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Opening extract from

Mr Gum and the Goblins

Written by

Andy Stanton

Illustrated by

David Tazzyman

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Chapter 1

In The Dead Of Winter

It was the Dead Of Winter and the little town of Lamonic Bibber lay under a blanket of snow and ice. Everywhere you looked, there was snow and ice. On the trees – snow and ice. On the ground – snow and ice. Inside the Museum of Snow and Ice – snow and ice. It was the coldest winter anyone could remember.

microwaving his feet to keep warm. 'Twas the Dead Of Winter, all right.

The streets of Lamonic Bibber were quiet at that late hour but presently there came the sound of footsteps as three shadowy figures turned into the high street. And now I will tell you who they were, for I have seen them before – and perhaps you know them too.

The leader was Friday O'Leary, a wise old man who knew the secrets of Time and Space.

in glow-in-the-dark paint and that was almost as good.

"Tis late, friends,' whispered Friday O'Leary as the church bells rang for ten o'clock, belting out like absolute marshmallows in the wintry night. 'We should be getting home, for who knows what strange spirits are about in the Dead Of Winter?'

'There are no strange spirits, kind Friday,' chuckled Alan Taylor. 'Methinks you have been spending too much time in the taverns, listening

'I gots no idea,' gulped Polly. 'But I don't likes the sound of that sound one little bit.'

'What if . . .' squeaked Alan Taylor, bravely weeing himself in fear. 'What if it's Mr Gum?'

Now, at the mention of that name they all went very quiet, because there was nothing worse than Mr Gum, not even accidentally falling into a volcano full of history teachers. For Mr Gum and his no-good friend Billy William the Third were the worst criminals Lamonic Bibber

'But Alan Taylor, no one's seen Mr Gum for ages,' said Polly.

'Nonetheless, he might have come back,' replied Friday gravely. 'For as the famous saying goes – "*He might have come back.*" Let us investigate!'

And the three friends set off to see what was what, their lanterns swinging hopefully against the darkness. With each step they took the wailing grew louder, until –

WAAAAIIIILLLL

'NO!' cried Friday in distress, for Mrs Lovely was his wife and he loved her like a barbecue. *'NO!'* he cried into the cold, cold night. *'NOOOO!'*

