



# Santa and the DUMBBELL

By Lucrece Beale



## Santa and the Dumbbell

By Lucrece Beale

### Chapter 1

One upon a time there was a boy named Robert Clarence Hector Lee. But no one ever called him Robert Clarence Hector Lee.

He was called Woodenhead, or Dunderpate, or Rattlebrain. Or just plain Loony. His teachers called him Flibbertygibbet. Even his mother called him a Goose.

But mostly he was called Booby Bobby for that is what he appeared to be.

He was so foolish that he thought goldfish were pure gold and the same thing as money in the bank. When his mother said she wished she could afford a gorgeous red velvet dress for Christmas, Booby Bobby took his two pet goldfish out of the bowl and put them in his mother's purse.

Hi mother got the goldfish back into the bowl just in time but Booby Bobby could not understand why she did not buy the gorgeous red velvet dress for Christmas.

At school his desk was next to the window. He liked to sit back in his seat and stare at the sky. One day while the teacher was explaining a very important point in the New Math for first graders, Booby Bobby jumped from his seat shouting, "Look! Look! It's Santa Claus! He has his bag on his shoulder and all the toys are spilling out of the bag!"

The children scrambled to the windows. Even the teacher forgot about New Math for a second as she came for a look. All they saw were clouds

"You sit down and stop disrupting this class!" snapped the teacher.

"It is Santa!" insisted Booby Bobby, "I saw him!"

"Sit in the corner" ordered the teacher, rapping his knuckles with her ruler.

The children sniggered and called him a dunce. The teacher wrote a sharp letter home to his father saying something would have to be done.

"Every day it's some new embarrassment," groaned the father when he came home from work that night and got the bad news. "The boy is the laughing stock of the town."

"Poor Goose," sighed the mother. "How lonely it must be to have everyone making fun of him. He needs a friend. If he had a friend perhaps he would be more sensible."

While they talked, Booby Bobby was standing in the umbrella stand. He was pretending to be an umbrella so his mother would not be able to find him when bedtime came.



Everyone laughed at Booby Bobby

Umbrella or not, he heard all his parents said about him. He was sad to have made them so sad, especially at Christmas time.

He was not aware that he was lonely and he did not really mind people making fun of him. Still, he thought, maybe his parents were right and things would be better all around if he had a friend. It might make people think he was important and not just a boob.

"Tomorrow," he said to himself, "I will go to the store and buy a friend."

## Chapter 2

### SEARCH FOR A FRIEND STORE

Early the next morning Booby Bobby went out to buy a friend.

He hoped he had enough to pay for it. He took \$1.17 from the toe of an old tennis shoe. He had been saving it to buy Christmas presents but he thought if he bought a friend it would be a present for everyone.

The downtown streets were strung with holly and wreaths and tinsel streamers. The store windows were packed with Christmas goodies.

Booby Bobby went into a department store that sold everything from dishpans to fur hats.

"I want to buy a friend," he said the lady in the Information Booth.

"A what?"

"A friend."

The lady glared at him. "Are you some kind of a nut?"

"I can pay!" said Booby Bobby holding out his fistful of money.

"I don't have time for foolery," snapped the lady crossly. "Go home to your mother where you belong."



"I'm waiting for a friend"

A group of shoppers swept Booby Bobby with them into the street.

"Please, sir," said Booby Bobby to the doorman. "Can you tell me where there is a Friend Store?"

"Are you pulling my leg?" Snorted the doorman. "Whoever heard of such a store?"

"There are pet stores," said Booby Bobby. "Baby stores. Men's stores. There must be a Friend Store."

"Look, Woodenhead," snapped the doorman. "You better just go in a toy store and buy yourself a rattle or something."

Booby Bobby went to a shoeshine stand and sat down. He was getting a little discouraged.

A shoeshine boy, only a little bigger than he, kicked him on the shin. "What're you doing sitting at my stand, Lunkhead?"

Booby Bobby explained that he was resting because he had come to town to buy a friend but could not find a Friend Store.

The shoeshine boy's eyes popped. "You off your rocker?"

Booby Bobby shook his head. "See! I have money and everything!"

"How much money do you have?" asked the shoeshine boy with interest.

\$1.17! Booby Bobby held out his fist.

"Listen," said the shoeshine boy. "You give me the money and I'll be your friend. Like you buy me see?"

Booby Bobby gave the boy his money. "Now you come home with me," he said. "And no one will call me names again because people don't do that to people who have friends."

"Yeah," said the shoeshine boy. "Well, you wait here a minute and I'll be right back."

He took his equipment and Booby Bobby stood there and waited. He waited till evening but his friend never came back.

The old man who ran the stand said, "You better go home now

"I'm waiting for my friend," said Booby Bobby.

"Listen, boy. I heard the whole thing this morning. You'll never see 'friend' or money again. You are a simpleton!"

"But, how will I get a friend?" asked Booby Bobby.

"Write to Santa Claus," jeered the old man. "Maybe he'll bring you one for Christmas!" Laughing at his own joke he shut up his shop.

## Chapter 3

### LETTER TO SANTA

That night Booby Bobby wrote to Santa Claus.

It was a very short letter, only one sentence, but he used 23 sheets of paper before he was satisfied with spelling and printing and neatness.

He put the letter in an envelope and ran downstairs to mail it. When he went into the living room he found his parents and some of their friends sitting around a huge log fire burning in the fireplace.

Booby Bobby stood and stared worriedly at the fire.

“Why are you standing there a dummy?” asked his father.

“I wanted to mail a letter.” mumbled Booby Bobby.

“Then go mail it.”

“It has to be mailed in the fireplace,” said Booby Bobby unhappily.

“In the fireplace!” cried his father. “Oh, what would you do with a balmy boy like this!”

The guests tittered. Booby Bobby knew they were thinking that he was a scatterbrain. He couldn't tell them it was a letter to Santa Claus. He knew some grownups did not believe in Santa and they would have thought him a dumb bunny for sure if he tried to explain.

He went back to his room and tried to think where else a person could mail a letter to Santa. There was a hot air register in the wall and he decided that might do. He placed the letter against the register and sealed it there with wide strips of tape.

In the middle of the night there was a swooshing and a whirring at the hot air register. Booby Bobby's eyes opened. Santa had come for his letter!

He lay quivering under the covers and listened to the coughing, moaning, sobbing in the walls. He could not imagine why Santa should make such sounds. Suddenly it came to him: “The letter is taped too tight. He can't get it off!”

He tiptoed to the register and carefully loosened the tape. There was a final mighty whoosh and the letter flew across the room. A white phantom burst from the register, swept over the head of the astonished boy and threw itself on the bed.

“W-who are you?” whispered Booby Bobby.

