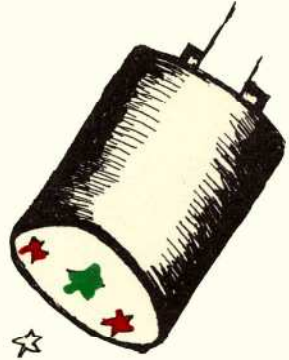


A CHRISTMAS FABLE
or
A STAR IS BORN



by SUSAN
KIRBY

**A Christmas Fable
Or
A Star Is Born**

by Susan Kirby

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A CHRISTMAS FABLE

or

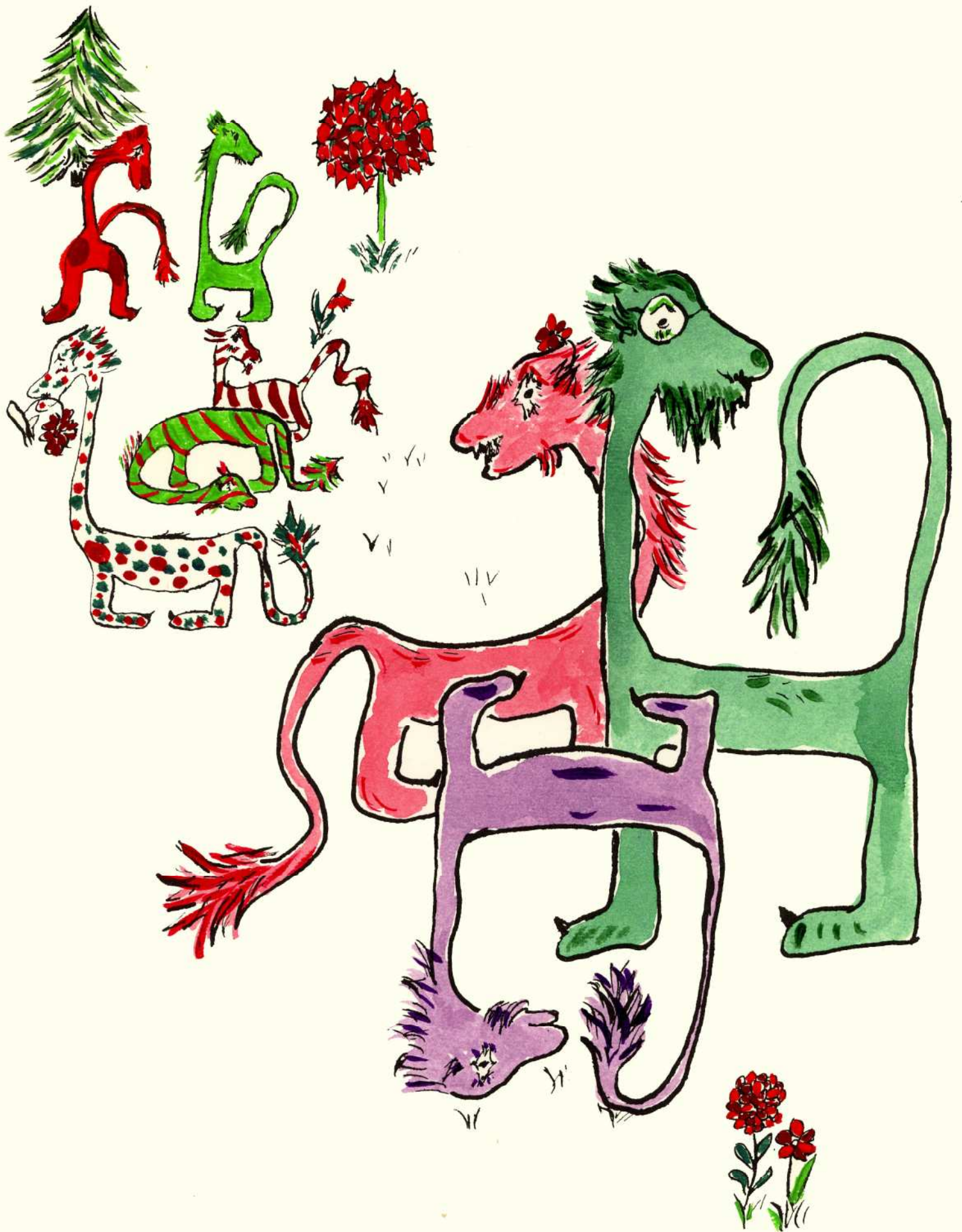
A STAR IS BORN

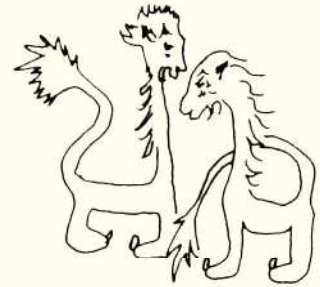
In the more remote reaches of the world, somewhat east of Hollywood and north of Broadway, there is a land of Christmas Monsters. Into this land was born -- of Maraschino and Spruce Monster -- a female offspring, Purple Monster, nicknamed (unimaginatively, but appropriately enough, I suppose) PM.

Since Christmas Monsterland was inhabited only by red and green Monsters, PM tended to clash with the rest of the community, causing great embarrassment to her family.

