

# A Chupacabra for Christmas

by Alan Nafzger

Visitors to the South Texas village of San Joaquín often wondered how the great Spanish Colonial church there was kept so nice and clean. Of course, people came to visit from far just to marvel over it and this was good for the town's one café, one car mechanic, and the one grocer. The tourists didn't matter much to the sports coach, the plumber, the judge, or sheriff. But, everyone knew it was the oldest and best maintained church in all the Americas because of Mateo Iglesias.

## Illustration #1: Old Catholic Church and caretaker

Mateo Iglesias was the caretaker, who lived in the basement with a green parrot, and he cracked endless pecans in between minor repairs, change light bulbs, vacuuming, sweeping, and sanitizing surfaces. He was especially helpful assisting with preparations for events, such as the many happy weddings and the few unfortunate funerals.

Mateo had been a foundling at the parish orphanage. The caretakers before him had also come from the no one knows as well, and he was pretty proud of living in the church. He could have left for the rat race (San Antonio or Dallas), but I don't mind telling you; despite his shy personality he loved the responsibility.

One day, only a month before Christmas, Mateo awoke and immediately knew something was wrong. There was a warm smell in the air, and the light that came through the tiny basement window was very dim and red.

Another of the numerous dust storms, he thought. And he didn't think much more about it. Only the previous day, he'd put up the nativity scene. Joseph, Mary and Jesus and wise men figured occupied a prominent position in the front of the church. People expected to see it and Mateo was extremely proud of the job he'd done. His first reaction was to run on out and check on the Nativity.

## Illustration #2: Sand blowing. The caretaker looks on the Nativity scene buried in sand.

The sandstorm had come and hadn't left yet; the wind was still literally blowing red bobcats. It would be a problem. The nativity was only faintly visible; only the shoulders of the three Magi (all tall) were visible. Joseph, Mary and the Baby Jesus were almost entirely buried. And, not only that, a layer of dirt was five feet high against ancient church. Worst of all, it occurred to Mateo that this was Texas and the sandstorm might never end. When it ended dig them out, for everyone to admire again.

Mateo's eyes burned from the grit and he ran back inside. With the parrot at his shoulder, he dashed up to the first floor. The windows were all covered in dirt. He climbed to the second floor, and then to the third floor. More sand! Up he bolted, up a very narrow stairs to the bell tower on the roof of the church, and he poked his head out. It was just like pictures he had seen of Chihuahua. A much smaller town, San Joaquín stretched out all the same, red. The sheriff had his blue and red lights flashing but they look only like tiny Christmas tree lights through all the blowing sand.

### Illustration #3: South Texas Town in a sandstorm

The streets could hardly be told apart from the buildings because they were so full of dirt. The cell tower at the edge of town wasn't there; had it been buried or blown over completely? It could go either way, but what was clear the church was nearly completely hidden under a giant drift of red sand.

It was as quiet and red as the inside of a football. Though Mateo Iglesias had never actually been inside a football, so he did not know if, in fact, it may have been full of very tiny creatures having a noisy party!

Down the stairs ran Mateo.

He ran into the parish's garage and outfitted his knobby-tired maintenance cart with the "one-size-fits-all" golf cart enclosure. It had only been cold once, that Mateo could remember, but a dinner was held and a polyvinyl chloride (PVC) cover had been purchased along with the knobby tires. Mateo removed the tent-like enclosure from the box that guaranteed to keep the weather at bay. Mateo felt certainly that dust storms qualified as a weather condition. He didn't need any tools to set it up. It worked like a see-through blanket that zipped over what would normally be a simple golf cart. He'd never felt cold watching the city's banker, doctor, lawyer and judge play golf; but the golf-cart greenhouse existed and so he felt it would clearly be useful that day.

He took his largest shovel from the garden room, opened the garage door, and started to dig. Mateo worked feverishly because he'd remembered Sister Bertrille, who at the ripe age of 85, still ran the orphanage on the other side of the village, and he wanted to make sure that she and the children were all right.

He dug himself a path out of the garage and was cruising on top of the great drifts of sand. He was well away from the church when the dust storm in front of him fell away. He had turned into another street and there, looking out the clear window of a pitched camping tent was Sister Bertrille, his favorite nun! Inside the tent, she had her walker and tennis rackets tied to each of her western boots. She wore ski glasses and was singing "Feliz Navidad" at the top of her voice as she moved the tent along as fast as the walker would allow.

