

The Curse of the Blue Figurine (extract)

by John Bellairs

Later Grampa and Johnny got their coats and boots and hats on and went out to help the professor get his car unstuck. It was still snowing on Fillmore Street. Flakes came whirling down out of the dark sky. Across the street was the professor's car. Its rear end was buried in a heap of snow. The situation looked hopeless, but Grampa reassured everybody. He said that he had once driven a Model T on muddy dirt roads in the springtime. And, said Grampa, if he could do that, he could get a car out of a miserable little bitty snowbank.

They set to work. The professor got into the car and started it. Grampa told him to rock it, and he and Johnny would push. The car rocked, and the wheels spun and whined. spurts of snow flew up into the air. At first nothing happened. The car just seemed to be digging itself deeper and deeper into a snowy rut.

“Cramp the wheel over!” Grampa called. “Cramp it way over!”

The professor cramped it over, and suddenly, with a jolt, the car shot forward, spraying wet snow all over Johnny and Grampa. The professor pulled the car out into the middle of the street and did a U-turn, fish-tailing madly. Finally he managed to nose the car over to the curb in front of Grampa's house. The professor got out of the car, slammed the door, and stood there with his hands on his hips, glowering.

“Cars!” he snorted. “I *hate* them! Hate them, hate them, hate them! If I didn't have to have one to drive to work, I'd push this thing into the Merrimack River! So help me, I would!”

Grampa ambled slowly across the street, brushing snow off himself. “You know, Rod,” he said slowly, “it would kinda help if you would put chains on your tires.”