"She can't be mine!" accused Spruce. "She's got the nose of Avocado Emerald, the Milk Monster." In righteous fury, Maraschino dragged Spruce to the Hereditary Monster, who explained, "Nein, mein Herr. She ist ein genetic aberration. She was caused by ein split in your BBY MDNA." Vindicated, Maraschino loped home, tugging a sputtering Spruce behind her.

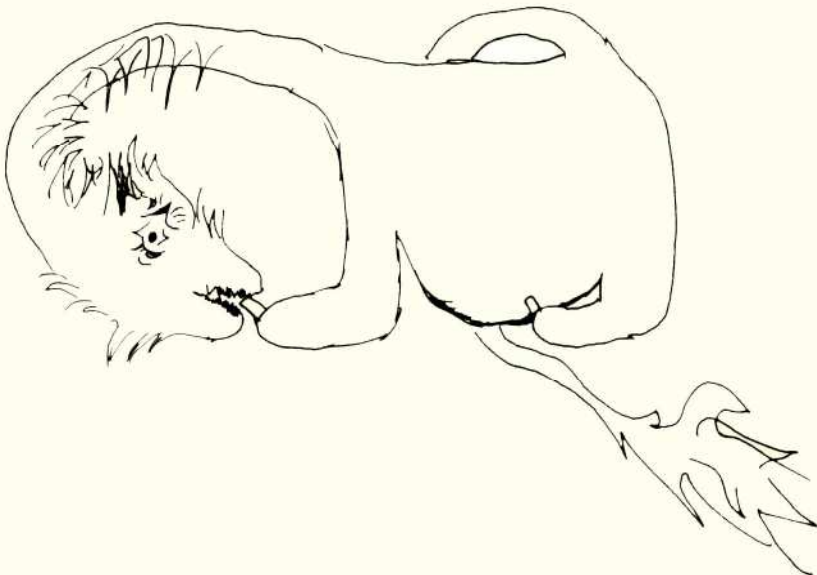
Forsaking Dr. Spock for a copy of "The Ugly Duckling," Maraschino raised PM as a potential redhead, putting braces on her teeth and replacing her horned-rimmed glasses with burgundy contact lenses. Spruce, to make up for the humiliating fact that, after all, it had been his blue genes, poured money into PM's singing, dancing and piano lessons.





