

Santa and the Zabbazara Bus

BY LUCRECE BEALE

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Chapter 1

This is the story of the Zabbazara bus. How it came to go to Santa Land, and how Santa happened to ride in it, and how it came to Zabbazara which is a land where the sun always shines and no grownups are allowed.

The Zabbazara bus was not always the Zabbazara bus. It used to be the Main Street bus. Mr. Diefenderfer was the driver. He had such a long name no one ever bothered to say it. Not even Mr. Diefenderfer. Everyone called him Mr. D, and that's what he called himself.

He was a little fellow with big ears and long feet and crossed eyes. For as long as anyone could remember he had been the driver of the Main Street bus, which never went anywhere at all except up and down Main Street 33 times a day.

As soon as the sun rose each morning Mr. D. got on his bus and put on his special driving glasses. He put on the glasses the very first thing because without them he saw two of everything, and seeing even one Main Street was almost more than he could bear.

As soon as he put on his glasses he took off his shoes. His feet were so big he could never get shoes that fit, and his feet always hurt.



Mr. D drove the Main Street bus

He tucked his shoes under the seat. Then he put on his driver's hat. It was an official cap and very smart. At least on anyone else it would have looked smart. But the way Mr. D's big ears curled up around the hat it looked like a flying saucer with wings that had just happened to land on Mr. D's head by mistake.

He didn't look like much of a driver. But then the bus he drove didn't look like much of a bus either.

It looked like a beaten up old picnic basket on wheels. People said it was 100 years old at least, and how it held together even one no one knew. Yet Mr. D loved the bus. It was Main Street he just couldn't stand any more. And the people who rode the Main Street bus. They were very rude to Mr. D.

"Pull in your ears," they said to him. "They're shutting out the view."

They looked at his big shoes tucked under the seat and said, "Do you have permission to carry BOATS on this bus?"

Mr. D was tired of it all. He kept wondering, "What lies beyond Main Street?"

One day, right in the middle of the Christmas rush, Mr. D decided he had had enough. He got a signboard and he painted on it in big red letters ZABBAZARA. He took down the sign on the side of the bus that said "Main Street" and he put up the new sign saying "ZABBAZARA."

Then he got on the bus and drove straight through the town, never stopping once for all the people waiting for the Main Street bus.

Chapter 2

THE CROCODILE AND THE DONKEY

How the people stared when they saw Mr. D and the Zabbazara bus drive down the Main Street of the town! "Hey!" they called. "Wait! Stop!"

They were in the very midst of their Christmas shopping. Their feet hurt and their tempers were short. They couldn't believe the bus wasn't going to take them up and down Main Street the way it always had.

The bus came to a corner where the traffic was so heavy Mr. D had to stop. The shoppers pushed open the door and cried out, "Let us on. We want to go down Main Street, you dunce!"

Mr. D pointed to the big sign he'd put on the side of the bus. He said, "This isn't the Main Street bus anymore. This is the Zabbazara bus. You want to go to Zabbazara?"

"ZABBAZARA! Where's that?"

"I don't know," said Mr. D. "But that's where this bus is going. If you want to go, hop in." Well, who wanted to go to a place with a name like that which no one had ever heard of? The people fell back grumbling and glaring at Mr. D as if he had taken leave of his senses.

Mr. D didn't care. He put his foot down hard on the gas and scooted away. When he came to the end of Main Street he didn't turn the bus around the way he always had. He kept right on going straight out of town.

The bus lurched and shook. Mr. D bounced up and down so hard his glasses slipped off his nose. Without his glasses he saw two roads instead of one. He decided to take the left road. It was rough but he liked it because it was taking him further and further from Main Street.

Presently he came to a cross roads where an ugly old woman with a shawl over her head flagged him down. "

This isn't a real bus," Mr. D called out the door. "It's the Zabbazara bus."

"That's real enough for me." Said the old woman and she climbed on board.

Mr. D slipped his glasses back on his nose and he saw that it wasn't an old woman at all, but a crocodile.

"Everyone is afraid of me. I am so ugly," said the crocodile as she settled herself in a seat. "I've been standing on that corner for more years than I can say, and no bus has ever stopped for me before."

Mr. D had never had a crocodile on his bus before, but he thought, "Perhaps this is the way things are away from Main Street and this is the life I wanted to see."

So he let the crocodile stay on the bus. He shut the door and started away. He hadn't gone far when he was stopped by a foolish looking animal standing in the middle of the road.

"Who are you?" asked Mr. D. "I don't know," said the animal unhappily. "I never went to school and I don't know anything."

"It's a donkey," said the crocodile from the back seat. "Donkeys don't have much sense."

"You better get out of the road," said Mr. D kindly. "You'll be hit standing there."

"It's just as well. What do I have to live for? Everyone despises me."

"Take him on the bus," said the crocodile. "He wants to go to Zabbazara."

"But there is no Zabbazara!" protested Mr. D. "I made it up!"

"So what? It doesn't matter. Let the donkey on."

