

The Wrong Comic Book

Story One – Danny’s Terrible Mistake

While Lucy was helping her grandfather Joshua with the household chores, her younger brother Danny had decided that this was a good time to disappear for a while. Intent on doing absolutely no work at all, he’d offered to go to the garden shed for another Starlight and Moonshine comic. Once the others had finished the housework it would be time for all three of them to gather in the kitchen to read the latest adventure; which, Colonel Moonshine would likely say, was going to be Huge.

Now, as anyone who has read the previous stories about the two comic-book heroes and their friends from the real world; they would know how truly special all five were. Because, thanks their belief in make-believe, Danny, Lucy and Joshua were able not only to speak with Starlight and Moonshine as they read their comics; but they could also transport themselves into comic-book world to become a part of the stories.

Finding the box with the Starlight and Moonshine comics, Danny took one from the top and had a quick glimpse at it. Being too young to read he could only look at the pictures and guess what it was about. There would be another way, however – by placing a hand on a picture of them, he could ask Captain Starlight or Colonel Moonshine to tell him about the upcoming adventure, and he was tempted; but he had got into trouble before for visiting comic-book world on his own so he thought it best not to try at that moment.

Really, all he needed to do now was take the comic to the kitchen, only that might mean getting roped into work; so he figured on hanging about in the shed for a bit. To pass the time he had a look in one of the other boxes. Here he discovered some different comics his grandfather had saved from when he was young. It wasn’t the first time Danny had seen them, but he hadn’t been allowed to even look at them. “Those are not for you, young Danny,” Joshua had warned sternly. “They are stories for older children, and some are quite gruesome.”

Well, as his grandfather wasn’t around Danny thought he might sneak a peek. It would have helped if he’d known what ‘gruesome’ meant; but judging by the pictures the story was just about a bunch of soldiers. Admittedly they had guns that they were firing; and in the next picture there was an explosion really close to them; but as for gruesome...? Hearing Lucy calling from the garden, and knowing he was doing the wrong thing, he quickly slipped the comic inside the Starlight and Moonshine one and began flicking through that instead. Only onto the second page Lucy appeared in the doorway.

She was standing there saying: "Come on, Danny. Bring the Starlight and Moonshine comic. We're ready to start reading." His heart skipped a beat as he closed the Starlight and Moonshine comic so that Lucy wouldn't see the other one inside. Unfortunately, she stood there waiting for him, hands on hips watching his every move and there was no way he could slip the forbidden comic back in the box. Maybe, he thought, he would have the opportunity to pull it out when no-one was looking and stuff it under his jumper.

He never got the chance. Even when they were all seated at the kitchen table and he suggested that Lucy might make them a cup of tea before the reading began; that didn't work. "I'm surprised you don't want to get straight into it," said his sister.

"I just fancied some tea," Danny lied.

"Well, you'll have to wait," snapped Lucy. "Let me have the comic."

Danny's heart jumped again. Pulling the comic closer he said quickly: "I want to turn the pages – you just read." Lucy shrugged believing there was no harm in it; so, for the moment anyway, Danny's sneakiness with the other comic remained a secret. "Right," he said, gazing at the cover picture on the comic. "Captain Starlight and Colonel Moonshine are on their ship; and there's Professor Dib-Dob with his nephew Lord Nuff-Nuff and Henshaw the giant penguin butler. I bet they're off on another expedition. Is that it, Lucy? What do the words say?"

"The title is: The Quest for the Golden Gastropod," she read, tracing the words with a finger. "I wonder what a Gastropod is? Turn to the first page and let's find out."

Danny opened the comic and the three of them frowned. "The picture squares are all blank," said the boy unnecessarily.

"Not quite," their grandfather corrected. "There is something in the first one, but it's very vague. Maybe it's fog."

"Or dust like in the Lost City of the Yincas story," Lucy reminded them. "Danny was able to fix that by putting his hand on the picture so that he could talk to Captain Starlight."

"And she told me," her brother cut in, "To put my hand on the next picture and that started the story up again." A quick glance at the other two seemed to confirm that they agreed, so he placed his open palm over the foggy square. Suddenly the other squares on the page filled with pictures; but not ones any of them had expected to see.

"Oh my, Starlight," Moonshine was exclaiming, "Where are we now? And where did all these ships come from?"

No wonder he was surprised. They were floating on the sea in the midst of what looked like a fleet of modern-day warships. Smaller boats were leaving some. These were heading towards the beach and they were packed with soldiers. Overhead, planes flew, dropping bombs and firing at the ships and anything that moved.

"And look to the shore, Moonshine," said the Captain, "People are running everywhere and there are explosions. Oh no!" she exclaimed. "A group of them have just been blown up! It's terrible!" Glancing into the air as if looking out of the comic at the three who were reading it, she pleaded: "Where have you sent us, Danny?"