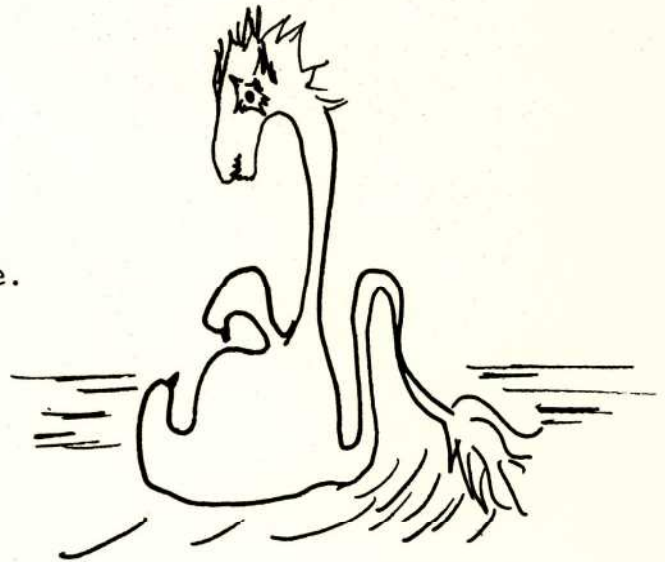
Lest I mislead you into thinking that PM was an only Monster, let us note that she had two older siblings -- a green and red striped brother, Viridian, and a red and green striped sister, Cerise. Both chose to deny PM's existence. Needless to say, this wounded PM deeply and she became shy and withdrawn. She also became very, very fat.

PM found comfort in her art. She would raise her lovely mezzo Monster voice for hours, warbling scales and arpeggios. She practiced ballet every day, developing a high extension and beautiful pointed paws. However, her entrechats and jetes shook the house, and Maraschino drew the line at tap dancing. PM's contemporaries called her the "Eccentric Eggplant" and taunted her with sneers of "Here comes the two-ton musical grape," "There goes the singing plum," or "Hey, hopping heliotrope!"





PM became manic-depressive.
In her manic state she would
pirouette until she fell
down, bounding half
across the room, or would
sing "Onward, Monster
Soldiers" at the top
of her lungs.



In her depressed state
she would stare at the walls,
mumbling incoherently.



After various arguments and consultations, Maraschino and Spruce decided to send PM to the Shrink Monster, Pimento Poppy. But the child psychologist felt helpless. Freud, Jung and R.D. Laing could do nothing for a seventeen-year-old fuchsia Christmas Monster.



About this time PM overheard Viridian and Cerise whispering about the next Christmas Monster auditions. Every year Santa Claus sent an army of his elves to hold the Sleigh-Puller tryouts, where twenty-five were weeded out for Santa's arrival on Christmas Eve. Santa then picked thirteen to pull his sleigh, based on their gracefulness, poise, and ability to sing "Jingle Bells" and "Here Comes Santa Claus" in four-part harmony.

You are probably going to give up on this fable right now.

"She's gone too far," you're saying. "Reindeer pull Santa's sleigh, not Christmas Monsters. This is a ridiculous fantasy conceived in a lunatic mind."

Not true. NOT TRUE.

Reindeer have had better ad men and PR.

Years ago an effective media blitz was launched to change the SC Sleigh-Puller contract, abetted by the introduction of such fictional tripe as "The Night Before Christmas" and the machinations of a red-nosed opportunist named Rudolph.

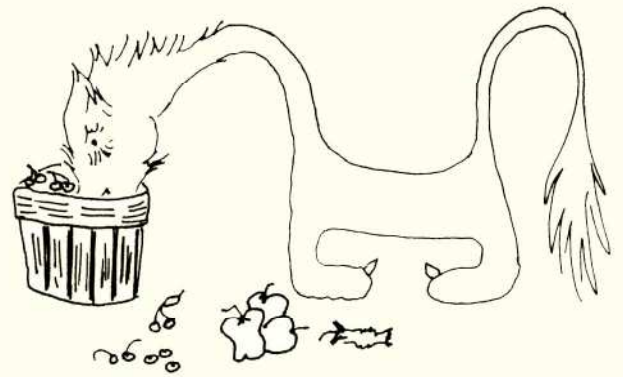
But let me set you straight. Reindeer no more pull sleighs than there's a little man rowing in your toilet bowl. The advertising has been effective, and People are very gullible.

The auditions obsessed PM. She had less than a year to prepare. Pimento Poppy encouraged her, believing that this futile endeavor at least showed signs of involvement. Maraschino, more skeptical, attempted to curb the enthusiasm of PM's pas de chats, fearing a total relapse following the auditions. She warned PM not to expect too much, reminding the child that she was overweight. Undaunted, PM went on the Last Chance Diet (which she considered appropriate to her psyche), and lost fifty pounds.

