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MOONBERRY PIE



MP83

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STARLIGHT AND MOONSHINE THE HIDDEN TREASURE Part Two

It was certainly a mystery. Danny had supposedly Moonberry-Pied into comic-book world; but he hadn't appeared in any of the pictures; so where was he? Lucy questioned her grandfather: "What did you mean when you said he may not be anywhere?"

Joshua took a moment to reply. Looking carefully at the comic he said: "I know this might sound a bit silly, but I was thinking about Brunswick and how he was chasing biscuit crumbs."

"What does that have to do with Danny?" said Lucy with a frown.

"Well, see there." He pointed at one of the blank picture panels. "Isn't that a crumb? More than likely it came from Danny's Moonberry Pie; and if it did, maybe the hand that was holding the cookie was resting on it."

"And the other was on the library picture," suggested Lucy, "So he might have gone to the blank panel instead," she added, "If that's the case, why isn't he there?"

"Because," said Joshua, "There is no picture yet, so he can't be in it until that part of the story unfolds. I'm wondering if he's stuck somewhere in between the real world and comic-book world; which is where he'll stay until a new picture appears in the panel his hand was on. And the only way that will happen is for the others to get past the iron gauntlet."

"One of us has to go to the library and bring Yum-Yum's journal back here," said Lucy. "Then we can tell them how to stop the axes chopping. Let me do it."

Joshua wasn't sure. "I don't know, Lucy. After what's already happened in this weird comic, it's a risk I'd prefer not to take. I could lose you as well as Danny."

"Sorry, Granddad," said Lucy, picking up her cookie, "I'm going. See you in a flash – or two." Keeping the hand holding the cookie well away from the blank picture panels, she placed her free one on the library scene and called out: "Moonberry Pie!"

Lucy flew through the rainbow sky which tasted of sweet berries and appeared instantly in Nuff-Nuff's library. Rushing to the table, she snatched up Yum-Yum's journal and was about to call out the magic comic-book words when she had a sudden thought: "If I pull down the book and open the bookcase door, Captain Starlight, Colonel Moonshine and Henshaw can come back to safety in the library."

"But that doesn't help Nuff-Nuff and Brunswick," Joshua reminded her, "And don't forget - at least one of the comic-book characters has to go on through the story to wherever Danny is, otherwise we may never get him back."

"You're right, Granddad," said Lucy with a sigh. "I'm coming home." With that, she called out: "Moonberry Pie!" The next second, she was back in the kitchen. "There," she said, handing the journal to Joshua. "Let's get the story moving again." The girl placed a hand on the picture showing the other three looking at Nuff-Nuff and Brunswick stranded half-way along the iron gauntlet. She spoke first to the picture: "We've got the journal, Captain Starlight." Then to Joshua: "We need to find the bit with the egg on it. That's where things started to go wrong."

Even though Henshaw had wiped off the egg there was still a stain, so that page was easy enough to find. Joshua scanned quickly through. "Here's the bit about opening the gate," he said. "The instruction is – *to open the gate, turn the hilt to eight.*"

"We can see the shield thing just to the right of the entrance to the iron gauntlet," Lucy pointed out, "And the hilt is on the number eight where Lord Nuff-Nuff must have turned it. What comes next, Granddad?"

"It finishes there," said Joshua, turning the page. "Nuff-Nuff never got to the other part which says – *back to the top to stop the chop.*" He spoke to the comic-book picture: "Can someone turn the hilt of the dagger on the shield back up to the top?"

"I'll do it," said Henshaw who was closest. He carefully turned the hilt back to the top of the shield. Everyone waited, but nothing appeared to happen. The giant penguin sighed. "I suppose the only way to test it is for one of us to walk past the first suit of armour." When no-one moved, Henshaw moaned: "Oh, well, once more into the breach," and he started gingerly into the long corridor, hesitating before passing the first of the axes.

"It's worked!" said Lucy jubilantly as the two in the real world watched Henshaw begin walking again, first past one, then two axes, neither of which moved.

Brunswick must have noticed that the danger was past and scuttled over to Henshaw. Nuff-Nuff, however, started walking in the opposite direction towards the far end of the iron gauntlet. "Where are you going?" Henshaw called to his Lordship's back.

"To find Yum-Yum's treasure, of course," droned Nuff-Nuff, as if it ought to be obvious. "I'm not giving up now."

Lucy spoke to her grandfather: "Is that really wise?"

"Maybe not," Joshua replied, "But if they can keep the new pictures coming, we might find Danny." The two real people watched as the comic-book characters moved to the end of the iron gauntlet passage and found themselves facing a big wooden door. "According to the journal," said Joshua, "The next instruction says, and he read it out loud: "*Unlock the door, but black or white? Push only one, the left is right.*"

"That's a bit Irish, isn't it?" sneered Nuff-Nuff.