"*Hola, Mateo,*" she said. "I was just coming to see how you were. Fire and brimstone. Do you smell sulfur too? I haven't seen weather like this since I was a girl! I think I might take a job at an orphanage in Minneapolis after this."

“But you’re eighty-five! Why would you move that far North?” said Mateo. “And, why would you want to keep working?”

“Prime of life, prime of life, never felt better! There’s a six pack under this habit, you know.”

“But you’re over eighty. How do you do it?”

The nun said, “I just get up every morning and go out. And I don’t let the old lady in. How long you been up?”

**Illustration #4: Caretaker meets Nun in the Street. Sand blowing still. The nun is inside a camping tent.. She can raise it up and walk. She’s peering out a clear plastic panel.**

“I just woke up. It took me a while to dig out.”

“Everyone’s digging out. There will be a meeting in the parish hall.”

“I guess I should set up the chairs. How many you think?”

“Well enough for all the serious mudders and dirt track racers in town.”

Behind them there was a race going on, a dirt track sprint car vs a 4 x 4. As they sprinted around city hall they were clearing some of the dirt from the street, but they were only displacing it and burying the café, the grocery store and the laundry mate deeper in sand.

“We’re going to hold a meeting about the dirt. I’m going to abandon this tent; that’s what expedient people do you know.”

“Sure, get in with me,” and Sister Bertrille climbed into the maintenance cart tent and they speed off. The sand continued to blow in great drifts down the main street and as they drove past Mateo Iglesias and the sister noticed for the first time all the second story windows.

Inside the parish hall, those who had been able to dig themselves out sat around waiting, used the obligatory eyedrops and were drinking lemonade. It had been the priest who said it was the best thing to cut the dust that had entered everyone’s mouth. Somewhere a teenager was playing an entirely inappropriate and spooky Halloween tape – flapping bat wings, ominous moans, sinister laughing and rattling chains. Wolves were howling, of course. It was weird music and everyone looked a bit unhappy. Somewhere out of sight the teenager was chuckling with his friends.

“Great bags of vermiculite!” hollered Sister Bertrille, as she burst in, out of the dust. “Why don’t we have a mudding competition! Don’t sit around like that – it’s unhealthy. When it rains,

“If it ever rains...” Mateo was there for a reason, to temper everything with a dose of reality.

“I think I’ll enter the orphanage’s bus; you know it’s four-wheel-drive.”

“What is that thing a 1982 model? It was old when I was there at the orphanage.”

“Still runs like a top” Sister Bertrille assured him.

“They drove it to San Antonio and half-way back, two years ago,” the priest bragged.

Everyone looked even more unhappy.

“All the roads are blocked and no one has a cell signal,” said someone, “and I don’t expect anyone will come and dig us out because to the south there’re a wall and to the north... someone interrupted, “buried now.”

“Well, maybe someone from the Washington will come to dig us out on their way to the wall. Who’s the president, these days?”

“They may be celebrating if the wall has disappeared.”

“When I was in the dust bowl during the 1950s, we had to eat our boots in the end,” said sister cheerfully. “*¡Aperra! Ya terminamos!* A good tragedy like this might build some backbone.”

“Oh dear,” said Mateo, thinking of his boots. ‘Well, I suppose the first thing we need is an knobby-tire emergency squad to dig everyone out of their houses. And then we’d better form an expedition.”

**Illustration #5: A young girl with eyes wide, enters the church hall. The towns people are sitting in the hall unhappy. The girl is addressing the nun.**

Just then one of the orphans burst out of the blowing sand into the parish hall, waving her arms.

“Anna Tabueña? Why aren’t you at the orphanage?” Sister Bertrille wanted to know.

“There’s a monster down at the school yard!” the young girl shouted. Then she fell flat into the arms of the nun.

After they administered lemonade to bring her round, the child apologized to the nun that she’d been tempted out of orphanage in search for bigger and better playground equipment. Sister Bertrille apologized for not keeping up with the changing times, but she also explained that new playground equipment cost money and they didn’t have any.

Protected by a pair of swim glasses, Anna had left the orphanage and walked through the dust to the schools’ play-ground to use the superior swing, but she’d met a hairless, ferocious and red creature, which had riding the merry-go-round growling at her every time she came around, but oddly laughing on the far side.

“Great material for an urban legend!” said Sister Bertrille.

“Are we really all that urban? There are only eight people who live here.” Mateo questioned.

“Yes, but we’ve got a Chupacabra!” exclaimed the nun.

“And she’s six feet tall!” Anna said.