“My name is Stanley. I am a Ghost as you can plainly see,” said the apparition. “I very nearly suffocated when you blocked the register. Moreover, closed places frighten me dreadfully. All in all, I have had a perfectly miserable night, thanks to you.”

“I am sorry,” said Booby Bobby meekly. “I was mailing a letter.”

“Well,” said the Ghost. “Considering the state of the mail these days it is very risky to mail a letter. It is wiser by far to make your delivery in person.”

“But this letter is to Santa Claus!”

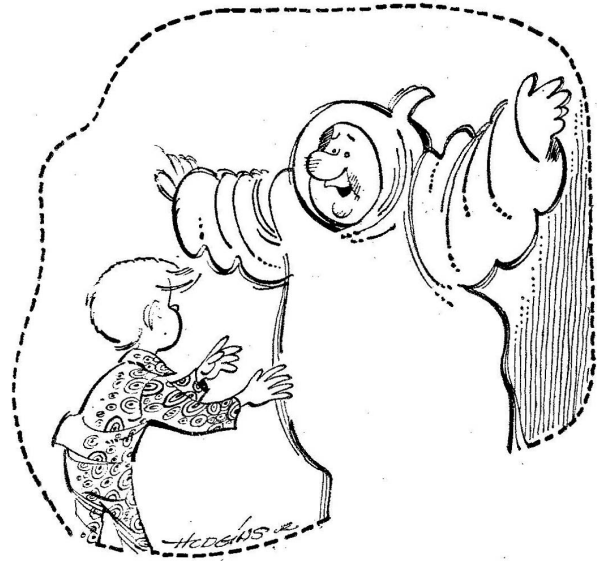
“All the more reason to take an important letter like that yourself.” The ghost stood up and straightened the sheets over his head. “What are you writing to Santa Claus?”

“Everyone thinks I am a dunce,” said Booby Bobby. “No one wants to play with me. I'm asking Santa for a friend for Christmas.”

“Not a bad idea,” said the Ghost approvingly. “I think I'll go with you”.

“Do you want a friend, too?” asked Booby Bobby.

“Not exactly,” said Stanley. “I want a better place to haunt.”



“I'm Stanley the Ghost!”

## Chapter 4

### THE PUPPET PRINCESS

"I don't want to hurt your feelings," Stanley the Ghost said to Booby Bobby. "But I am tired haunting houses like yours."

"My mother says it is a good house," said Booby Bobby. "It's warm and compact and easy to clean."

"That's the trouble with houses nowadays," complained Stanley. "They have no attics, no nooks and crannies. Stairs are carpeted so boards don't creak with the rest of the creak. Doors don't even have keyholes anymore! How can I be a proper ghost in such a place?"

"Maybe Santa will let you haunt in Santa Land!"

"I shall ask him," said Stanley. "But I must get some sleep now. All this talking has exhausted me."

With that he collapsed in a heap in the middle of the rug. Booby Bobby was too excited to sleep. He dressed in his boots and coat and lay down to wait for Stanley.

Suddenly it was morning and his mother was in the room exclaiming, "My gracious! Why are you sleeping in all your clothes? And what on earth is this dirty old sheet doing here? You get up while I put this in wash."

Booby Bobby leaped up shouting, "Don't do it, mother! It's not a sheet. It's Stanley. He's a Ghost!"

"Tch, tch," said his mother in exasperation. "Will you never I make sense?"

She bundled up Stanley and marched to the laundry room and flung him into the whirling washing machine with the rest of the wash.

"Now you hush up," she said sternly to Booby Bobby who was wailing and wringing his hands.

"I'm going next door to borrow milk for breakfast."

As soon as she left, Booby Bobby opened the machine and pulled out the Ghost. Stanley was dripping and dizzy and blinded with soap. "That's what I mean about your modern house!" he sputtered. "It's no place for a ghost."

Booby Bobby offered to put Stanley in the drier but Stanley said he wouldn't stay in that house another minute. He shook himself angrily, like a dog who has fallen in a pond, and stalked out the back door.

"How do we get to Santa Land?" asked Booby Bobby, running to catch up.

"Just keep going until we get there," said Stanley gruffly. "But we will have to look sharp or some other housewife may want to hang me on a line to dry."

"You can pretend you're a boy wearing his Halloween costume," said Booby Bobby.

"A sensible idea," agreed Stanley.



#### They strode boldly through town

He strode boldly along as if it were the natural thing to do and no one they passed thought it strange at all to see a ghost walking through the town.

They traveled until they came to a small village where a puppet show was being given in the square. They sat down to rest a while and watch the show.

It was very sad.

A beautiful Puppet Princess was captured by a wicked ogre who swore to keep her a prisoner forever unless she agreed to become his bride. The princess was kept in a dungeon and fed nothing but butterfly wings and soybean shells but she refused to give her consent. The ogre grew impatient and said, "Tomorrow you will be my bride or die." And the curtain came down on the second act.

Booby Bobby jumped from his seat and cried, "This is terrible! We've got to save her!"

Chapter 5  
THE CHASE

Stanley the Ghost agreed that the Puppet Princess must be rescued from the wicked ogre who planned to wed her.

“Now is our chance,” Stanley whispered, “before the curtain goes up for the last act.”

They crept to the little stage and peered behind the curtain. The man who ran the show had gone off for a smoke. The audience had turned away for the intermission. The Princess lay on the stage in a crumpled heap of strings and sticks. The ogre also lay in a heap and did not seem so dangerous anymore.

“Princess! Come with us,” said Booby Bobby. “We will save you from the ogre.”

The Princess opened sad dark eyes and gazed at Booby Bobby in astonishment. He was the first person who had ever spoken to her as if she were real and not just a marionette on a string.

“I cannot move unless the puppeteer pulls my strings,” she murmured unhappily.

“I will break the strings,” said Booby Bobby. “Then you can move by yourself.”



There was only a beat-up raft

Booby Bobby snapped the strings tied to the puppet’s feet and hands and head.

“How good it feels,” breathed the Princess as Booby Bobby helped her from the stage. “I’ve never before moved of my own free will!”

“You must move very fast,” said the Ghost. He rushed out of the square with Booby Bobby and the Princess at his heels.

The puppeteer came from around the corner where he had been having his smoke. He stared in puzzlement when he saw

the Puppet Princess was missing. Then he saw the Ghost and Booby Bobby running away.

“Thief! Thief!” he shouted. “Stop them! They’ve stolen my puppet!” He began to give chase and all the men and women and children in the square followed him.

Panting and wheezing, the Ghost led the way out of the village, across the fields and through the forest.

“I-I can’t run anymore,” gasped the Princess at last. “It is harder than I thought.”