Mr. D did as he was told. The donkey climbed on and the Zabbazara bus continued on its way.



"This isn't the Main Street bus any more," said Mr. D

Chapter 3

LITTLE BOY LOST

On and on went the Zabbazara bus with Mr. D clinging to the wheel and pressing with all his might on the gas. People gazed in astonishment as he passed them by.

"My goodness!" they exclaimed to one another. "Was there really a donkey on that bus? And a CROCODILE?"

Mr. D did not think it strange to have a donkey and a crocodile riding with him on the bus. He thought this was the way things were done away from Main Street. And they were much more agreeable than the passengers he had carried up and down Main Street all his life.

For one thing, they didn't make fun of him. In fact, the crocodile complimented him on his big ears.

"When you wiggle them it makes a very pleasant breeze back here," she said.

Mr. D was so pleased at this he wiggled his ears without stopping for 40 miles. The crocodile finally asked politely if he would stop because she was getting chilly.

The donkey asked Mr. D why he wore his shoes under the seat instead of on his feet. Mr. D explained that the shoes didn't fit because his feet were so big. The donkey offered to stretch the shoes with his own feet, and he did. He stretched the fronts right out of the shoes. After that they fit Mr. D's feet just fine.

While the bus was stopped for Mr. D to put on the shoes, a little boy came up and knocked on the door.

"I'm lost," said the little boy.

"Where is your home?" asked Mr. D kindly. "I don't have any home," said the boy. "I don't have any father, and I don't have any mother. I don't have any brothers, and I don't have any sisters. I'm lost, and I don't have anywhere to go."

He began to cry. The crocodile and the donkey began to cry, too, to hear such a sad story.

Mr. D said, "Get on the bus, little boy. You're not lost any more. You're going to Zabbazara with us."

The little boy hopped on the bus. The crocodile put him on her lap and dried his tears. The donkey sang a song about boys and donkeys who didn't know who they were or where they were. Soon they were all laughing and singing, and Mr. D thought what a wonderful bus it was. He was very, very glad! he had left Main Street to set out for Zabbazara, wherever it might be. It was getting dark and it had begun to snow when Mr. D saw a bent old man standing by the road.

"He looks cold and lonely," thought Mr. D. "Perhaps he'd like to go to Zabbazara, too." He stopped the bus and called out, "Would you like a ride?" The man got on the bus and Mr. D saw he wasn't really old—he was ageless. And he wasn't really bent—he was pulled down by the weight of the bag he carried.

"We're going to Zabbazara," said Mr. D, cheerfully.

"Then," said the stranger, "You won't mind taking me to Santa Land first."



"I am the Voodoo man," said the stranger

"Santa Land! How on earth would we get to Santa Land?"

"I'll show you the way. I have business there."

"W-who are you?" stammered Mr. D.

"I'm the Voodoo man," said the stranger.

As he spoke everyone on the bus shivered with a sudden fear.

THE VOODOO MAN'S PRESENT



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

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.

Chapter 5

THE ACCIDENT

The Voodoo man stepped off the bus and Mr. D jumped right after him. But Mr. D fell over his great big feet and went sprawling in the snow. When he got up both his glasses and the Voodoo man had vanished.

The little lost boy and the donkey and the crocodile also got off the bus. They stood there and wrung their hands and wondered what on earth to do.

"Perhaps it isn't Santa Land," said the crocodile hopefully. "Perhaps we aren't near there at all."

But the little lost boy pointed down the mountain where a cluster of lights glowed in the valley. "That looks the way I always thought Santa Land I would look," he said.

"Get back on the bus," ordered Mr. D suddenly. "We're going to get there before the Voodoo man!"

They piled back into the bus. The crocodile said, "But your glasses?" Mr. D said, "There's no time to find them!"

He stomped on the gas. The bus leaped forward. But without his glasses, Mr. D saw two roads, and took the wrong one. The bus climbed in and out of a ditch, mowed down a line of trees and went hurtling down the far side of the mountain.

The wild ride ended with the bus upended in ice and snow at the bottom of the cliff. Mr. D still clung to the steering wheel and peered cross-eyed through the windshield that wasn't there any more. The little boy and the crocodile and the donkey were scrambled like an omelet at Mr. D's feet.

The bus had lost two wheels and the gas tank was punctured. The radiator was caved in and all four fenders were gone. The only thing that wasn't broken was the sign saying "ZABBAZARA." It still hung bravely on the side of the crumpled bus.

The crocodile was the first to speak. "I've lost seven teeth! Now I'm uglier than ever."

"Thank goodness I had no sense," said the donkey, rubbing his broken head. "If I had I would have lost it all."

"How about you?" asked Mr. D, lifting the little lost boy from the bottom of the pile. "Are you all right?"

"Oh, Yes! I thought it was a WONDERFUL ride! But what about Santa? How will we stop the Voodoo man now?"