That dumbfounded everyone.

Of course, no one wanted to go and see a six foot tall Chupacabra, even on a clear day; but at last, Sister Bertrille persuaded Mateo, Anne, and one or two of the others (the grocer and the coach) to set out for the school yard. They all piled into the maintenance cart and cruised through the sand, all tented up. When the expedition got to the school, all they found were tiny footprints. Each one was nearly an inch across, with three toes.

**Illustration #6: The sandstorm has ended but the sand is four of five high. On the playground. The nun and the small girl look at tiny three toed tracks in the sand.**

“And a six foot Chupacabra made this tiny track?” asked the nun.

“Where could the Chupacabra have gone?” asked Anne.

Mateo pointed in the direction of Dead Red Horse Arroyo, the sinister canyon in the nearby desert just north of San Joaquín.

“The footprints go towards it,” he said, “and there are a lot of places in that arroyo that have never been explored. They say there are still Comanche and Kiowas there too.”

“But there are deer leases and blue agave fields all around it,” said Anne.

“That doesn’t make any difference to a Chupacabra,” said Mateo.

“If you think I’m going into that arroyo your salad isn’t quit tossed!” said the grocer.

“Well, don’t look at me. If he’s not going, then I’m not either,” said the coach.

They heard a terrible growling, a snarling that way frightened them. They all froze petrified by the threatening sounds. Then what they thought was a lump of sand got up on its hind legs. They staring at what was now something in the form of a Chupacabra.

**Illustration # 7: Baby Chupacabra tries to look fierce.**

It was staring up at them.

“Where are it’s sharp teeth?” Mateo wanted to know.

“All I see are pink gums,” observed the nun.

Then the Chupacabra burst into tears.

“You told us he was a six-foot tall,” Mateo complained.

“I think you might need glasses Anne; I’d say he’s about maybe one foot.”

“And that’s generous,” Mateo said.

“It's just a pup and in need of some kind and affectionate care. Poor little fellow.”

So Sister Bertrille took the adorable Chupacabra baby home to the orphanage that day and all the children dominated their share of the milk because babies of all species love milk.

The children at the orphanage officially confirmed his name to be, “Chupie, the wonder monster.” She was far from a monster, but it’s funny how even children have a sense of humor.

Sister Bertrille was delighted with her new adoptee and started immediately to outfit the orphanage’s new mascot. And she announced, “After Christmas, we're off to the SportsMart first thing tomorrow. He'll need a sports jersey for when we play the Cistercian orphanage.”

“You can't keep a Chupacabra for a mascot,” Mateo objected.

“Who says she’s a mascot? We’ll need her as a player, you know,” Sister Bertrille was being honest.

“It’s like keeping a cobra,” Mateo argued.

“Why not and he's not at all reptilian; in fact, she's pretty clearly very mammalian.” The nun saw things clearly.

“Don’t mammals have hair?” Mateo had a questioning mind.

“Don’t be a smart aleck? She might grow hair. We don’t know yet.” Sister Bertrille said kindly.

“I’ll be clearing the sand that’s buried baby Jesus and comany.” Mateo said frustrated with it all.

**Illustration #8: Mateo is making progress digging out the Nativity figures. He has cleared the sand up to their waists. He’s half way done with the job.**

Mateo began digging the sand from around the Nativity scene.

Sister Bertrille walked with the baby Chupacabra to the SportsMart, where Chupie encountered what was probably the last rattlesnake in all of Texas.

“No, Chupie. Snakes are dangerous!” the nun exclaimed.

But regardless, Chupie smelled the snake and the snake flicked his tongue at the baby Chupacabra and a certain silent and understood peace was negotiated; perhaps they formed a mutual esteem society.

**Illustration #9: Baby Chupacabra encounters a “friendly” rattle snake.**

There on what previously had been the sidewalk, the snake, then struck at a sheriff’s deputy and fortunately missed, but baby Chupie (in what must have been comradery or friendship) got the idea she should do the same. Chupie struck at the officer and did not miss. The deputy lost one boot, his pants and his 9mm in the sand; he escaped into his cruiser, but the baby

Chupacabra scratched and dented the car in six places and broke two lights by tossing it upside-down into the town's only tree.

Sister Bertrille tried to apologize, but the deputy refused climb down out of the car. He was happy to speak with the nun, through the window, "I thought they only went after politicians and goats."

"Yes, but it's hard to fool them even when they are babies; and this one is exceedingly smart."