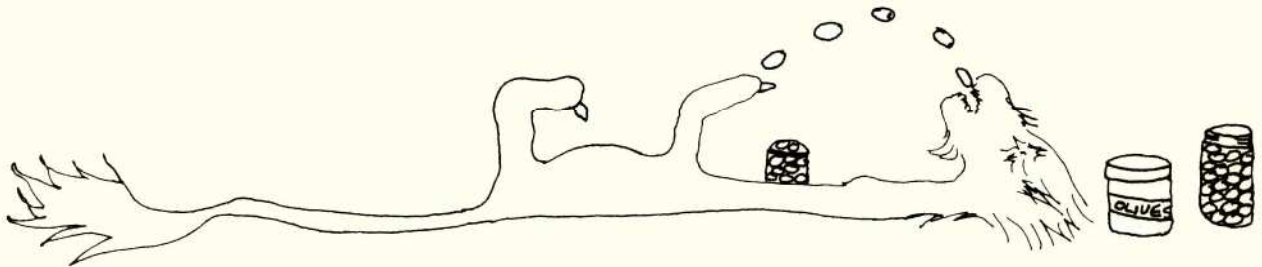
Confidence came rapidly, only to be shot down six months before the audition, when Cerise (who had been eliminated after three callbacks the previous year -- she was good but lazy, and relied on tricks) chided PM, "You'll never be chosen. You're not green, you're not red, you're not even striped or spotted! You aren't what Santa wants. You are PURPLE. You aren't Christmas material!"



Reality hurt.
PM tried to grow redder.
She ate bushels of cherries
and apple skins, and
drank cartons of tomato juice.



When this failed, she turned to broccoli,
olives, artichokes, and mint jelly, all to no avail.
She only became heavier and a bit queasy.
She tried a patch test of red Ritz Dye,
which made her fur fall out.
Miss Clairol's henna rinse
gave her urticaria.



Sear's Latex paint, which she painted on
in red and green stripes, matted her mane,
ruined her jumps because her feet stuck
to the floor, and took three weeks and
two bottles of Janitor in a Drum to wash
out. Purple she was and Purple she
would be, her talent and lithe body
notwithstanding. But PM persevered
with her practicing and shunned the
temptation to return to cookies and
melancholia.

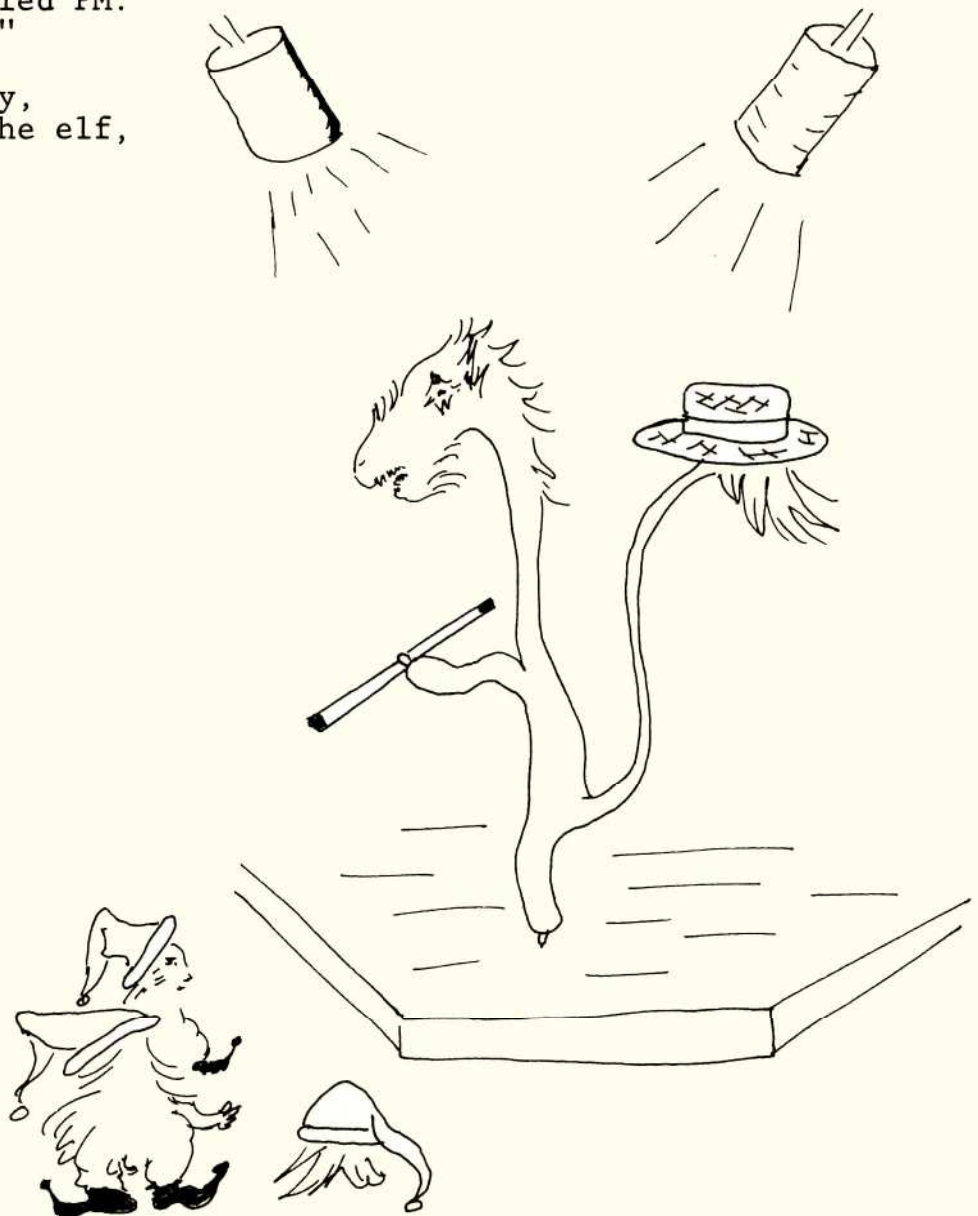
On December 22nd the elves arrived and began the auditions. Spruce had a friend on the judging panel who, with a large under-the-table payment and a promise of yearly Christmas greens, agreed to pass PM through the preliminaries.