"Maybe not," said Starlight. "Look – there's another shield fixed to the door."

"That's just Count Yum-Yum's coat of arms," Nuff-Nuff informed everyone, "But I don't see what good it is to us."

"What's on it?" asked Joshua. "Are there, by any chance two hands, one black and one white?"

"You're dead right," said Nuff-Nuff, hurrying to stand before the shield, "And didn't you say to push one of the hands – the black is right?"

"No, wait!" Joshua called out, "The journal says the *LEFT* is right..."

But Nuff-Nuff was in too much of a rush and had put his right hand over the black hand on the shield and pushed. When nothing happened, he said: "So much for the black hand. Let's try the white one," and he put his left hand over the white hand on the shield and pushed it. A scraping noise could be heard coming from the other side of the door, as if a large bolt was being drawn back. Then the door moved inwards a little. "There," declared Nuff-Nuff, "No harm done."

He began pulling on the door and hesitated when Joshua called out again: "Hold on a moment. The next part is another warning - *The elevator takes me down, but tarry not or I may drown*. I'd say that means whatever you do next has to be done quickly; but have a good look first before going any further."

Nuff-Nuff stepped back, saying: "Over to you again, Henshaw."

The penguin butler sighed. "Why doesn't that surprise me?" Edging towards the door, he peered around it. The next picture showed his back and what he was looking at. "It's some kind of cage," he announced.

"I bet that's the elevator," said Lucy. "I remember them in one of my video games. Can you see a lever somewhere, Henshaw?"

"There's something sticking out of the floor on the far side," he replied.

"That's it," said Lucy. "What all of you have to do is stand in the cage, then one of you pull the lever."

"I wonder what the drowning bit is all about?" Moonshine asked.

"No idea," replied Starlight. "The only way to find out is to do what Lucy said."

The following two pictures showed the group filing into the cage. Nuff-Nuff nudged Henshaw towards the lever. The butler just stood there. "Go on," urged His Lordship, "Push it, or pull it, or something."

"Okay," said his butler, "But don't blame me if you drown. I won't, of course because, unlike someone who shall remain nameless, I can swim." Grasping the lever, he tried moving it. "A bit stiff," he said with a grunt, then: "Ah, got it." Suddenly they were going down, descending into a really big room; and just as the elevator touched the floor, someone else appeared before them.

"That's Danny!" said Lucy in amazement. "You were right, Granddad. We've found him at last."

The boy must have heard his sister's voice. He looked up and demanded to know: "Where am I, Lucy? This isn't the library! And where's the water coming from? My feet are getting wet."

"Join the others on the elevator, Danny," Joshua ordered hastily. "As soon as he's on board, push the lever in the opposite direction to go back up, Henshaw."

"No, not yet," Nuff-Nuff blurted out. Stepping off the platform, he began splashing through the water to a large stone block in the centre of the room. Standing before it, he gazed excitedly over the items arranged on it. "Here it is - Yum-Yum's treasure! I knew I'd find it." Turning around he called to the ones still in the cage: "Come and help me. I can't carry it all on my own."

He waited a moment to check that the others were coming. Starlight and Moonshine were, but Henshaw was still on the platform. It seemed Brunswick wasn't keen to venture into the water. Scooping up his mouse friend, he gave him a little reassuring stroke and stepped out of the elevator cage. Nuff-Nuff scowled at

the delay, then returned his attention to the stone block and began reaching for a jewel-studded crown.

Joshua called out again: “No, Nuff-Nuff! The journal says: *Take only the chest – that, is my prize. Touch the crown and the waters will rise...*” Once again, Nuff-Nuff took no notice of the warning and had picked up the crown. What happened next had them all gazing outward in dismay. Carved at intervals on the surrounding walls were some gruesome-looking stone heads; and water had begun pouring from their open mouths. “Back to the elevator!” Joshua shouted.

For a moment confusion reigned. Nuff-Nuff had let go of the crown and was in the process of picking up a large silver platter of what looked like precious gems. He called over his shoulder to Henshaw: “Grab the chest!” Then he spun, bumped into his butler and dropped the platter. “You clumsy penguin!” growled Nuff-Nuff.

“Hark who’s talking,” sneered Henshaw, “And if you want the chest, move out of my way.”

Henshaw had barely time to pick up the small wooden chest in the middle of the stone block when he heard Moonshine announce: “I think we’re too late – the elevator’s going up on its own.”

“See,” Henshaw snarled at Nuff-Nuff, “You and your stupid ideas!”

Starlight ignored the arguments to ask: “How do we get out of here now?”

“Better think of something quick,” said Danny. “The water’s up to my knees already.”