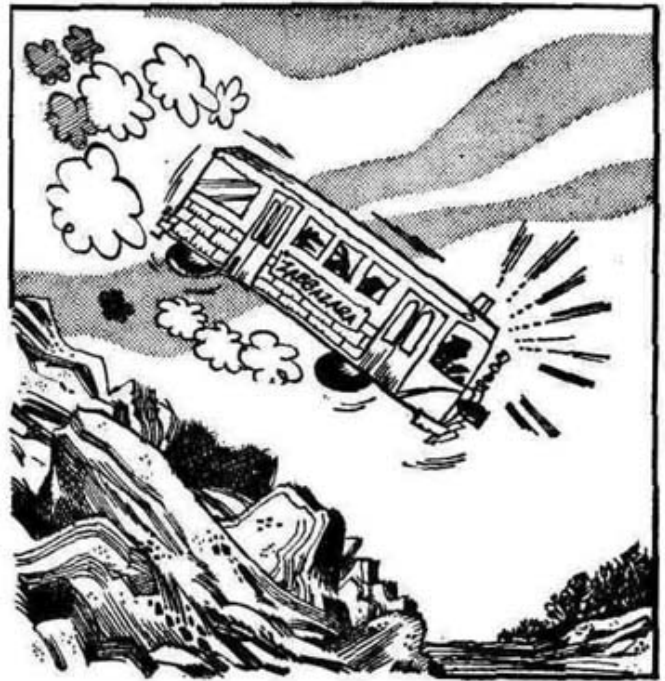
"If only it were light," moaned the crocodile. "We'd know where we were."

The donkey pointed out the window. "There's light! It's the sun coming up through the trees!"

But the light was not the sun. It was a shiny red glob with long glittering arms that sparkled and glowed as it came towards the bus.

"It's a monster!" shouted the boy. "Get off the bus!"

They scrambled out the door, but as they stepped down they fell into freezing water. The bus had broken through a frozen lake and was slipping slowly to the bottom.



The bus hurtled down the side of the mountain

The four of them clung to the Zabbazara sign on the side of the bus. They stared in terror at the glowing beast inching toward them.

"Don't hurt us!" quavered Mr. D. "We don't mean anyone any harm!"

"I don't mean harm either," said a tiny voice from the middle of the shining glob. "I've come to help you."

The creature glided above them and fastened its long glittering arms around the sinking bus. With a mighty heave it lifted the bus and everyone clinging to it right out of the water.

Chapter 6

THE FABULOUS DUNKLEBUM

"Hooray! We're safe!" cried the little lost boy as the shining monster deposited the bus on dry land.

The crocodile shook her head admiringly. She said she had never met so strong and brave a creature as the monster and if she had net been so ugly she would have kissed him to show her gratitude.

Lights all along the beast's arms blinked and fluttered with embarrassment. "I am ugly myself," he said. "As you can plainly see."

Well, he certainly wasn't handsome. He had a flat mushy face like a smashed-in tomato. He was fat and stooped and his many glittering arms hung from his shoulders like willow tree branches.

"What are you?" gasped Mr. D, striving with all his might to see out of his poor crossed eyes.

"I'm the friendless Fabulous Dunklebum," said the creature in his tiny squeaky voice. "I'm the only one of my kind. I've lived all my life at the bottom of this cliff, where I can hide my lights in a cave so I won't frighten anyone."

"I think you are gorgeous," said the crocodile, trying to hide her missing teeth.

"You have magic, too," said the donkey. "Those lights are very magical. In fact, I think you have more magic than anyone I've ever seen."

"Except the Voodoo man!" exclaimed the little boy. "And now the Voodoo man is going to get Santa Claus!"

Mr. D shook his head. "Not yet. We may still get there in time. We can fix the bus by the light of the Fabulous Dunklebum!"

He told the creature of the Voodoo man, who was off to cast a spell over Santa Land. The Fabulous Dunklebum turned on all his lights as high as they would go. They lit up the whole mountainside.

Mr. D got out his tool box. It was filled with bobby pins and rubber bands and fingernail files and chewing gum that Mr. D had used to repair the bus a hundred times before. They found the two missing wheels and hammered them back on with the crocodile's tail. They pried open the radiator and the donkey stomped on the twisted pipes until they were straight. They fastened on the bent and broken fenders with bandage strips.

"She's good as new!" said Mr. D finally.

"Oh, hurry, hurry!" cried the little boy. "Let's go!"

They said goodbye to the Fabulous Dunklebum and thanked him for all he'd done. Then they all got on the bus and Mr. D started her up. The engine gave one gasp and quit. There wasn't any gas. It had leaked out of the punctured tank.

Mr D groaned. The Zabbazara bus was useless. They would never get to Santa before the Voodoo man, and Santa Land would go under a spell forever.

But even as Mr. D groaned, he felt the bus jerk. The little boy cried, "He's carrying us again!"

Sure enough, the Fabulous Dunklebum had lifted the bus in his long swinging arms and was carrying it slowly up the steep mountainside.



