

Santa and the Zabbazara Bus

BY LUCRECE BEALE

"If you look into the mirror you will turn to stone!"



Synopsis: Mr. D is driving his bus to the made-up land of Zabbazara. On the way he picks up a donkey, a crocodile, a little lost boy and a Voodoo man.

CHAPTER FOUR

Mr. D was sorry he had picked up the Voodoo man. It wasn't that he didn't want to go to Santa Land. What he didn't like was the way the Voodoo man's eyes glittered when he said he had business in Santa Land. What kind of business? Mr. D wanted to know.

"I have a present for Santa Claus," said the Voodoo man. "A very nice surprise."

This made Mr. D feel better. He turned the bus off the main road as the Voodoo man directed and headed for the mountains in the north. The old bus rocked and swayed on the bumpy roads as they went higher and higher among the mountain peaks.

It grew colder and colder. The snow was coming down so fast and thick Mr. D could hardly see the road. It didn't matter, because the Voodoo man could see everything—even in the dark—and he knew exactly where to go.

Mr. D did as he was told. He said to himself that, after all, the Voodoo man must be good to think of taking a present to Santa Claus, when everyone else went to Santa to get presents.

"You have the real Christmas spirit," he said to the Voodoo man.

"Oh, I like to give presents," said the Voodoo man. "I give presents all the time."

"I wish you would give me a present," spoke up the donkey. "I wish you would give me some sense."

"And give me beauty," said the crocodile.

"And me a home!" piped up the little lost boy.

"Pshaw!" scoffed the Voodoo man. "Those are sissy presents. My presents are different."

"Tell us!" begged the little boy. "What kind of presents do you give?"

The Voodoo man bent down and opened his black bag. The crocodile and the donkey and the little boy leaned over his back. Mr. D nearly ran the bus off the road trying to peer around over his shoulder. What they saw nearly caused their eyes to pop out of their heads.

The bag was filled with snakes and scorpions and centipedes!

"Shut it up!" cried the little boy. "They're climbing out!"

The Voodoo man grinned and shut the bag.

"Is . . . is that what you're taking to Santa Claus?" stammered Mr. D.

"Oh, no. I'm taking Santa a very pretty present."

"C-can we see it?"

"You can see one side of it." The Voodoo man reached under his cloak and pulled out a mirror. The glass was covered with paper but the back of it shone with sparkling jewels.

"Oh, it is pretty!" said the crocodile with relief. "Why can't we look in the glass?"

"Because if you look in the glass you will turn to stone."

Mr. D jumped so hard the bus stalled. He leaped from his seat and faced the Voodoo man.

"You're taking THAT to Santa Claus?"

The Voodoo man stood up, too. He wrapped his cloak around him and said, "I'm casting a spell over the whole of Santa Land."

"I—I won't take you," shouted Mr. D. "I won't go any further!"

"You won't need to. We're already there."

The Voodoo man waved his hand. The bus door opened and he stepped out into the dark.

NEXT: The Accident