Joshua spoke to the comic again: “I believe there’s only one way. Have you all got your cookies?” It seemed even Nuff-Nuff had remembered to bring his this time. “Right, I’m hoping you can do what you did in *The Amazing Roller Ghoster* story.”

“What, all hold hands and Moonberry Pie to somewhere else, you mean?” queried Starlight. “Where to, though?”

“I’m thinking back here to my kitchen in the real world,” Joshua replied.

“Could that work?” Moonshine wondered.

“Well, it did with Professor Dib-Dob,” Lucy reminded them. “When he was stuck on the island and the volcano was about to explode, Granddad took a spare cookie, Moonberry-Pied there and brought him back to here.”

“There’s a small problem,” said Henshaw. “Dib-Dob and Joshua both had cookies, but what about Brunswick? He never had a cookie in the first place.”

“And even if he had, he’d probably have eaten it by now,” muttered Nuff-Nuff.

“No worries,” chirped Danny, “He’s only little, so he can share mine. Give him to me, Henshaw.” The boy waited for Henshaw to pass Brunswick over. “You can ride with me,” he said. Once the little mouse was in his shirt pocket, he announced: “Ready when you are.”

The plan was simple and it had worked before, so what could possibly go wrong? Holding hands for Henshaw wasn’t easy, seeing as he was carrying the wooden chest; but he managed. When they were all holding hands, Danny asked: “Can I do the count?”

“Better do it now,” said Moonshine. “The water’s rising very fast.”

“Okay,” said Danny, “After three – one, two, three...” And they all called out “MOONBERRY PIE!”

Joshua and Lucy were prepared to have a pretty crowded kitchen, only nobody appeared, not even Danny. “Where are they, Granddad?”

Joshua had a sudden thought and turned back to the page in the comic where the search for Nuff-Nuff had begun and, sure enough, all five of them were back in the library. “How did that happen?” queried Lucy.

“I think I have a fair idea,” Joshua replied, and he went on to explain: “A part of it is due to this weird comic, but mainly Danny putting his hand on the blank square when he Moonberry-Pied from here. Doing it a second time from the hidden room must have set things straight again and he ended up in the library where he should have gone in the first place.”

“Along with all of the others,” said Lucy. “Uh-oh, it seems Lord Nuff-Nuff and Henshaw are at it again...”

“Well, open it then,” commanded Nuff-Nuff. “I want to see my treasure.” Henshaw flipped the lid, paused briefly and withdrew something from the chest. “That’s a *BOOK!*” spluttered Nuff-Nuff. “Where’s the treasure?”

“Actually, the book *is* a kind of treasure,” said his penguin butler, “From my point of view, anyway. It’s Count Yum-Yum’s secret recipes – it’s a cookery book and...,” Henshaw was thumbing through some of the pages, “These recipes are quite wonderful, totally new to me; and probably to anyone else.” He began musing: “I could make some of these cakes and candies and sell them.” He looked pointedly at Nuff-Nuff. “I could use the profits for the housekeeping. I *might* even consider buying you some Crunchy Corn Doo-Dads; if you behave yourself, of course.”

Nuff-Nuff scowled and snorted: “Hrr-umff! Where, may I ask, are you going to get the money to buy the ingredients? Don’t expect me to fund your bakery venture!”

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” said Henshaw with a grin. He dipped back into the wooden chest and brought out something which he showed to Nuff-Nuff. “One of these should be enough to buy all the ingredients I need, and some.”

Nuff-Nuff peered at what Henshaw was holding. “Is that a jewel?”

“Nothing wrong with your eyesight then,” said the butler with a smirk. He offered the wooden chest to Nuff-Nuff. “There are more of them, which I magnanimously donate to the Gumbyland treasury. Don’t spend them all at once.”

“So, it seems Lord Nuff-Nuff has found his treasure after all,” said Lucy, “And they all got back safely.”

“Yes,” said Joshua, “Now, I think it’s time Danny came home.” He spoke to the comic: “Just keep it simple this time Danny.”

“Okay, Granddad,” said the boy surprisingly. “I need some dry clothes anyway.” And with that, he Moonberry-Pied back to the real world, without incident this time. Just about to go to his room, he felt movement in his shirt pocket. “Um-ah! I forgot about Brunswick – I’ve still got him. Maybe I should take him back to Henshaw...?”

“Not right now, Danny,” said his grandfather rather hurriedly. “Save that for the next comic, one that hopefully isn’t so weird - yes?”

Brunswick gave a little squeak. “I guess Henshaw’s little mouse friend agrees,” said Danny as he continued out of the kitchen. On the way he began speaking to Brunswick: “Let me get changed, then we’ll see if we can find you something better to eat than just plain old crackers.” Brunswick squeaked again; and it sounded like a really happy squeak.