Mr. D got out his tool box to fix the broken bus

Chapter 7
SANTA LAND

It was a long way up the mountain. The snow was deep and the rocks slick with ice. The Fabulous Dunklebum was gasping for breath when he finally brought the Zabbazara bus to the road at the top of the hill.

Daylight had come. The little boy pointed over the other side of the mountain to a cluster of houses and stables and workshops.

"It is Santa Land! And look how the road winds downhill. We can coast all the way. The Fabulous Dunklebum won't have to carry us any further."

"Then he can ride inside with me," said the crocodile. "I am sure he would like to see Santa, too."



Where is Santa Claus? We must see him immediately!

She had fallen in love with the creature and did not want to part from him. The Fabulous Dunklebum was only too glad to stay with the only friends he had ever had. But he was too big and had too many arms to fit inside the bus, so he plopped on the roof.

Mr. D took the wheel. Even though he couldn't see straight he was the only one who knew how to drive, and you had to know a great deal just to blow the horn of a machine like the Zabbazara bus.

He flapped his ears furiously and the bus began to roll. The little boy hung over one shoulder and the donkey over the other. Between them they kept Mr. D in the middle of the road by shouting "Move left!" or "Move right!"

As the way got steeper the bus went faster and faster. The crocodile thumped her tail wildly and screamed "Slow down! Slow down!" But, unfortunately the brake wasn't working any more and there was no way to slow down.

The Fabulous Dunklebum was so shaken up some of his long glittering arms slipped down through the windshield that wasn't there any more and began to flash lights off and on in Mr. D's face. Mr. D, not knowing what else to do, put his hand on the horn and honked it all the way down the mountain.

Noisy as a circus parade, the bus finally came to the bottom of the incline and, still in one piece, coasted into Santa Land.

For a long moment no one moved on the Zabbazara bus. They could hardly believe they were alive.

Then the little boy shouted, "We're in time! I see elves. They are Santa's workers: See, they are standing all around. The Voodoo man hasn't come!"

It was true. Across the snow fields they could see little fellows in peaked caps standing about the shops.

Mr. D leaped off the bus with the others behind him. They raced across the snow banks shouting "Hooray, hooray! We've come on time!"

Mr. D reached the first two elves. They had sacks of toys over their shoulders. Mr. D was so excited his crossed eyes rolled in his head.

"Where is Santa Claus?" We must see Santa immediately! It's very important!"

The elves gazed at him and made no reply.

The little boy and the donkey and the crocodile and the Fabulous Dunklebum came panting up behind Mr. D.

"They don't answer me!" exclaimed Mr. D. "They don't understand!"

But the others took one look at the elves and fell back in horror.

"They're not alive!" gasped the boy. "They've turned to stone!"

Chapter 8

THE TERRIBLE SPELL

"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?" donkey and 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.



Santa had never seen as strange a group as this

Chapter 9
A SAD STORY

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



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

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!"

Chapter 10

A MAP OF DREAM LANDS

Mr. D patched up the broken gas tank with chewing gum and Santa filled the tank with gas from the toy automobile shop.

"I shouldn't drive," said Mr. D. "I can't see properly without my glasses."

"I keep a spare pair of glasses for myself," said Santa. "Try mine."

Mr. D put on Santa's glasses. For the first time in his life, things looked straight and true.

"They're like magic! Everything is beautiful!"

"Not I!" said the crocodile. "Even you," said Mr. D. "And the Fabulous Dunklebum, too!"

"Wait until we get to Zabbazara," said the little boy. "I bet that'll be the most beautiful."

The crocodile shook her head. "I'm going to stay here with the Fabulous Dunklebum."

The ugly old crocodile, in love with the ugly old monster, couldn't bear to leave him even though he had turned to stone.

The donkey felt sorry for them. He said, "I'll stay, too. What if the Voodoo man comes I back? Someone has to be here to protect things!"

"That's true," said Santa. "How sensible you are."

No one had ever told the donkey he had sense. He felt very proud. He almost didn't mind not going to Zabbazara.

"Goodbye! Goodbye!" He waved to Santa and the little boy and Mr. D as they climbed aboard the bus. "Don't worry, I'll take care of everything."

The crocodile waved, too, and called out, "Don't forget to break the spell."

In the bus, the little lost boy sat beside Santa. "What will happen if you don't find a way to break the spell?" he asked.

"There'll be no Christmas," said Santa. "How can I make toys without my workers, and how can I deliver them without my reindeer? And when the Voodoo man finds I did not look in his mirror and turn to stone, he won't rest until he has cast another spell for me. We must get to Zabbazara, and we must get there very fast for it is only a few days more before Christmas."

"But," said Mr. D from the driver's seat, "how do you know there is truly such a place?"

"I have a map and I have seen it there." Santa unfolded a sheet of fine linen. On it, embroidered in silk threads, was a map of faraway places.

"It's not a map of the world at all!" protested the boy.

"It is a different world. These are lands where you go in your dreams." He pointed to an island embroidered in gold. "See, here is Zabbazara. I have heard there is a Princess there who can give any gift and break any spell. That's where we must go."