Booby Bobby knelt down and ordered her to climb on his back. Then with the Princess riding piggyback, he staggered after Stanley.

They came to a wide river. Stanley said, “I’ve heard that there is a ferry boat here run by an elf who will take us straight to Santa Land.” They looked everywhere but the only boat in sight was a beat-up raft tied to a tree. A sign on the raft said, “The ferryman ha retired. This ferry doesn’t run anymore.”

The Ghost and Booby Bobby and the Princess looked at each other in dismay. They heard a hallooing and thrashing in the woods behind. The puppeteer came nearer and nearer screaming, “We have them cornered! They’ll never get away!”

“Oh, dear,” moaned the Princess. “All my life that man has made me do things I didn’t want to do. Now he’ll put me back on strings and I’ll be just a marionette again.”

“He hasn’t caught us yet,” said the Ghost.

He pushed Booby Bobby and the Princess on to the rickety raft, untied the rope and leaped aboard. The craft lurched away from the bank just as the puppeteer reached the shore screeching, “Here they are! We have them!”

But he was too late. The raft was spinning down the river and was already nearly out of sight.



The raft zoomed over the water

## Chapter 6

### ADVENTURES ON A RAFT

Booby Bobby and Stanley the Ghost and the Puppet Princess huddled on the rickety raft as it swept faster and faster down the river

“I expect it’s taking us straight to Santa Land!” said Booby Bobby happily.

But the Ghost said, “I’d feel better if the ferryman were here. He’s the one who knows the way.”

“I don’t care where it goes,” murmured the Princess. “It’s so wonderful to be free.” She stretched her arms and wiggled her toes for the sheer pleasure of moving without any strings.

The raft reeled on until it reached the open sea. Land was far from sight. Now a terrible storm engulfed them. Winds heaved the raft up and down the sides of enormous waves and spun it wildly in whirlpools.

Booby Bobby felt seasick. The Ghost turned three shades whiter. Even the Princess was dismayed by so much movement.

A huge wave crashed on top of them and nearly swept them overboard. Another wave hit. The raft twitched and trembled as though it would splinter to bits.

The Ghost came sputtering out of the next wave and said in a very calm voice, “I think we are coming apart”

The raft was indeed sinking. Already they were sitting in 16 inches of water.

“Maybe we can tie it together again,” said the Princess in a timid voice. She slipped off her petticoat and tore it into strips and the three worked frantically to tie the raft together. Booby Bobby found a wad of silly putty in his coat pocket and used it to fill some of the cracks between the boards. Soon the raft was again riding on top of the waves.

But now a worse thing happened. The sea calmed; the wind stopped howling; the raft sat dead traveling nowhere at all.

They sat there all night and jail day and another night. The raft never moved. They tried paddling with their hands and kicking with their feet in the water, It did no good. The raft would not move.

“If only we had a sail!” said Booby Bobby.

“Me!”

“My mother thought you were an old sheet. If we spread you out, you might be as good as a sail.”

The Ghost, grumbling and feeling very silly, stood in the bow of the raft and the Princess and Booby Bobby spread out his sheets as far as they would go.

The raft quivered slightly and began to move. A strong breeze came out of the west and filled the Ghost’s sheets. The raft zoomed over the water. They were on their way again.

“I see land!” cried Bobby.

“It’s Santa Land!” shouted Booby Bobby as they neared the shore of an island.

He jumped up and down and flapped the Ghost’s sheets wildly to hurry the raft through the surf. This was a mistake. The wind filled the flapping sheets with such force that it lifted Stanley off the raft and swept him away like a kite torn from a child’s hands.

At the same moment the raft turned upside down in the pounding surf. Booby Bobby and the Princess were dumped into the sea and the raft was shattered to pieces.

## Chapter 7

### THE DESERT ISLAND

Booby Bobby and the Princess were dumped into the shallow water off the beach. They were tossed over and over, like empty bottles, until a last big wave washed them up on the sand.

Booby Bobby helped the Princess out of the water. They staggered up a hill and sat down to rest under a tall Pine tree. From there they could see the whole island.

“This can’t be Santa Land,” groaned Booby Bobby. “There’s no snow!”

The Princess began to weep. She sniffed and said, “Poor Ghost! He has probably been blown to the moon and it’s all my fault because I wanted to be free.”

“No, it’s my fault,” protested Booby Bobby. “If I hadn’t



The three explored the island

wanted to get to Santa Land, the Ghost would still be haunting my house back home.”

“I certainly would not,” rasped a voice. “As you know, your house was a perfectly dreadful place to haunt. Now get me down from here.”

Booby Bobby and the Princess looked up in astonishment. There was Stanley the Ghost hanging upside down above them, his sheets caught in the boughs of the pine tree.

With a whoop of relief, Booby Bobby shinnied up the tree. He untangled the sheets and the Ghost dropped to the ground.

The Princess dried her tears. She said she felt much better to know that Stanley was with them on the desert island.

Stanley said, “There is no such thing as a desert island. Ghosts haunt islands just as they haunt houses. As a matter of fact, I think I hear one now.”

Booby Bobby and the Princess sat wide-eyed and quiet. They heard a rustling in the brush. “It’s the wind,” said Booby Bobby.

“No,” said the Ghost. “It’s Ghosts. I know the language.” He began to drone and hum and make mysterious whirring sounds and Booby Bobby knew that he was talking to his brothers.

At last Stanley stood up and led them to a cove on the beach where a flock of white birds were fluttering. When they got closer they saw they weren’t birds at all but a family of ghosts picnicking in the sun.

The ghosts were happy to have visitors, because no one had been to the island for a thousand years. They gave them ghost pie and phantom cake and frothy fuzzy soda and played hide and seek with them on the beach.

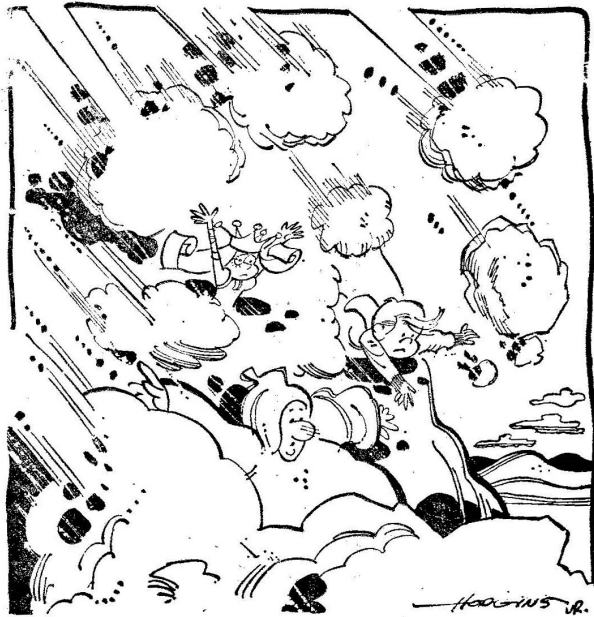
Stanley said he must find a way to leave the island because they had to get to Santa Land. He supposed they would have to build a new raft but even so he had no idea how to cross the seas or even what direction to go.

