

ANTA CLAUS OF ANTARCTICA Serialized



1. South Pole

In a small cozy cottage on the cold South Pole lives a tall, skinny man with a bushy, black beard. His name is Anta Claus.

Last Christmas Eve, Anta Claus sat before a crackling fireplace inside his workshop. He held a long list of names on a curling sheet of paper. A single word appeared on top:

NAUGHTY

“Oh! Oh! Oh!” Anta said. “This year’s list is too long. Too many new names; too many repeats. Great bother, this.”

In the back of the workshop, Anta Claus’s two ten-foot-tall troll helpers, Tis and Twas, prepared for Anta’s journey.

“You better pack my extra-large sack,” Anta called out. “The list is extra-long this year.”

Tis held a sledgehammer. With a mighty whack, she broke a large chunk of coal into small lumps. Her long red pigtails swung like thick ropes.

“Will do, Anta,” she said. “We’ll load lots of coal.”

“Along with plenty of moldy oranges, rusty bolts, smelly socks, and a few surprises,” said Twas. His long red beard swept the ground as he pulled rotten potatoes from the workshop garden.

“Splendid,” Anta Claus said.

Leaning forward in his rocker, he peered out the window. A fuzzy sun sat on the horizon. At this time of year, the sun refused to set. Instead, it would skip around the horizon all night and all Christmas Day.

“I must be off,” Anta said. “Packages need to be delivered.”

“Nearly ready, Anta,” said Tis. She was loading headless dolls into a large black sack.

“Just a few more presents to pack,” said Twas. He was tying a ribbon around a box of stinky fish bones.

Anta studied the list once more. His eyes landed on the name at the bottom.

“Carol Snow,” he said. “A girl who’s staying with her grandmother in Connecticut, USA. Now there’s a curious case. Carol is ten years old, yet this is her first year on the Naughty List. Oh! Oh! But what a naughty year Carol has had. Says here she’s been a sneak. She sneaked out of her classroom at school and off the school playground. Two times she sneaked away from her grandmother’s house. Oh! Oh! No doubt Carol Snow deserves to be on the Naughty List this year.”

Anta rolled up the scroll. He rose from his rocking chair and strode toward the workshop door.

“Why are children naughty?” he grumbled, shaking his head. “From Tahiti to Texas, Ecuador to England. Boys and girls are naughty the world around.”

In the hallway, Anta Claus dressed for his long journey. By the door hung his sleigh-riding outfit. He pulled on a pair of black trousers and tightened a white belt around his narrow waist. Next, he put on his black jacket with a furry white fringe. A pair of white rubber boots went on his feet and a pointy black hat with a white ball on the tip covered his head. With a white mitten, he batted the fluffy ball away from his face.

Tis carried the bulky black sack over to Anta.

“Watch out for the sticky balls of chewed bubble gum we packed,” she said.

Twas handed Anta a thermos of hot cocoa.

“Something to keep you warm in the wee hours of the morning,” he said.

With a nod, Anta Claus slung the sack over his shoulder.

“It’s a tough job,” he said. “But I’m the one chosen to do it.”

He left the warm cottage and trudged down a path to a small barn. Inside stood Anta’s eight yaks, swishing their stubby tails.

“Evening, lads,” Anta greeted the team. “Another year and another journey to the four corners of the earth. I’m afraid the trip this year will be a long one.”

The yaks were magnificent beasts. Each boasted a pair of long curved horns. Each one had long, shaggy wool hanging from his back and bellies. What is more, each yak’s fur was a different color.

Anta Claus hitched the yaks to his sleigh in pairs. Closest to the sleigh went Yellowback Yak and Orangeback Yak. Next came Redback Yak and Purpleback Yak. Before them, Anta hitched Blueback Yak and Greenback Yak, and in the lead,

he put Whiteback Yak and Blackback Yak.

A blast of cold wind greeted Anta as he pulled open the barn doors. He fed each yak a turnip before leading the colorful team outside.

The yaks grunted at the cold. Puffs of steam shot from their wide nostrils. They swayed restlessly side to side.

“Hold on there, lads,” Anta said. “We’ll be flying in a jiffy.”

He tossed the black sack in the back seat of the sleigh and climbed into the front. He stashed the cocoa thermos under the seat and grabbed the reins. He picked up a long whip and snapped it in the air.

Crack!

“Get on Whiteback Yak! Get on Blackback Yak!” Anta Claus cried. “Get on the rest of you lads!”

In graceful unison, the colorful beasts sprang toward the pale-blue sky. Over the barn, over the cottage, away from the South Pole they flew.

And from the black sleigh, now high in the air, came a shout.

“Oh! Oh! Oh! Be wary of Christmas, naughty children! Oh! Oh! Here comes Anta Claus! Oh! Oh! Oh!”