"An island!" exclaimed Mr. D. "How on earth will I get the bus to an island?"

"Just follow the directions on the map."

Mr. D studied the map. There were directions in strange languages and roads whose names he couldn't pronounce. There were highways that seemed to leap across oceans and lands that seemed to hang in the skies.

Maybe it was because of the glasses Santa had given him or maybe it was for some other reason, but suddenly the map seemed very clear to Mr. D. He knew for sure that the Zabbazara bus really was going to Zabbazara.



"Here is Zabbazara. That's where we must go," said Santa

Chapter 11

THE GOLDEN ISLAND

They rode all day and they rode all night. On the morning of the second day they arrived at the edge of a blue-green sea. In the middle of the sea was a golden isle. This was Zabbazara.

Santa and Mr. D and the little boy got out of the bus.

"There's no bridge!" cried the little boy. "And no boat. How will we get across the sea?"

Santa pointed to an old sea trunk on the beach. A sign on the trunk said "Free ride to Zabbazara." They opened the trunk. It was filled with pieces of colored rubber.

"They're balloons!" exclaimed Mr. D. "What use are they?"

The little boy snatched out a purple balloon and began to blow it up. In two breaths it was bigger than he. He could hardly hold on to it. A little breeze tugged at the balloon. Before he knew what had happened, the boy was in the air and sailing over the sea.

"My goodness!" cried Mr. D. "What a wonderful way to travel!"

He took a balloon out of the box and blew it up. In a few seconds he was sailing after the boy. A moment later Santa, too, was on his way.

When they came near the island the little breeze died down as if someone had pressed a button. The three travelers floated gently down.

Now they saw that the island was not all gold. But the trees bore such golden apples and oranges and pears and bananas, and the flowers had such bright yellow blossoms, that it seemed truly a golden island.

A group of laughing children burst through the trees and surrounded the visitors.

"Come play with us!"

Santa shook his head. "We don't have time for play. We have work to do."

"But, there's no work here! We only play!"

"Don't you even go to school?" asked the boy in astonishment.

"What for? We know all we need to know."

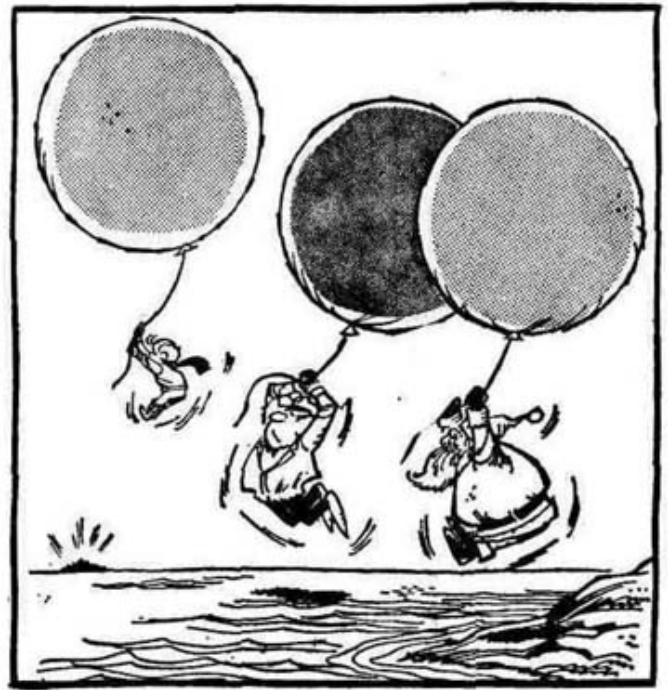
"Perhaps you had better take us to your elders," said Santa.

The children hooted. "We have no elders! There are no grownups in Zabbazara."

The little boy thought he had never heard of a land so grand.

Santa said, "You have a Princess, I have heard."

The children said of course they had a Princess, and they would take Santa to see her. They led the visitors out of the trees and down a golden street to a golden palace. There in a golden hall on a golden throne sat the Princess. She was no older in years than the little lost boy, who thought that never again in his life would he see so lovely and shining a creature.



Airborn, the trio headed for the golden island

The Princess smiled graciously. Santa told her he had heard she had great power and could grant any wish and break any charm. He asked her help in breaking the spell the evil Voodoo man had cast over Santa Land.

The Princess' smile vanished. She sent all the golden-haired children out of the palace. Then she said, "What you have told me makes me fearful for us all. The Voodoo man threatens us, too, and I do not want the others to know."

"But you have great power," began Santa.

The Princess looked even younger than her years. "Alas! The Voodoo man has found a secret magic that makes his power greater than mine. There is no magic I can work against him. Unless we find what his secret is he will destroy us all."

Chapter 12
MR. D'S PLAN



“He has a secret power,” said the beautiful princess

The beautiful Princess of Zabbazara had tears in her eyes as she explained to Santa Claus that she did not have the power to break the spell the Voodoo man had cast over Santa Land. “Oh, my,” moaned Mr. D. “To think there’ll never be Christmas again! How can he do such a thing?”