The grandfather ghost said, “I have heard that once in his lifetime if a person wishes something hard enough, the wish comes true. Of course, I don’t necessarily believe it s so.”

“I believe it!” cried Booby Bobby. “I will wish!”

He shut his eyes and wished with all his might that he and Stanley and the Puppet Princess were in Santa Land.

Chapter 8  
AVALANCHE!



“Avalanche!”

Poor Booby Bobby! He was so intent on using all his heart and all his might to make his wish come true that the words got mixed up in his head. Instead of wishing to be in Santa Land he wished to be in Snow Land which is not the same thing at all.

When he opened his eyes and looked around he found himself at the top of a mountain of snow but there was not a sign of Santa Land.

“Everyone is right,” he said wretchedly. “I am a dumbbell.”

Stanley the Ghost and the Princess, who found themselves sitting beside him, tried to reassure him.

“Santa Land can’t be too far off,” said Stanley. “We know Santa Land has snow and this must be most of the snow in the world.”

“I could try wishing again,” said Booby Bobby.

“No,” said the Ghost. “One wish is enough to spend on this trip. Besides it is probably true that only one such wish works in a lifetime.”

“What shall we do now?” asked the Princess in a small voice, shivering more than ever.

“Walk,” said the Ghost. “After all, it’s all downhill.”

Now mountains in winter time are very tricky. One minute it is sunny and the next minute a cloud drops down and you can’t see at all. When Booby Bobby and the Ghost and the Princess started down they could see the bottom of the mountain quite clearly. It seemed to be at a reasonable distance. But the snow was soft. They sank to at every step. After hours they had hardly made any progress. The bottom the mountain was as far off as ever. And now they couldn’t

see the bottom or even their hands in front of their faces. A white cloud had descended. They were lost in a fog.

The Princess held Booby Bobby’s hand and Booby Bobby held Stanley’s trailing sheets. The Ghost shouted at the top of his voice, “Follow me! Follow me!”

This was a mistake, for his voice, echoing up and down the mountain, loosened a cliff of overhanging snow. There was a sudden clap! and a far-off rumbling getting louder and louder until it was booming, thundering, roaring coming down the mountain.

The Ghost screamed, “Avalanche!”

Booby Bobby clung to the Princess’s hand. He lost hold of Stanley’s sheet, fell and grabbed his ankle. Just in time. The avalanche picked them up and hurled them head over heels, somersaulting, topsy-turvy, down the mountain in a river of snow.

When they came to a stop they were buried under the snow. The Puppet Princess’s nose had broken off. Stanley’s sheets were ripped from his head. Booby Bobby had two black eyes. But they were still together.

They began to tunnel out of the snow but they were so upside down they couldn’t tell whether they were going up or down or sideways. They decided each would tunnel in a different direction. One would have to be right.

After hours of digging, Booby Bobby’s head broke above the ground. He leaned over his tunnel and shouted, “Come this way! I’m out.”

He sat back to wait for the others. As he sank back, he felt an awful twinge and the jaws of some fearful creature locked around his seat.



## Chapter 9

### THE STARNGE BEAST

“HELP! HELP!” cried Booby Bobby.

A strange beast gripped him from the rear and locked him in its powerful jaws. He twisted and squirmed but he could not break away. The Ghost and the Princess were still working their way through the tunnels of snow. They could not hear his shouts for help.

“I’ll be eaten up before they get here.” thought Booby Bobby.

For lack of anything better to do, he kept bellowing. He hoped this would frighten away whatever had hold of him.

At last Stanley the Ghost popped out of the tunnel. The Princess climbed out after him. They stared in astonishment at Booby Bobby sitting in the snow, whooping and yowling.

“What are you hollering about?” asked the Ghost crossly. His sheets had been torn away in the avalanche. He was embarrassed to be standing there in his underwear in front of the Princess.

But the Princess, who had lost her nose in the avalanche, appeared not to notice. She bent over Booby Bobby and said, “Get up you silly goose, There’s nothing wrong.”

“I can’t get up,” wailed Booby Bobby. He looked fearfully over his shoulder. “Some beast has me in its jaws.”

“There’s no beast here,” said the Ghost.

“I can feel its teeth,” insisted Booby Bobby.

“The fall in the avalanche has jiggled your brains. You are imagining things,” snapped Stanley. “Come now. Get up!”

He took one arm and the Princess took the other arm and they tried to pull Booby Bobby to his feet. They pulled and pulled and finally they yanked him out of the Snow. Then they saw, to their horror, an enormous steel trap fastened tight to poor Booby Bobby.

They sat him back down in the snow and the Ghost studied the situation. He fiddled and pattered with the jaws of the trap but he could not loosen its grip on Booby Bobby’s pants.

“I do not know what this trap is,” muttered Stanley. “I have never seen anything like it before.”

“It’s a Booby Trap, I expect,” said Booby Bobby forlornly. “That is what it has caught.”

The Ghost said, “We can’t get him out and he can’t move with it hanging on to him. We’ll have to wait until whoever set the trap comes back to see what he has caught.”

The Ghost and Princess hid behind some bushes to wait and watch. Presently they heard far away jingle, jangle, dingle, jingle of bells, and the and chatter of hoof beats.

The Ghost and the Princess shivered at the sound. Bobby, caught in the trap, nearly fainted with fear. He clenched his hands and screwed his eyes shut and whispered, “I will be brave. I will be brave.”

The tinkling and the dingling grew closer. The whole world seemed to be ringing and pealing and clanging with the sound of bells. When Booby Bobby thought he would burst with terror the noise stopped. A sharp voice cried out:

“Ha!”

Booby Bobby took a deep breath and opened one eye. Then he opened the other and his mouth dropped. There, not, 10 feet in front of him, was a little red sleigh pulled by two reindeer. The reindeer were hung with bells and were driven by a crooked-legged, red-haired elf who carried a sliver bell in each hand.

The elf leaped from the sleigh and shouted furiously at Booby Bobby. “We’ve caught you at last!”



Shouting, the Elf leaped from the sleigh

Chapter 10  
SANTA LAND

“We will smother you in ashes and whip you with switches and give you spiders to eat. You’ll be sorry you ever came to Santa Land.” shouted the red-haired, crooked-legged dwarf.

