

Dolly Witch's Coconut Christmas

IT WAS November, and like most Novembers in Michigan, it was a cold, gray, dismal month.

Dolly Witch was not as young as she used to be. Every year the Michigan winter seemed to bother her more. Her bones were aching and her knees cracked so loudly when she bent over that the noise woke up her funny fat cat that was sleeping in front of the fire.

Something had to be done. It would be months before the warm summer days would return. Winter had only just begun and already she was feeling too sad to cast a happy spell.

Then, suddenly, she had an idea. Why not fly down to Florida for the winter? Dolly had always enjoyed shellpicking on the beaches and swimming in the warm waters of the Florida Bay, on the Gulf of Mexico.

She could see it all now. She would spread a blanket on the sandy shore, and bask in the sun while she dreamed of the bold and lonesome pirates that once frequented those beaches.

Yes, that was the life for her. She guessed you could call her a "sand witch." Dolly laughed at her own pun.

WELL, SHE had made up her mind. She would leave as soon as she could get ready.

The first thing she did was have her broom checked over and tuned up. A few minor repairs were necessary for it hadn't been re-bound or even repainted since the year she lent it to Santa Claus to deliver presents when his reindeer got sick from eating fruitcake and couldn't make the trip.

Next she packed her bag. Of course, she took her frog-green bathing suit and her hot pink "Miami Mama" straw hat, the one with the broad brim, red and yellow flowers and a fluorescent orange scarf that was long enough to blow in the wind, even when tied tightly under her chin.

Then she tucked in two brightly colored manumous from her closet. Let the other, more old-fashioned witches wear black. She preferred more colorful clothing.

They could keep those horribly uncomfortable pointed-toed shoes, too, if they liked. But, as for Dolly, she would wear war sandals and she put her most comfortable pair into her bag.

Dolly pictured herself as quite beautiful, decked out in her finery in spite of the fact she was as round and plump as a butterball.

SHE DID not forget to pack her sunglasses, her tanning oil and a big net bag for gathering shells. Then she picked up her cat, perched it on her shoulder, locked up her house, and waved goodbye to the neighbors.

She pointed her newly painted broom southward, jumped on its handle and off she flew.

Except for a blizzard in Ohio, the weather was good all the way, and she flew non-stop to Sarasota.

It didn't take Dolly long to find a nice condo to rent, right on Lido Beach. She unpacked, and then went over to St. Armand's Key to get some



orange juice and a few groceries.

Dolly Witch loved shopping on St. Armand's circle. She stopped into the Pied Piper toy shop and bought a couple of hand puppets to send to her little friends Krystal and Coveney, back in Michigan. She also bought a musical bear for their baby sister and a book for their cousin Corinne.

The next day, she made postcards by painting pictures on the dried bark she cut from the coconut palms on the beach.

DOLLY WITCH had fun in Florida, and her slightly green skin took on a healthy glow from the sun. The warm saltwater was great for swimming and she didn't have a single ache or pain.

In fact, she felt great, and could bend over easily to pick up sand dollars and starfish washed up on the shore.

But something was wrong. By mid-December, Dolly began to feel lonely. She really loved Florida, but the people she loved were all in Michigan.

She didn't really want to go back to the cold weather up north, but even flying her green dragon kite over the bay wasn't as much fun as she thought it would be, without anyone to enjoy it with her.

Then Dolly Witch got a wonderful idea! Why not invite her little friends Krystal and Coveney to come and visit her during their school holiday? Their baby sister was still too little to enjoy playing in the sand, and their cousin Corinne wasn't really old enough to leave her mother yet, either.

HERE IS Krystal and Coveney's recipe for

COCONUT ICE CREAM SNOWBALLS

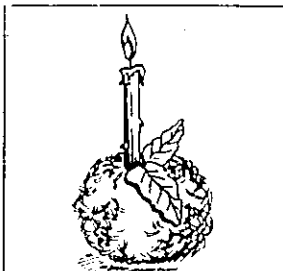
To make six of these, you will need:
A quart of plain vanilla ice cream
Lots of shredded or flaked coconut (in Michigan, you may have to use the kind you buy in a bag)
A bowl of warm water
Mint leaves
6 little red candles (the kind you put on birthday cake)

Using your hands, shape the ice cream into six hard-packed "snowballs." You may wish to dip your hands into the warm water, occasionally, to make this easier.

Roll each snowball in the coconut until well covered. Place it on a serving plate. Stick a candle in the top, and garnish with a mint leaf. Light the candle, and serve.

You may wish to make these ahead of time and place them in the freezer during dinner. Take them out, light the

candle, and serve them for dessert. Don't leave them in the freezer too long, however, or they will get freezer burn.



artwork by GWEN DIETRICH

To rid Dolly Witch of her sadness and homesickness, Krystal and Coveney made Coconut Ice Cream Snowballs from vanilla ice cream and shredded coconut.



artwork by GWEN DIETRICH

Dolly Witch, her bones aching, decided to spend the winter in the warmth of Florida. With her funny, fat cat on her shoulders, she flew non-stop to Sarasota.

But Coveney and Krystal were ages 6 and 7 and if their parents said "yes," they could fly down on an airplane, of course, and she could meet them at the airport.

DOLLY DIDN'T even wait until six o'clock when the rates changed. She went right then and telephoned the girls' mother.

The two little sisters had a

wonderful time in Florida. They helped Dolly fly the green dragon kite and they met other children to play with on the beach. They picked up sand dollars, and Dolly Witch told all the children the legend of that beautiful, fragile shell.

Then they painted the poinsettias on the shells bright red and hung them on the Christmas tree with pretty green ribbons.

They also painted pictures of palm trees, shells, sailboats and sea gulls on the green coconuts they picked up from beneath the trees to send back home as Christmas gifts.

Dolly opened one of the paper ones and took out a big brown coconut from the center. They made holes in the end of it and drank the coconut "milk" from inside. Then they broke open the shell and ate the sweet white meat.

Dolly cut up chunks of it, and put it in the blender. When it was shredded, she used it to make coconut cookies and coconut cream pie.

The girls were having a great time but still, Dolly felt there was something missing. Suddenly, Coveney noticed a tear in Dolly's eye and asked what was wrong.

"Oh, nothing, really," answered Dolly. "But Christmas just doesn't seem like Christmas without a little snow."

"**DON'T FEEL** sad, Dolly," said Krystal. "Coveney and I will make snowballs for you. You go lie on the beach and we will surprise you later."