“He has a secret power,” said the Princess. “He is using it to get rid of all happy spirits and all good fairies. He wants to be king of all Fairyland and not even Zabbazara will escape.”

The little lost boy couldn’t stand to see the Princess cry.

“Don’t worry!” he blurted out. “We will protect you. Won’t we, Santa? Won’t we, Mr. D?”

Santa shook his head helplessly but Mr. D said, “Of course!” He flapped his ears with excitement. “I’m not afraid of that old Voodoo man!”

“You are right not to be afraid of him,” said the Princess. “He has no power over real-life people. But you can’t stop him from casting his spells over fairyland creatures.”

“We could find out his secret!” exclaimed the boy.

“Sure,” said Mr. D. “I’ve heard a lot of secrets in my time. Folks like to tell bus drivers their secrets.”

All this time Santa had been standing there not saying anything but just thinking and worrying about the awful power of the Voodoo man. Now he said, “We’ve got to find out what his secret is. Maybe they can do it.”

The Princess took the boy’s hands in hers. “Oh, could you?” she cried.

The little boy felt 10 feet tall. We’ve GOT to do it!” he said. And Mr. D said, “Come on, boy, let’s get back to the bus and find the Voodoo man!”

But, alas! The Voodoo man had already found them!

They rushed out of the palace and down to the edge of the Sea. Far away they saw the Voodoo man holding a black balloon. He was just taking off from the distant shore.

“Get back!” cried the Princess to the waiting children, “Go quickly and hide!”

The children looked at her in astonishment. They could not understand why she was so afraid. Nevertheless they did as they were told.

Then Santa said, “We must hide, too.”

But the Princess said, “It’s no use. He will find us wherever we are. Oh, the poor children! Whatever will become of them?”

Suddenly Mr. D’s ears began to wiggle. Whenever he had an idea his ears flapped wildly. He put both hands over his ears to still them and then he burst out:

“Change clothes!”

“WHAT?”

“Change clothes. I’ll be Santa Claus and the boy will be the princess. The Voodoo man’s power won’t work on us, and you two will be safe!”

But you don’t have whiskers” protested Santa. “And you’re thin. I’m fat!”

“And how can I be a girl?” scoffed the boy. “I don’t look anything like a girl!”

But the Princess said, “I still have some power. I can provide wigs and whiskers and such. We must try it. It’s our only chance!”

Chapter 13
DRESSIN UP

Santa and the princess rushed into the palace with. Mr D and the little boy.

Mr. D put on Santa's long red coat and his red britches and his black boots. He stuffed two fat pillows in the front of his trousers and one behind. Santa got out the Princess's paint box and painted Mr. D's cheeks bright red. He put an extra bright dab on the tip of Mr. D's nose.

The little boy dug in his pockets and handed Mr. D two balls of bubble gum. Mr. D put one ball in each cheek and his face was as plump and rosy as Santa's.

The Princess got out her best white feather hat and snipped away at the feathers until they were shaped just right. Mr. D fastened the hat under his chin with an elastic band. When he was done not even Santa could tell which one was who or who was which one.

Then it was the little boy's turn. The Princess gave him her most elegant gown—white and gold with a red velvet train. He put it on backwards and sideways and even upside down before he got it on right.

Every step he took he tripped over the velvet train until the Princess showed him how he could carry it over his arm if he absolutely must.

Finally she put a wig of golden curls on his head.

"You look beautiful!" exclaimed the Princess. "I only wish I looked so!" She looked down at herself in dismay, for she was wearing the little boy's discarded clothing.

"You're still the Princess," said the boy shyly. "You're still—"

He was interrupted by Mr. D, who was standing guard at the window. "Here he comes! He is just walking through the gates!"

Santa and the Princess fled from the room. The little boy climbed on the Princess's throne. He arranged the velvet train around his feet. Mr. D sat on a stool at the side of the throne. Quaking inside, they waited for the Voodoo man to appear.

A feather from his whiskers tickled Mr. D's nose. He tried to blow it away. It only tickled more. Finally he just had to sneeze and he did — an enormous "Kerchoo!"—so enormous that both balls of bubble gum shot out of his mouth and clear across the room.

At this very moment the Voodoo man appeared in the door and was struck twice in the eye by the flying gum.

He looked so funny and so surprised the little boy couldn't help laughing, though he was shaking with fright. The Voodoo man was furious. He scowled.

"Laugh now. But you won't laugh long, for I have you in my power."

Mr. D cleared his throat and said in a quivering squeak,

"You aren't so big! Your spell didn't work on me in Santa Land!"

"It worked on all your workers. Now I'll take care of you and the Princess together, and Santa Land will be no more."

The little boy was shaking all over but he thought he ought to say something so he said, "Phooey!" in a very loud voice.

The Voodoo man's face turned. white with rage. He rubbed his brows and muttered to himself. He brushed one foot hard against the other and turned around three times in one spot.