“But-I-I haven’t done anything” stammered Booby Bobby, quaking in the trap.

“Ha! You can’t fool me. You’re the Troll who has been stealing candy and breaking toys and mixing up Christmas orders. You hate children and don’t want them to have any Christmas.”

The Ghost and the Puppet Princess popped out of the bushes, “He is not a Troll!” shouted the Ghost angrily. “And he never did any of those things!” declared the Princess.

“If he’s not a Troll how come he’s caught in my Troll trap? And who are you anyway?”

“I’m a ghost as you should be able see for yourself,” said Stanley stiffly.

“I never heard of a ghost in underwear!” scoffed the elf.

“I lost my clothes in an avalanche, said Stanley. “That is how the Princess lost her nose and Booby Bobby got caught in your trap. We’ve come a long, long way to see Santa Claus and I must say we never expected such a reception as this,”

“It all sounds very queer to me” said the elf. “But never mind. We’ll let Santa settle the matter.” He unlocked the Troll trap and Booby Bobby, minus the seat of his trousers, was free. They climbed into the red sleigh and with bells ringing, dashed away.

“Why do you ring the bells so loudly?” complained the Princess putting her hands over her ears.

“I’m getting them ready for Christmas,” explained the elf, He had to bellow to be heard.

“They get rusty and out of tune between seasons.” He shook the bells on the reindeer reins and went ding, dong, with the silver bell in each hand.

Clanging and chiming they arrived in Santa Land, The elf herded them into Santa’s house where they all began to talk at once.

Santa sat in his chair by the fire smoking his pipe and rocking gently to and fro as he listened to their tale. When they had finished he shook his finger at the elf. “Don’t you know what a Troll looks like?” he asked with amusement.

“A Troll can take many shapes as you know,” retorted the elf. “And anyway the boy had no business in my trap.”

Santa’s eyes twinkled. “You must excuse Tweedleknees, He has a low boiling point and gets very excited about things.”

“There’s plenty to be excited about,” argued: Tweedleknees. “Unless we catch the Troll, there’ll be no toys left for Christmas.”

“Things aren’t quite that bad,” said Santa soothingly, “Some now, we must do something for our visitors.”



“There’s plenty to be excited about!” cried Tweedleknees

Mrs. Claus came in and set about patching Booby Bobby’s britches. Tweedleknees, grumping all the time, went to the linen shop to get new sheets for the Ghost. Santa, meanwhile, bent over his workbench and cut out and molded a brand new nose for the Princess.

After this, Santa asked why the three had come to Santa Land.

The Ghost said he hoped to find a better place to haunt. The Princess said she was looking for a new kingdom. Booby Bobby said, in a very small voice, “I would like a friend for Christmas so people will think I’m important and not call me dumbbell anymore.”

“Hmmm,” said S a n t a, thoughtfully. “Hmmm.”

Before he could say more, Tweedleknees burst in shouting “Come quick! Something terrible has happened!”

## Chapter 11

### THE RUBBER BALL SHOP

“The reindeer!” blurted Tweedleknees. “They’ve disappeared!”

They ran to the barn. The barns were empty.

“They must be somewhere nearby,” said Santa. “I hear bells.”

There was a faint tinkling in the field behind the barns but when they went there they saw eight little pigs grunting in the mud. Each little pig had bells around its neck and everyone knew from the sound they were the very same heels the reindeer had worn.

“I warned you!” cried Tweedleknees. “I told you the situation was serious. Now the Troll has changed the reindeer into pigs. There’ll be no way to travel on Christmas Eve!”

“We’ll manage,” said Santa firmly. But it was plain he was worried. He returned to his house and sat in front of the fire and brooded.

Mrs. Claus brought in a scrumptious supper of mock turtle soup and roast partridge, cheesecake and pineapple frappe. But Santa wouldn’t touch a thing, though pineapple frappe was his favorite dessert.

The Ghost and the Princess and Booby Bobby couldn’t eat either, though they tried. Finally they got up and walked out to the shops to see the toy makers. But the elves and fairies were too upset to work.

“It’s the reindeer turned into pigs today,” murmured one. “Who knows? Tomorrow it may be us turned into caterpillars. The Troll is very powerful!”

They huddled fearfully in groups and made no dolls or wagons or games. “What is the use?” they said. “The reindeer are gone and the toys cannot be delivered anyway.”

The three visitors went into the empty Ball Shop. There was a huge tub of liquid rubber and large machines to turn out basketballs and footballs and tennis balls and just plain rubber balls. All the machines were idle.

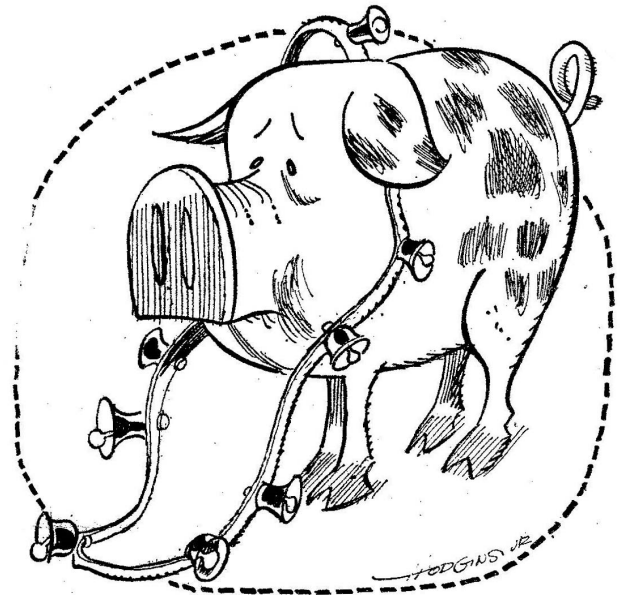
The Ghost sat on the edge of the tub of rubber. “We must trap the Troll,” he announced.

“Tweedleknees tried that,” said Booby Bobby. “All he caught was me.”

The Ghost said he meant a different kind of trap. “They say the Troll comes every night to the toy shops to work some mischief. Tonight we’ll wait for him here in the Ball Shop. When he comes I’ll make ghost sounds to frighten him and you will push him into the tub of liquid rubber.”

This seemed an excellent plan. When it was dark the Princess hid by the door to watch for the Troll. The Ghost crouched in the corner. Booby Bobby waited behind the golf ball machine.

The hours passed. It was very black and still. Booby Bobby’s eyes kept closing. He was enormously sleepy. Suddenly the



The Troll had changed the reindeer into pigs

Princess whispered, “Now!” The Troll came in carrying a small lantern.

“Eoow!” shrieked the Ghost, darting from the corner and flapping his sheets.

