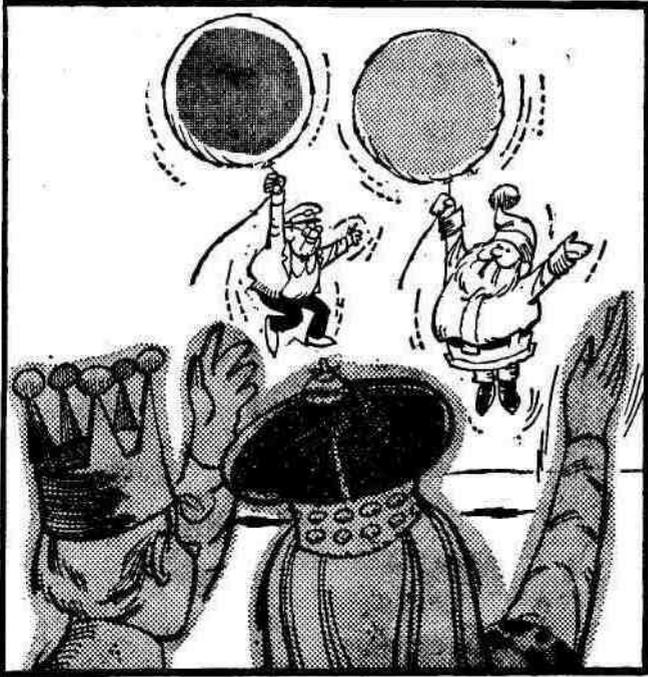


Santa and the Zabbazara Bus

BY LUCRECE BEALE

"Merry Christmas to All!"



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The little boy did as he was told. He yelled and screamed and howled.

Presently he stopped and whispered, "Why am I hollering?"

"To make the Voodoo man come back," said Mr. D. "He cast a spell over this room for all who are non-mortals. HE is non-mortal. If he comes in HE will be caught in the spell."

He put his ear to the door and listened. He heard the Voodoo man hopping back down the corridor. When the Voodoo man was outside the door Mr. D disguised his voice and said, "See, my power is greater than his. I even kept him from casting a spell over this room!"

The Voodoo man flung open the door. He stared at Mr. D and the boy. He peered at the door. There was no X mark there.

"You just make a big noise,"

he sneered at Mr D. "You have no

power at all. I must have overlooked this room. Thanks for reminding me.

He stepped into the room.

There was a clap of thunder and a burst of smoke and the Voodoo man was no more. In his place was a crimson carpet. At the edge of the carpet lay a tiny woven ring.

"It worked!" cried Mr. D. He has been caught in his own spell!

He snatched up the woven ring, and he and the boy raced through the palace shouting for Santa and the Princess. They found them in the garden hiding in a golden banana tree.

The Princess was overjoyed when she heard the news. She put the woven ring on her finger and said, "All the spells cast by the Voodoo man are now broken except the spell he cast over himself."

Santa said that Mr. D and the boy would be remembered forever by all of fairyland, because if it had not been for them all good spirits would have vanished from the earth.

The Princess said they should have anything they wished, for she now had the power to grant it.

The little boy said he had no home and he would like to stay in Zabbazara if that were possible. The Princess said he not only could stay but he could be Prince as well, and have a golden throne beside her own.

Mr. D said he liked being a bus driver and said he loved his old bus but he wished he never had to drive down Main Street again.

"Hereafter," said the Princess, "Your bus shall be known as the Zabbazara-Santa Land Bus and you will make one round trip a day between these two magic lands.

Then Mr. D remembered the crocodile and the donkey and the Fabulous Dunklebum they had left in Santa Land. He told the Princess how the crocodile yearned for beauty and the donkey yearned for sense.

The Princess smiled and said, "I cannot make the crocodile beautiful, but the Fabulous Dunklebum will think her so, and that is the same thing. And I cannot give the donkey sense, but I will give him sensibility, which is a better thing."

Now Santa said to Mr. D, "If the Zabbazara-Santa Land bus driver is ready we had best be on our way. It's Christmas Eve, and if we hurry we'll make it just in time!"

"Always ready!" cried Mr. D grandly.

They went to the beach. The Princess gave them balloons to carry them to the bus. In a few minutes Santa and Mr. D were sailing high above the sea.

The little boy, who was now a Prince waved and shouted "Merry Christmas!"

Santa and Mr. D waved back, and Santa cried, "Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas to all!"