Then he pointed at Mr. D and the boy and said, "Marshmallows!"



You won't laugh long for I have you in my power

Chapter 14

THE SPELL THAT FAILED

"Marshmallows!" whispered the Voodoo man. He pointed at Santa and the Princess. "I order you to turn into marshmallows!"

Santa and the Princess sat there and didn't turn into anything. Of course, they were really Mr. D and the little lost boy, and the Voodoo man's charms couldn't work on them.

The Voodoo man muttered some more words to himself. He pulled his cloak over his head and walked three times around the throne. Then he shouted in a very loud voice, "MARSHMALLOWS!"

Mr. D and the boy sat there.

The Voodoo man lost his temper. He jumped up and down and screamed "Marshmallows! Marshmallows! Marshmallows!"

Nothing happened at all.

Mr. D began to feel very brave. "You see, you cannot harm the Princess and me. Your magic has gone."

"It can't be! I have a secret power! No one can cast such a spell as I!"

Mr. D shrugged. "Very well. Cast your spell over us."

The Voodoo man drew a line on the floor with chalk. "Let the Princess cross that line and she will turn into a fish."

The boy got up from the throne and, holding his train very carefully, stepped across the line.

"I can swim," he said. "But I'm still no fish."

The Voodoo man stared at him in dismay. He searched through his pockets and drew out a little sack of red powder. "When this powder touches you you will fall into a sleep and never awake!"

He came close to Mr. D and blew the powder directly into his face. Mr. D coughed and blinked his eyes. He never went to sleep at all.

The Voodoo man had used up all his tricks. Nothing had worked. He hung his head and groaned. "I don't understand it. I don't understand."

"It's very simple. My power is greater than yours," said the little boy. He felt very strong and brave. He climbed back on the Princess's throne.

"Where is my wand?" he said to Mr. D.

"What wand?" stammered Mr. D in astonishment.

"My wand I give orders with."

"Oh that!" Mr. D looked about hurriedly. The only thing he could find was a coat hanger. He handed it to the boy.

"Now," said the boy to Mr. D. "Is there anything you want or any little spell you want to cast over him?"

"Why, no," said Mr. D thoughtfully. "Only I think we might command him to admit that our power is greater than his."

The Voodoo man glared at him. "It's true, I suppose. "But I still don't understand it."

"It isn't necessary for you understand," said Mr. D grandly. "Now we command you to tell us the secret of the power you thought you had."

"Never!" declared the Voodoo man. "Very well," said the boy. "I guess we'll have to cast a spell of our own."

He began to wave the coat hanger over his head.



**"Marshmallows! Marshmallows!"
screamed the Voodoo man**

Chapter 15

THE VOODOO MAN'S SECRET

The little boy waved the coat hanger around his head. He tried to think of some magic words that would frighten the Voodoo man. All he could think of were nursery rhymes, and he didn't think they would sound too impressive.

He turned to Mr. D and said, "Santa, will you kindly cast a spell over this wicked creature? I will wave the wand."

Mr. D was taken by surprise. He couldn't think of a single magic word. But suddenly the names of all the streets he had called out during the years he had driven his bus down Main Street came crowding into his mind.

"Dunrobbin. Dalonega. Wapakinoeta. Walhonding. Wisioming."

He shouted out the names of the streets in his fine old bus driver's voice. The little boy waved the coat hanger wildly. The Voodoo man was frightened nearly out of his wits.

"Stop it! Stop it! I'll tell you my secret. What good is it now anyway?" He sat down on the floor in front of the throne.

Mr. D stopped shouting. The little boy put down the coat hanger. They leaned over the Voodoo man and, hardly dared to breathe. This was the secret they had to know. Until they did neither Santa Claus nor the Princess nor any fairy creature was safe.

The Voodoo man slowly drew the shoe off his right foot. Then he drew off the sock. On his long big toe there was a ring of woven hair.

"There it is," he said sadly. "It is made of hairs taken from the beard of the fiercest ghoul in witchdom. I lived with him in the bottom of a well, and plucked his whiskers one by one while

he slept. Since he slept only one night a year it took me 70 years. But it was worth it, for when I had made the ring, the ghoul was my slave and I had the power to conquer all of fairyland.

"I have turned the Santa Land workers to stone. I have put the Fairy Queen to sleep. I have turned all her subjects into mice. I have been to the bottom of the sea and changed the mermaids into sardines. There is no spell I could not cast. Now I find your power is greater than mine, after all."

He began to pull his sock back on. Mr. D and the boy looked at each other. They had to get the ring. As long as it stayed on the Voodoo man's toe, his power remained even though he did not know it.

"Wait," said Mr. D. "Let us look more closely at the ring. He reached down and took the Voodoo man's foot. The boy leaned over and grasped the toe. Mr. D's whiskers and the boy's curls brushed against the bottom of the Voodoo man's foot.

"Stop! You're tickling me!" cried the Voodoo man. Before he could stop himself he kicked out his leg and sent both Mr. D and the boy sprawling.

