

Santa and the Zabbazara Bus

"How could a city bus get to Santa Land?" asked Santa

BY LUCRECE BEALE



Synopsis: Mr. D reaches Santa just as he is opening the magic mirror left by the Voodoo man. Santa does not look in the mirror, but the Fabulous Dunklebum does and is turned to stone.

CHAPTER NINE

Mr. D snatched the mirror from Santa's hands, took it to the fireplace and smashed it into a thousand pieces.

But it was too late to save the Fabulous Dunklebum. The creature's lights had gone out and he had turned to stone.

"What is it?" cried Santa. "What has happened?"

"It was the Voodoo man's mirror," said Mr. D. "He has already cast a spell over the whole of Santa Land. If you had looked into the mirror you, too, would have turned to stone."

"The VOODOO man!" exclaimed Santa, turning pale.

"He's a wicked, wicked man in a long black cloak!" blurted out the little boy.

"I know him well. Oh, surely he hasn't been here!"

"Come and see!"

They left the house and Santa ran through all the shops. He saw what they said was true. A terrible curse had been laid on Santa Land. Every elf and every reindeer had turned to stone.

Santa walked up and down. He twisted his hands and shook his head. All the good cheer had left his face.

"Why did he do it?" cried the little boy. "Why would anyone want to do such a thing?"

"Because he is the Voodoo man. Long ago he swore to destroy Santa Land and all the creatures in it. He hated Christmas and all other days when people make merry. He wanted to get rid of all the good spirits in the world, and then he himself would rule the land.

"But I never feared him because he didn't really have much power. Moreover, a friendly witch told me that the Voodoo man could never get to Santa Land unless he came on a city bus driven by a cross-eyed man. That was impossible, of course. How could a city bus get to Santa Land? But the witch was wrong, and the Voodoo man came some other way."

Mr. D's hands flew to his face. The crocodile and the donkey and the little boy looked at him in dismay.

"T-the witch was right," stammered the little boy.

"He came on a city bus," whispered the crocodile.

"With a cross-eyed man," moaned the donkey.

Mr. D took his hands down and Santa looked into his eyes and saw for the first time that they were crossed.

"But—the bus? Where is it? Where did you come from? How did you get here?"

Mr. D told him the bus was behind the hill at the end of the road. Then he told Santa how he had driven the bus up and down Main Street all his life until he couldn't stand it any more. He just had to find out what there was in the world beyond Main Street. So he put a sign saying "ZABBAZARA" on the side of the bus and drove out of town.

He picked up the crocodile and the donkey and the little boy because they were lonely and homeless and wanted to go, too, though they didn't know where Zabbazara was or even if there was such a place. Then he picked up the Voodoo man, who tricked them into driving to Santa Land.

"It's a sad story," finished Mr. D. "I never should have left Main Street."

But Santa's face had brightened. "Zabbazara," he murmured. "Zabbazara! How did you know about Zabbazara?"

"It—it's just a place I made up."

"Those are the best places!" exclaimed Santa. "And Zabbazara is the best place of all. Come—we'll go to Zabbazara. I think it is there we will find the charm to break the spell of the Voodoo man!"

NEXT: A Map of Dream Lands.