"I think I know," said Joshua gravely. "I recognise these pictures from another comic-book series." Turning to face his grandson he said sternly: "I don't understand how you did it, but I suspect this is your fault, Danny. Am I right?"

The boy dipped his head so that he didn't have to look into Joshua's eyes. "Sorry, Granddad. It must be because of this." Opening the Starlight and Moonshine comic he withdrew the other one he had been hiding there.

Joshua let out a snort of disapproval. "That explains it. Because the other comic was also under your hand with just a few pages separating it, you have sent Starlight and Moonshine into a different story."

Lucy pulled the other comic closer so that she could read the title page and asked: "What's D-Day, Granddad?"

"Put simply," he explained, "It's about the Second World War; and D-Day is when the allied forces landed in France to free Europe from the German invasion. It was a shocking time and many lives were lost. My greatest dread, however, is that Starlight and Moonshine won't survive."

"Hear that, Danny," scolded Lucy. "How could you do such a dumb thing?" Before her brother could answer she carried on: "What we have to do now is find a way to get Captain Starlight and everyone on her ship back to their proper comic book. Is that possible, Granddad?"

"I don't know, Lucy," Joshua answered, "But for the moment somehow we have to move them all out of the danger zone before one of those planes drops a bomb on them." Facing the comic he said: "Can you hear me, Captain Starlight?" Once the Captain replied that she did, Joshua continued: "Good. Now, you have to get away from the beach. I think your best bet is to blow up the balloons and fly inland. While the allied troops are trying to land, the German bombers are concentrating on *them*. Make sure you go well into the countryside, though; and stay high because there will also be enemy ground troops firing from the back of the beach."

The three sitting at the kitchen table watched the next few pictures change one by one as Starlight and the others began to appear in the scenes of the original D-Day comic. Activity on the ship was frantic, with Nuff-Nuff and Henshaw scrambling for cover and Moonshine turning a wooden wheel to do what he called the blow-up thing. Starlight was at the helm waiting for the balloons that were tied to and floating above the ship to get bigger. Dib Dob was just standing, staring in awe at the battle raging around them. In moments the ship began to rise off the water. As soon as it was high enough in the air, Starlight ordered: "Hold on tight everyone: we'll have to go really fast."

The breeze blowing in from the sea helped and the ship was soon flying inland and well away from the beach. As Joshua had said, there were lines of enemy soldiers aiming their fire at the allies as they scrambled to the back of the beach. Some of the German riflemen glanced up when this strange ship flew over them and one took a pot-shot. Unfortunately it went straight through one of the balloons; and we all know from the Starlight and Moonshine Pirate Adventure what problems that was likely to cause.

Peering through his telescope at the front of the ship, Colonel Moonshine certainly did. "There are two holes in one of the balloons and it's leaking air. We're losing height, Starlight!" he yelled. "Go as fast as you can. With luck we might make it to those trees up ahead."

Over the countryside they went, dropping lower and lower as the air escaped from the punctured balloon. "We can patch that like we did before," said Danny. "I can Moonberry Pie to them with the scissors and sticky tape."

"Stupid boy," growled Lucy. "Do you want to get shot?"

"I'll be okay," Danny assured his sister. "No-one's shooting at Captain Starlight's ship now."

“Not yet,” put in Joshua, “But look down there just ahead of them. There’s a group of soldiers hiding in the bushes.”

“But they look like the men on the beach – they’re wearing the same uniforms. That means they’re British, right?” suggested Lucy. “They won’t fire on Captain Starlight, surely? They wouldn’t shoot at friends.”

“The soldiers don’t know they are friends,” groaned Joshua. “And...” he pointed to the last picture on the page. “Starlight’s ship is on the ground. Those soldiers have started firing; and what’s worse is that one of them is preparing to throw a grenade.”

“What’s a grenade, Granddad?” asked Danny.

“It’s like a bomb that can be thrown by hand,” Joshua replied.

Danny’s fingers were on the corner of the comic-book page. “I’ll turn to the next picture so we can see what happens...”

“NO!” roared Joshua catching hold of his grandson’s hand. “The scene in this picture is frozen until we go to the next one. Before we move on we have to think of a way to stop the soldiers from shooting; and we can’t have that one throw the grenade.”

“Isn’t there something about waving a white flag?” asked Lucy. “If Captain Starlight’s got one and he waves it the soldiers will know they’ve given up and will stop their attack.”

“They might think it’s a trick,” said Joshua.

“Well, we have to do something,” said Danny, “And if that soldier chucks his hand bomb and blows up the ship, that’ll be the end of Captain Starlight and Colonel Moonshine, forever and ever.”