Mr. D's whiskers slid to the top of his head and the boy's golden wig came all the way off and landed on the Voodoo man's toe. Mr. D looked at the boy. The boy looked at Mr. D. Then they looked at the Voodoo man and they knew everything was over.

The Voodoo man was on his bare feet hopping up and down with joy.

"You're not Santa Claus! You're not the Princess! That's why my secret power didn't work!" He rushed out of the hall screaming, "I'll find them! There's no place they can hide from me!"



The ring is made from the beard of the fiercest ghoul in witchdom

Chapter 16

THE X MARK

Santa and the Princess were hiding under a tin washtub in the palace kitchen. They heard the Voodoo man running through the palace hunting for them, and they knew he had discovered who Mr. D and the little boy really were.

"He'll find us!" whispered the Princess. "We can't stay here!"

It was true they couldn't stay there, but they didn't dare come out from under the tub. They did the only thing they could think of. They started crawling out of the room inside the washtub.

At the moment the Voodoo man came into the kitchen. He stared at the crawling washtub in amazement. Then he beamed with pleasure, for he knew what made the tub move.

He took a mighty swing with his right foot and sent the tin tub high in the air and skittering against the ceiling. On the floor sat Santa and the Princess. Helpless.

But the Voodoo man gave a howl of pain and fell over in a faint. He had forgotten that his shoe was off. The mighty kick had smashed the toe that wore the secret ring of woven hair.

Mr. D and the little boy crept into the kitchen. When they saw what had happened Mr. D cried "The ring is his secret power Take it off quickly!" But the Voodoo man's toe had swelled to the size of an orange and no power on earth could pull the ring over the bulge.

The Princess snatched a pair of scissors from the pantry shelf and tried to cut the ring. But the hairs from the beard of a ghoulish are hairs of steel and cannot be cut.

Then Mr. D said, "Cut off his toe!"

But witches and fairies and elves and Voodoo men are not like ordinary folk. They cannot be cut up or killed like mortals. They can only be destroyed by spells whose magic is stronger than their own.

Santa knew this, and the Princess knew it. Santa said sadly, "The ring is there to stay."

At these words the Voodoo man recovered his senses and Santa and the Princess fled from his sight.

But the Voodoo man did not give chase. He had other plans. Hopping on one foot, he passed down the corridors of the palace. He entered every room and twisting the woven ring on his toe he said these words:

"Whatever creature from the non-mortal world enters this room hereafter will turn into a rug and will carpet this floor forevermore."

As he left each room he took a piece of chalk and drew a huge X on the door to show he had been there and left his curse.

Mr. D. and the little boy watched in horror. They knew that even if Santa and the Princess had gone out of the palace they would come back after the Voodoo man had left, and they would become carpets in the golden castle.



Twisting the ring on his toe, the Voodoo man screamed his curse

Then Mr. D got an idea. It was so big it made him shiver all over.

He pushed the astonished little boy into one of the rooms where the Voodoo man had cast his spell. He took his handkerchief and rubbed out the X mark on the door. Then he went in the room with the boy and shut the door.

"Now, yell," said Mr. D. "Yell as loud as you can!"

Chapter 17

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

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 nonmortal. 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."

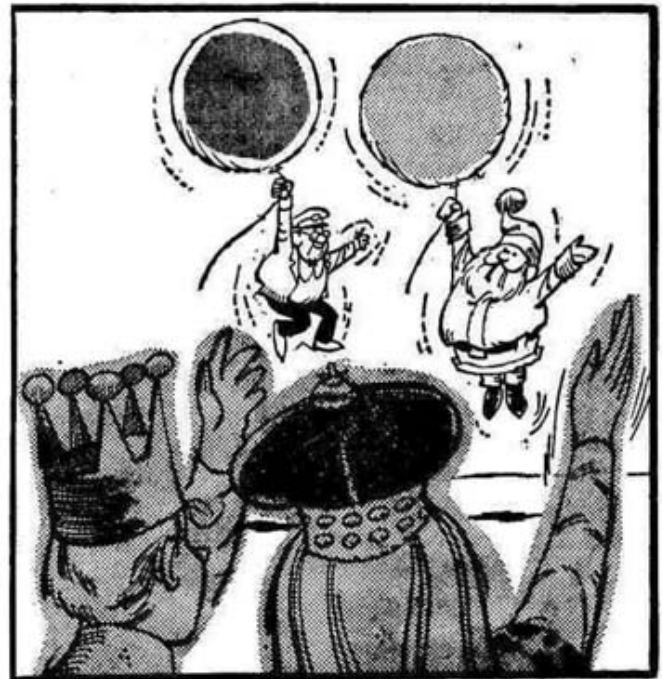
Now Santa said to Mr. D, "If the Zabbazara-Santa Land bus driver is ready we had best be on our way. It's Christmas Eve, and if we hurry we'll make it just in time!"

"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!"



Merry Christmas to All!

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