"But," he said, "I can't let Santa see her. I have my reputation as Santa's chief advisor to uphold." He put his arm around Spruce's shoulders and gave him a consoling pat. "She's good, Spruce, but she ain't Christmas."

On the 23rd, the fourth callback, PM rendered "We Three Kings," accompanied by a soft shoe, her selection from the Nutcracker, and a rousing "O Holy Night." Then, standing in line with the other hopefuls, she heard, "You, stay. You, stay. You - the purple one - go. Thank you."

"Why?" cried PM.
"I was the best!"

"I'm sorry,
darling," said the elf,
"you're just
NOT CHRISTMAS."





PM cried until her heart would break. She did not go to the Sleighport for Santa's arrival the next day. She did not watch the finals. She hid in her room and sobbed endlessly. In her agony she began to sing. "O Little Town of Bethlehem" wafted through the windows just as Santa Claus's entourage passed the house.

"Whoa," cried Santa. "Who's that? I LOVE the voice. Why didn't I see her?"

The Chief Advisor quivered. "She's good, SC, but she ain't Christmas," he mumbled.

Santa's face turned redder. "Hey, you, singing in there, come out here!" he bellowed.

PM crept over the doorsill. Santa looked her up and down. The Christmas Monsters quaked in silence, blushing red (or green) in their embarrassment.

"Let's hear Jingle Bells," SC ordered. PM's voice trilled like an angel's.

"Can you dance?"

PM went through the Snowflake number followed by Candy Cane.

The crowd watched and listened, envisioning their source of income slowly ebbing. Santa rolled his black eyes, pulled his matted beard, and began to laugh.

"Baby, I'm going to make you a star!" he cried. "You, with your voice and feet so light, you shall guide my sleigh tonight!"





And PM went off with Santa, leading the other twelve Christmas Monsters in Handel's "Messiah," the "Twelve Days of Christmas," and a raunchy rendition of "I Saw Mama Kissing Santa Claus." And the best and merriest Christmas was had by all.

MORAL:

If you are Purple, don't be Blue.
A Merry Christmas will come to you.
For Santa Claus, both wise and kind,
Is also very color-blind.