Booby Bobby, who really had fallen asleep, was so startled he threw back his head and smacked the handle of the golf ball machine. There was a grinding of gears and hundreds of golf balls began popping from the machine peppering everyone in the room.

The Princess moaned. The Ghost squawked. The Troll roared. The lantern went out.

Booby Bobby, quickly recovering, leaped out in the dark and pushed the Troll into the tub of liquid rubber.

THE WITCH'S HANDBOOK

'I've got him!' cried Booby Bobby. Dodging golf balls, he stumbled to the wall to turn on the light. "He's in the tub of rubber!"

But—alas! In the dark, it was the Ghost that Booby Bobby had pushed into the tub while the Troll had fled.

"Get me out!" bawled Stanley, flapping and floundering in the thick black goo. The more he struggled the bigger and fatter he grew. When the Princess and Booby Bobby finally fished him out he bounced on the floor like a giant rubber ball.

Meanwhile, the golf ball machine kept clattering away, turning out golf balls and bombarding the three of them. The balls flooded the room and flowed out the door and down the road.

The terrible racket brought Santa and Tweedleknives running to the shop. Their eyes popped at the sight before them. Tweedleknives turned off the golf ball machine and bounced the Ghost away to clean him up. Santa took Booby Bobby and the Princess to his house to bandage their cuts and bruises.

"We were trying to catch the Troll," explained Booby Bobby.

"We would have, too, if I hadn't been such a boob!"

"Never mind," soothed Santa. "At least you frightened him away."

But, the next morning they discovered that, while all the commotion went on in the Ball Shop, the Troll had broken into the Doll Shop and stolen the eyes from all the finished dolls. Their eyes were made from a rare and priceless glass impossible to replace.

Now things were worse than ever. The Ghost, who still bounced slightly when he walked, said that time was running out and what was Santa to do about the reindeer turned into pigs and the damaged toys and the candy that disappeared as soon as the candy fairies made it?

Booby Bobby felt dreadful because he had let the Troll escape. He was determined to do something to make up for his blunder. He wandered off into the Book Shop and studied the rows and rows of books ready for Christmas delivery.

He wished he hadn't been such a scatterbrain in school. "I might have learned something about how to catch a Troll," he sighed. He picked up a tiny book from under a stool. It was flaming red and had a skull on the front.

"WITCH'S HANDBOOK," he read: "This book contains curses, charms, incantations, exorcisms and recipes for magic potions. KEEP THIS BOOK OUT OF THE HANDS OF CHILDREN."

He sat down on the floor and began to read. His eyes grew big and his hand reeled as he turned the pages. He ran off to show the Ghost and the Puppet Princess what he had found.

"Here are all kinds of ways to catch the Troll," he exclaimed, showing them the book. "We can turn him into a fish or cause his teeth to drop out or make him disappear in a cloud of smoke!"

But the Ghost shook his head and said that it was a witch's magic.

"But it's all written here clear as can be," protested Booby Bobby, "All we have to do is follow directions.

The Princess pointed out that the book was not supposed to be read by children, "Do put it back where you found it," she begged.

But Booby Bobby went off and read some more. When he came to a recipe for candy that would turn the Troll into fruit he could not resist.

"I will do it all by myself!" he exclaimed. "When I catch the Troll how proud everyone will be of me!"



Booby Bobby read the forbidden book

## Chapter 13

### THE CANDY RECIPE

Booby Bobby went to the Candy Shop. It was empty because the Troll kept stealing the Christmas candy and the Candy Fairies didn't have the heart to make any more.

Booby Bobby followed the recipe in the Witch's Handbook. He mixed together a pound of butterfly butter, three scorpion eggs, a cup of goatfish scales, ingredients he found behind the pipe under the sink where they were kept to kill termites and such.

He boiled everything together until the mixture spun a thread when dripped from a spoon. Then he set it out in a buttered pan to cool.

It did smell delicious! Booby Bobby's mouth watered as the odor filled the shop and drifted out the window and away on the evening breeze.

"What a success!" he cried. "The Troll will never be able to resist." He imagined how happy everyone would be when they discovered that he had turned the Troll into a fruit.

He was so excited that he could not wait a minute longer to tell the Ghost and the Princess what he had done. He went off to find them.

But the Ghost himself had gone looking for Booby Bobby. He was disturbed about the Witch's Handbook. He again wanted to warn Booby Bobby not to fool with it. He smelled the cooling candy and went into the Candy Shop to see what was cooking.

What he saw smelled so good and looked so good he picked up the spoon and licked it. Pop! Plunk! He turned into a long, yellow banana!

A few minutes later the Puppet Princess, who had been waiting for the Ghost to return, followed him into the shop.

"Yummy!" she exclaimed. "How delicious this looks!" She picked up the tiniest crumb of candy and stuck it between her lips. Pop! Plunk! She turned into a golden pomegranate.

Meanwhile, Santa Claus was taking a walk while he considered ways to catch the Troll. He too, smelled the wonderful odor and he thought, "Splendid! The Candy Fairies are working again." He went to the shop and was surprised to find no one there.

He saw the pan of candy and it looked very good to him. He was glad to see that a new recipe was being tried because, to tell the truth, he was getting quite tired of the usual Christmas candy. He ran his finger around the sides of the saucepan and was just putting his finger to his mouth when Booby Bobby returned to the shop.

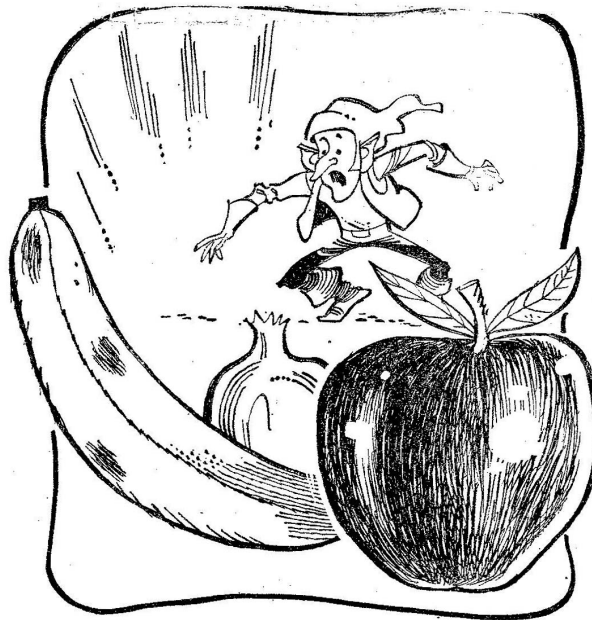
"Stop! Stop!" screamed Booby Bobby when he saw what Santa was about to do.

But it was too late, Santa licked his finger and Pop! Plunk! He was a bright red apple.

