

Santa and the Zabbazara Bus

BY LUCRECE BEALE



Santa had never seen as strange a group as this.

Synopsis: Mr. D and the passengers on the Zabbazara bus finally reach Santa Land, but the Voodoo man has already arrived and turned the elves to stone.

CHAPTER EIGHT

"The Voodoo man has been here!" cried the little boy. "He's turned them all to stone!"

"It can't be!" cried Mr. D.

He ran into a work shop. It was the doll shop. A dozen elves sat at their work benches. They had hammers and nails and needles and thread in their hands. But the hammers did not hammer and the needles did not sew. The workers had frozen into statues. They were as lifeless as the dolls on the tables before them.

It was the same in every shop. Mr. D went through them all. Even the reindeer in the stables were still. And the elves who stood outside were as motionless as the rest—stopped in the midst of whatever they were doing and wherever they were going.

Tears welled up in Mr. D's eyes. He said it was the most dreadful day in history.

The little boy wept. So did the crocodile. But The Fabulous Dunklebum said, "What about Santa Claus? Maybe he's not turned to stone."

"But — he'd be the first," protested the little boy. "The

Voodoo man hated him most of all."

"All the same," said the Fabulous Dunklebum, "I think I will go and see."

He waddled off, his long arms dangling and his lights blinking off and on. The others followed, though they were sure there wasn't any hope.

But they were wrong.

Because suddenly and for the first time they saw smoke curling up out of the chimney of a little red house that stood alone in a far-away field.

They all saw it at the same time, and they ran as fast as they could across the field and up the steps of the little red house. Mr. D banged with both fists on the door. He shouted, "Who's there? Oh, speak up! Is anyone there?" The door opened. There stood Santa Claus! He was plump and ruddy-faced. His eyes sparkled and his mouth turned up at the ends. He breathed and he moved. He was very much alive. "Of course I'm here," he said, as calm as you please. "What did you expect?"

The visitors were so stunned with surprise not one of them could find voice to speak. Their mouths worked but no words came.

Santa was used to strange visitors, but he had never seen as strange a group as this. But he thought that there was nothing a warm fire and a cup of hot chocolate couldn't cure, so he said, "This seems to be my day for visitors. An unseen one left me a gift during the night. It's sitting on my breakfast table. Come join me while I open it."

The visitors came to life. They crowded after Santa into the house. Mr. D, seeing the package on the kitchen table, stammered, "W-who brought it to you?"

"I did not see him," said Santa. "I was asleep and he left it inside the door." He picked up the present and tore off the wrapping. In his hands was the Voodoo man's jewel-encrusted mirror.

"Don't look!" shouted Mr. D. He tried to snatch the mirror from Santa's hands.

"But it's beautiful," said Santa. He held the mirror straight out to keep it away from Mr. D. The face of the mirror was turned towards the Fabulous Dunklebum and before the poor monster could help himself he had looked in the mirror and turned to stone.

NEXT: A Sad Story