"I hope he mistook me for a goat; I promised my mother I'd never enter politics," deputy looked worried.

"The next time I see your mother, I'll mention how you do resembled a goat in all this blowing sand," the nun promised.

"Wow, how civil of you," said the deputy.

**Illustration #10: A policeman, in a car upside-down in the towns only tree, rolls down the window and speaks with the nun, who is looing up at him apologetically.**

"You aren't mad?" Sister Bertrille wanted to know.

"No, who can anyone be mad when they're this frightened," the deputy replied.

"I'm sorry," the nun was truly embarrassed.

"You can come down now," suggested the nun.

"No thanks I'll just hang here for a while longer." The deputy was happy right were he was, upside down in a tree.

And Sister Bertrille ought to have been even more ashamed of herself, but she was fine with public opinion, whatever it was. As a result of the "police car stuck in the tree" incident, there were pollical protests first at City Hall and then on front of the orphanage. Some of the protested shouted in no uncertain terms that Chupie would have to leave.

**Illustration #11: Eight political protesters with placards, "Kill the Little Monster," and "Goat Killers Must Go!" "Out!" and "No Tolerance Here!"**

But the city officials said nothing. It was only a reason to raised taxes yet again to buy five new police cars and they deputized all the remaining men in the city, so now all eight of the village's men were now on the city payroll. The mayor claimed to love little Chupie because, "she stimulates the economy."

In other words, there had only been the one incident and the Mayor's brother sold police cars in San Antonio and so little Chupie was tolerated.

All that fear and animosity, but no deputy would dare go near the orphanage after that for a year. But Sister Bertrille didn't care as she and the baby were fond of each other. Chupie

laughed and played well with the children and was the star attraction at recess time and she was a terrific goalie.

The playground star and goalie cried only once that entire year; it was when Chupie finally got a tooth and it accidentally scratched one of the children. The guilt that Chupie felt about the accident was terrible and almost caused the pup to run away from the orphanage. Melancholic, little Chupie kept staring to the South.

**Illustration #12: In front of the soccer goal. The nun is putting a band aid on her arm of a small girl. The baby Chupacabra (the goalie) looks on worried. At their feet are six deflated soccer balls with canine teeth puncture holes in them. The coach seems more concerned with the destruction of the sports equipment.**

It was really all very silly; it was only a scratch and no one (except the coach) really cared about all the punctured soccer balls. And besides, Mateo had quickly learned how to patch the holes.

Other than tossing the police car and accidentally scratching her friend and the soccer balls, nothing remarkable happened for almost a year. However, it was Christmas Eve the following year, when a full-sized momma Chupacabra arrived in San Joaquín. The sand hadn't receded and the Chupacabra was looking in the second story window of each of the villages homes and muttering something. No one bothered to translate Chupacabra-speak as they felt they needed to run for their lives. Whatever this Chupacabra lady was saying, she was clearly agitated and extremely muddled.

**Illustration #13: Angry and mumbling lady Chupacabra is searching through a second floor window for her baby. In the back ground we can see that the caretaker has dug out the Nativity. The sand is still five feet high but the Nativity is clear in front of the church.**

"Where is my baby?" and "I'm going to eat anyone who has my baby." Everyone in the town would have understood (a mother looking for her baby) if they weren't terrified and already hiding in the next county.

Sister Bertrille rose from her bed and walked out to see what the exodus was about. Nearly the entire town was gone and there stood Chupie's mother; the resemblance was shocking.

Sister Bertrille's jaw dropped, "Holy Moses. You are real! Well, of course you're real. This is probably your daughter I've taken in."

Sister Bertrille began again, "Hello. Good morning."

Sister Bertrille wished someone had remained to translate but they hadn't.

Sister Bertrille continued to make lite conversation, "I see where this little girl gets her strikingly beauty from. I would have returned her to you but she didn't have any identification or an address or a name."

The mother Chupacabra looked angrily at the nun and finally she took the nun by the hand and her baby in other other hand; she lead them back in the direction of the haunted arroyo.

**Illustration #14: Mother Chupacabra takes her baby in one hand and the nun in the other hand that lead them out of town into the desert... and canyon area.**

Matao yelled out, "Sister Bertrille! Sister Bertrille!" But he was too late.

Matao heard a woman, not a stranger but a member in the congregation, who whispered loudly to her neighbor, "She brought it on herself." And the neighbor answered, "That's what happens when you take in a hairless stranger." And the woman replied, "which I know now."