Booby Bobby stared at the apple as if he could not believe and never would believe what had happened. He saw the banana and the pomegranate beside the apple and he knew why he had not been able to find the Ghost and the Princess.

He didn't know what else to do so he opened his mouth and screamed, "Tweedleknies!"

When the crooked-legged elf came running. Booby Bobby burst into tears and told him what had happened.



They had turned into a banana, an apple and a pomegranate

"It was a recipe from the Witch's Handbook. I made it to catch the Troll."

"Now you've done it!" groaned Tweedleknies. "The book is the Troll's book and all the magic in it is his. I expect he left the book around hoping you would find it and do exactly as you did. Couldn't you see it says 'NOT FOR CHILDREN!'" "I saw but I didn't believe," sobbed poor Booby Bobby.

## Chapter 14

### CLOUD CASTLE

Booby Bobby put the yellow banana and the golden pomegranate and the big red apple in a bowl. "What shall we do?" he moaned.

"The first thing to do is destroy that candy," said Tweedleknees. "Witch's recipes would never work on the Troll anyway for he is a witch himself." He threw the candy, pots and pan into the fire.

Booby Bobby pleaded: "There must be some way to turn Santa and the Ghost and the Princess back into themselves. Isn't there anyone who knows magic and can help?"

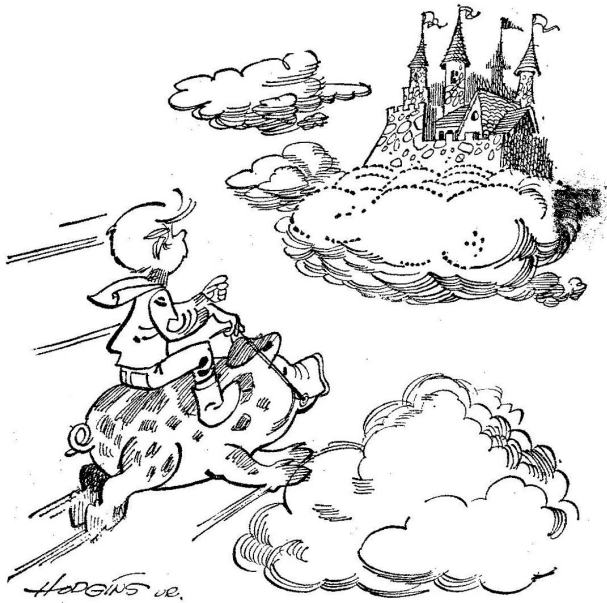
"There is a Prince who knows about such things," said Tweedleknees.

"I will go to him!" cried Booby Bobby.

"Impossible," said Tweedleknees. "He lives in a castle no one has ever seen. It is said that it is somewhere in the sky but that is all make-believe, of course."

"I have often seen castles in the sky!" exclaimed Booby Bobby.

"You are daft," said Tweedleknees. "They were only clouds you saw." He took a very large handkerchief from his pocket.



Riding the pig, he came nearer the castle

"It's no use. Santa has gone. Christmas is over forever." He rushed out honking his nose and wiping his eyes.

Booby Bobby went out and gazed at the cloudless sky. He sat down to wait. He waited all day and all night, never taking his eyes off the sky. Early the second morning he saw the castle, a great white palace flecked with pink and gold, floating overhead.

He started to shout for Tweedleknees but he thought, "No. He will say it is only clouds, I'll get one of the reindeer and fly to the castle on my own."

He ran all the way to the barn before he remembered that the reindeer had been turned into pigs. He watched them scrambling in the mud.

"If only they could fly!" he thought wistfully. And then: "Well, who knows? Perhaps they can. No one has tried!" He climbed on the back of the littlest pig. He jingled the bells around its neck and cried, "Fly away to the castle in the sky!"

The pig grunted and snorted and took a few waddling steps. Suddenly it straightened its tail and rose out of the mud and soared towards the castle drifting overhead.

As they drew closer, the castle seemed to change shape and disappear. Booby Bobby was worried. Was it really only a cloud after all? He rode into a bank of clouds. For a long while he couldn't see anything at all. Then he was out on the other side and there was the castle, real and true.

He left the pig at the gates of the castle and walked slowly up an avenue paved with rose leaves. He went up marble steps and into a blue-ceilinged hall.

There sat a crowned prince playing on a silver flute. It was a sound so sweet and pure that even the birds in the garden were still to listen.

The Prince greeted Booby Bobby with surprise. "Everyone thinks the castle is made of clouds. We have never had visitors before. Tell me how you happened to come."

Booby Bobby told him all that had happened in Santa Land and how it was said the Prince knew the way to break the Troll's spell on Santa and the Ghost and the Princess.

The Prince shook his head and said sadly, "You yourself cast the spell and only the Troll knows how to break it."

## Chapter 15

### THE FLUTE

The Prince told Booby Bobby that only the Troll himself could tell how to break the spell Booby Bobby had cast when he used the Troll's own magic.

"The Troll would never tell!" exclaimed Booby Bobby.

"You can make him tell," said the Prince. "You have only to hang onto his back for 100 seconds."

"To hang onto his back I must catch him first."

"True," said the Prince.

"And how will I do that?"

"You must think of a way," said the Prince. He picked up his flute and began to play. The sound was almost sweeter than one could bear.

Booby Bobby said, "If you would come and play your flute perhaps the Troll would stop to listen and I could jump on his back."

"I would never leave my castle!" exclaimed the Prince.

"It is the only way I can think of," sighed Booby Bobby. "You would only have to stay a little while."

"Hmmm," said the Prince thoughtfully. "And this Puppet Princess—is she very pretty?"

"Oh, very! Though, of course, she is a pomegranate right now."

"Hmmm," said the Prince again, "Well, I suppose there is no harm in my leaving here for a while. It has been a long time since I have seen a pretty princess - or pomegranate, for that matter. Come, let's be off."

The two flew off to Santa Land, Booby Bobby riding the fat little pig and the Prince riding a white, winged horse.

When they arrived they found Tweedleknives and Mrs. Claus and all the Santa Land workers gathered in Santa's house mourning for Santa.

"I have brought the Prince," said Booby Bobby. "We have a plan to catch the Troll and bring back Santa."

Booby Bobby took the Prince to the Candy Shop and showed him the bowl of fruit.

"The apple is Santa Claus. The banana is the Ghost. And the pomegranate is the Puppet Princess."

"A very pretty, bowl of fruit," said the Prince. "But I don't suppose they think so at all. Well, let us see what we can do. Remember, if the Troll comes and you get on his back, you must hang on for 100 seconds."

"And then what will happen?"

"His power will be gone."

"I will hang on," promised Booby Bobby.

The Prince took out his flute and began to play. All the while he played he stared at the golden pomegranate. He played sweeter than he had ever played sweeter than he had ever played before and Booby Bobby, standing behind the door, stopped up his ears to keep from being himself beguiled.

Presently, he saw the doorknob turning and his heart pounded for he knew the Troll had come.

Slowly, silently, the door opened. The Troll stood there mesmerized by what he heard. He took a step into the room, and another step, and another. When he took the third step, Booby Bobby sprang on his back and gripped him by the hair.

The astonished Troll howled and quivered and shook with rage but Booby Bobby hung on. The Prince laid down his flute and counted softly.

"One second, two seconds, three . . ."



As the Prince played his flute, the Troll appeared

## Chapter 16

### THE STRUGGLE

"Let me go!" yowled the Troll.

Booby Bobby fastened his legs tighter around the Troll's middle and hung on to his hair.

"Seventeen seconds," counted the Prince, "Eighteen . . ."

The Troll tottered and stumbled, he pitched and squirmed, but he could not fling off Booby Bobby.

The Troll said, "I will turn you into a fly and you cannot hold me!"

"I have magic, too," retorted Booby Bobby. "I will turn into a spider and catch you in my web."

"I will be fire and burn you up!" said the Troll.

"Then I will be a pail of water and put you out!"

"I will become a piece of cheese and the smell will overpower you!"

"I will become a mouse and eat you up," retorted Booby Bobby.

Of course Booby Bobby had no magic and could do none of these things, but the Troll did not know this and so he cried, "I shall turn into so many things you will not have time to turn into anything!" Snarling magic words he became a grizzly bear, a shrew, a king cobra, a polecat and a timberwoif.



Booby Bobby leaped on the Troll's back

Booby Bobby grew dizzier and dizzier, He could not hold on any longer. But just as his legs began to slip the Prince shouted, "Ore hundred seconds!" and the power of the Troll was gone.

Now the Troll was just an ugly oaf with aching sides and hair standing on end. "You have won," he mumbled. "What is it you want of me?"

"Return the toys you stole, break the spells you cast and leave Santa Land forever," said Booby Bobby.

"The pigs are this minute turned back into reindeer," said the Troll. "The toys are hidden in Santa's cellar. As for the Ghost and the Puppet Princess and Santa Claus, three kisses will bring them back.

"First, let someone kiss the pomegranate."

"I will do that!" cried the Prince and he pressed the golden fruit to his lips. As he did so the pomegranate disappeared and the Puppet Princess was in his arms.

"Second," said the Troll. "Someone must kiss the banana"

"I love bananas!" exclaimed Booby Bobby. He smacked the banana with his mouth and there was Stanley, the Ghost.

"To bring back Santa," said he Troll, "someone must kiss his own elbow."

Booby Bobby tried, but he could not do it. The Prince tried but he could not do it. The Ghost, being mainly sheets, did not really have an elbow.

But the Princess said, "I was built to be a marionette, I can twist my arms in any direction." She bent her arm and kissed her elbow. Instantly, Santa Claus appeared.

"What on earth happened?" he asked, rubbing his eyes.

Booby Bobby told how he had brought the Prince from the castle in the sky and how the Prince had shown him how to capture the Troll and break his power.

"What can I offer you in return?" Santa asked the Prince gratefully.

"You can do nothing," said the Prince. He turned to the Princess and said, "But you can. For I have fallen in love with you and would you like to be my bride?"

The Princess blushed and said she was honored to accept because she had never seen so fine a prince and she too, had fallen in love.

"Then you'll have the new kingdom you wanted for Christmas!" exclaimed Booby Bobby

"And speaking of Christmas, said Santa, "we must get busy for tomorrow is the day!"



## Chapter 17

### MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!

Santa went to his house and told Mrs. Claus and all the workers that the Troll had gone and would never return.

“Hooray!” cried Tweedleknecs. “Our troubles are over!”

“No,” said Santa, “They are just beginning, for there are thousands of children’s orders still unfilled and we must have them ready this very eve. Can we do it?”

“We can do it!” shouted the Santa Land fairies and elves.

Mrs. Claus carried out platter after platter of homemade patty cakes, pan dowdy, cream puffs, macaroons and lady fingers to the shops for the workers. And the whole of Santa Land hummed as the elves hammered wheels on wagons, tuned horns, stitched together stuffed animals, painted pictures on the front of coloring books and wound up toy engines.

The Puppet Princess straightened out orders from children and checked them off on a master list to be sure no one was forgotten. The Ghost recovered the stolen candy and the doll eyes the Troll had hidden in Santa’s cellar.

Booby Bobby hitched the reindeer to the sleigh and tested all the bells. The Prince loaded the sleigh with bag after bag of toys as the workers filled them.

By evening everything was ready Santa called them together and thanked them for all they had done.

“Every request is filled. The Prince has his bride. The Princess has a new kingdom. The Ghost has a new place to haunt for he has promised to stay here and be our special spook forevermore.”

“What about me?” asked Booby Bobby in a very small voice.

“You will come with me,” said Santa. “Before this night is over you will have all the friends you want and no one will call you Booby Bobby anymore.”

He took the boy in the sleigh with him and off they sailed. They visited every city and town and hamlet in the world and left toys for every child sleeping there.

At last they came to Booby Bobby’s town. Now Santa jerked the reindeer reins to make the bells tinkle and jingle. He shook the great bells in his hands and filled the silent night with silvery chimes.

The sleeping children awoke and could not believe their ears. Never had they heard such a sound. They crept to their windows and looked in wonder at Santa Claus and Booby Bobby unloading toys in the great town square.

“Now tell me, Robert Clarence Hector Lee,” shouted Santa so all could hear. “Have the children in this town been good this year?”

“Oh yes,” replied the boy. “They are always very good.”

Every child who heard him breathed easier and thought to himself, “Why, he’s not such a boob after all!”

“Are they your friends?” asked Santa in a very loud voice.

“I-I don’t know for sure,” said the boy uncertainly.

“Well,” boomed Santa, “any friend of yours is a friend of mine and don’t let anyone forget it!”

He went from roof to roof and dropped a bag of toys down every chimney. When all was done he left the boy at his door and took off in his sleigh shouting, “Goodbye, Robert Clarence Hector Lee. Bring your friends to see me sometime!”

“I will! I will!” called the boy.

All the children shivered in awe and swore they’d be his friend and never call him Booby Bobby again.

“Merry Christmas!” called Santa, flying away. “Merry Christmas to all!”



“Goodbye Robert Clarence Hector Lee,  
and Merry Christmas to All!”

*Story and images are the property of  
the family of Lucrece Beale  
and reprinted with their permission.*