Immediately at the sheriff's office Mateo was trying to get something done. Mateo was begging for the sheriff to get out of his chair and shot someone. "What should I do; a vicious monster just stolen Sister Bertrille.

"Would you care to give me a description of the missing nun?" asked the sheriff.

"What? This is the smallest town in all of Texas; we only have one nun." Mateo argued.

"Still," the sheriff was stubborn.

You were with me at the orphanage. Half this town grew up with Sister Bertrille," Mateo reminded him.

"Please, this is my job and it needs to be official." insisted the sheriff.

"Okay, she's about 5-foot-tall, white hair (I'm sure) red face (definitely), a habit," Mateo described the nun.

"She's wearing a pair of blue lady Ariat boots?" the sheriff speculated.

"I imagine. Normally," Mateo knew.

"Yeah okay, I know who you are describing," the sheriff finally gave in.

"She's been taken by a monster into the arroyo.," Mateo explained.

"Oh, well maybe I'll call up my deputies.

Soon a group of deputies and townspeople were following the trail of the Chupacabra mommy through the dusty streets.

"OK listen up people let's brace ourselves because we're to the arroyo," warned the group.

Even though in the center of a relatively civilized county which had been playing baseball for over 20 years, the arroyo was well known to be one of those places that had escaped development and history.

**Illustration #15: Eight townspeople are frightened by what the imagine is in the canyon -- Indian warrior ghost with the hunchback (maybe on horse), giant owl and a male ferocious (steroid ripped) Chupacabra.**

The townspeople because they didn't want to spank their children, instead frightened them with stories when they wanted to make them behave. They told them of Comanche ghosts, giant owls and even Chupacabras concealed at the far end of the canyon and if the children didn't mind their parents it might invite them to leave the canyon. And it worked; it worked so well the canyon, nor the land around it was never developed. The profit from building houses in the area was given up largely because the town love their children and didn't want to spank them.

When the children grew up they might have ventured into the canyon to uncover the dark recesses and legends but no one was brave enough for that.

They heard a racket from the canyon...

"What's that terrible mechanical clanking?" said the sheriff.

"It's coming from what must be the far end of the canyon," said the baker.

"And there seemed to be a slight glow in that direction," the plumber said.

The judge was the first to balk, "Oh, I suddenly remember something very important I have to do back in town."

"I promised my children, who are in the Children's choir, I'd be there at the Christmas ever service to hear them sing," said the banker.

"I'm in the bell choir," said the hair stylist.

"I'm serving turkey at the homeless shelter," said the baker.

"We don't have a homeless shelter," commented Mateo.

"Sure we do. I just started one incase someone drifts though this holiday," the baker tried to explain.

"If you will excuse me," said the dress maker.

"The way back is too dangerous.. due to... of course," said the deputy.

"We should all return in a group and we'll walk back together and return to search for sister in the morning," the sheriff.

"It might get down to 65° tonight," said the judge.

"Sister Bertrille has taken care of herself for how many years?" the sheriff asked.

"Eighty-five," Mateo knew the answer.

"And she's taken care of how many orphans through the years," said the deputy.

"We can't count that many," Mateo really couldn't count high.

“Well, she’ll be okay,” the judge ruled.

The sheriff nodded to Mateo, “She’ll be fine. You have a good evening, now.”

**Illustration # 16: The townspeople stand around frightened of the noise coming from the canyon.**

The sheriff, grocer, baker, grocer, mechanic, coach, dressmaker, deputy, hair stylist, plumber and judge thought they needed to become rare. They had legitimate excuses.... And they all... eleven grown men and women... turned their backs and began marching back toward the village.

Mateo remained and out of loyalty; The ghost of Buffalo Hump or a fully grown mother Chupacabra, he didn’t care. Sister Bertrille had taught him how to count, swim and kick a ball; he needed to make sure she wasn’t hurt.

“Looks like my own. But poor sister, I mean that Chupacabra might be roasting her over a fire right now. You can't give up now Mateo. Remember what she’d said, “just hold your breath and dive in.”

When Mateo reached the far end of the canyon, he could make out a glowing light, “Okay I’m almost there. It’s about to be show time.”

Mateo was terrified of what he would find. Would his favorite nun still be alive?

**Illustration #17: The caretaker finds the nun watching the baby Chupacabra who is sleeping on a blanket. In the background, mother Chupacabra wrench in hand torquing on something under the hood of a curiously small flying saucer.**

He found the mother Chupacabra wrench in hand torquing on something under the hood of a curiously small flying saucer. Well, it wasn’t flying at the time, it might have had the potential to fly. The mother Chupacabra hit a button and the saucer shock, sputtered and smoked a bit, but the engine wouldn’t start.

Mateo spotted Sister Bertrille with the sleeping baby on a blanket. It looked like they’d been playing with with some Fischer-Price toys that some “genius” had painted John Deere green.

“Hello, Mateo. Be quiet or you’ll wake the baby,” Sister Bertrille whispered.

“What’s going on?” Mateo was puzzled.

“It seems Chupacabras aren’t mangy coyotes at all and the detest goats; can’t stand them. Best I can tell they are just extremely shy extra-terrestrials,” Sister Bertrille explained.

“I thought you were being eaten alive,” Mateo mentioned.

“Nonsense we get along like milk and cookies. I've just given her a few tips on diet. It's not her planet and the feeding and care of a baby might be different,” the nun clarified things.

"I must say they look so sweet." Mateo reasoned.

"Yes lovely. They were having a small transportation issue when the baby got lost. But now they found each other they're off," the nun further explained.

Chupie's mother was still working on her space craft, but the would-be flying saucer only sputtered and shuttered. It coughed three times.

"Maybe." Mateo reasoned.

"To go back home to Chupnubia," the nun finished her sentence.

"Do you think we should leave them alone?" Mateo asked.

"I'll miss him. The children at the home they loved him," the nun said.

"You're doing the right thing, Sister. You gave him a home when nobody wanted him but now it's time to let him go back to his family." Mateo philosophized.

"Yes of course," the nun admitted.

"If you are running short on orphans, you can always look after me, whenever you like. Technically, I'm still an orphan," Mateo tried to make it all okay.

"I know. And I'll drop in on you more often in the future," Sister Bertrille promised.

"Well, I've got to get back to town and prepare the church for for the Christmas-Eve Mass," Mateo reminded himself.

Sister Bertrille turned and had what she thought would be one last look at her beloved adoptee.

**Illustration #18: The town is clear of sand... the five feet of sand is gone. The nun is looking**

The following day on Christmas morning, the sand was miraculously gone. Sister woke up and looked out the window, "the sand is gone."

"It's been here for a year and now it's all gone in one night," she said.

She gulped again when she walked outside. Mateo was there looking at all the stuff that was left when the storm subsided.

"Now this is weirder than weird," Sister tried to be practical.

"There's no sand anymore, but..." Mateo was confused.

"That's where all the sand has gone?" Sister asked.

No longer buried, the orphanage's faded and rusted old bus had been restored to its original bright yellow and the tires looked new too.

**Illustration #19: The orphanage has a new shiny red bus/van, a slew of new red playground equipment and a red statue of Sister Bertrille.**

Neither Mateo or Sister Bertrille remembered the playground as being this large. Now there were four swing sets (small, medium, large and extra-large). There were two new merry-go-rounds (pink and purple - small and large). There were four new red teetertotters (also in S, M, L, and XL). And there was now an elaborate tree house, which was odd because there hadn't been a tree there (or anywhere near there).

Sister Bertrille gasped as she turned from the playground to the lawn in front of the orphanage.

"A giant statue of... me? Is that me?" It was a statue of the nun who'd operated the orphanage for no one knew how many years!

And then Sister notices the dozen wooden picnic tables in the back of the orphanage.

"Let's fire up the barbecue and we'll have Christmas lunch outdoors."

The townspeople began to gather there. "Merry Christmas Sister. That must be the best Christmas present ever."

"But who made this Christmas miracle?" Sister asked?

"Well look over there." Mateo pointed.

The flying saucer was rising up out of the arroyo and it began to hover a bit before zooming away.

**Illustration #20: Flying saucer hovers not far from the orphanage as the caretaker and the nun wave to them.**

Sister Bertrille waved and shouted, "Thank you for the present. Come back soon."

And so the townspeople crowded around the new statue. The children swarmed the playground equipment that now far exceeded the school's stuff. Everyone eventually brought their Christmas meals to the picnic tables. They were happy and full of Christmas spirit and they all agreed that they had learned an important lesson from Sister Bertrille, that an act of true kindness is always rewarded.

In fact, if you're lucky enough to visit south Texas, you will almost certainly hear someone or other telling the story of that most weird of all Christmases, about a tiny bundle of love that the sister opened her doors to and the joys that she bought.

And if that isn't Christmas magic, who knows what is?