

ANTA CLAUS OF ANTARCTICA Serialized



10. Anta's Story

Wandering

“I wish to know about the world,” Anta Claus told himself. *“And what better way to know about the world than to wander around it.”*

On a frosty summer's day, Anta left his cozy cottage on the South Pole. He wandered to the four corners of the earth. He sailed the seven seas. He explored the great forests, the great deserts, the great rivers, and the great mountain ranges.

He wrote in his travel journal: *The world is full of interesting people and places. I want to see and meet them all.*

Wherever Anta wandered he saw children playing games. Whatever the game — freeze tag, blind man's bluff, leapfrog, dodge ball, or kick the can--he stopped and watched the children having fun. Most often the players played fairly. No problems. But sometimes a boy or girl entered the game and pushed, shoved, tripped, and broke the rules. Whenever this happened, no one had any fun.

Anta wrote in his travel journal: *One naughty child spoils the whole game.*

Tis and Twas

While wandering high in the Himalayan Mountains, Anta heard shouts of joy. They came from the top of a long glacier.

“Fa-la-la-la! Fa-la-la!”

Moments later, two trolls, a woman and man, came sliding down the river of ice on a wooden toboggan.

“Fa-la-la-la! Fa-la-la!” they cried.

Anta followed the toboggan down the glacier into a green valley. “My name is Tis,” said the woman troll.

“I’m Twas,” said the man troll.

The trolls told Anta they were wind farmers. They used wind to power their inventions.

“A wind-powered bicycle,” said Tis.

“A wind-powered Ferris wheel,” said Twas.

“A wind-powered merry-go-round,” the trolls said together.

“Oh! Oh!” said Anta.

“Come visit our cottage, Anta,” said Tis.

“We’ll make you a mug of hot cocoa,” Twas said.

“Hot cocoa?” Anta said. “Splendid.”

The trolls’ cottage was small but comfortable. Outside stood eight wooden windmills with whirling blades. Eight wind vanes poked up from the roof; eight spinning pinwheels circled the windows; eight colorful windsocks hung from the porch, and eight wind chimes tinkled in the doorway.

Anta sat in a room with a small fireplace. As he sipped his cocoa, he admired the eight woolen rugs on the floor. Each one was a different color.

“Such thick shaggy wool,” he said. “What animal does it come from? How do you dye the wool to weave those splendid rugs?”

The trolls laughed. They slapped their thighs and sang, “*Fa-la-la-la!*”

“No need to dye the wool, Anta,” said Tis. “It comes from air-yaks.”

“Air-yaks come in many different colors,” said Twas.

“Air-yaks?” said Anta. “Please show me these colorful beasts.”

Later Anta wrote in his journal: *Trolls a hard workers and pleasant company. I'd like to be their friend.*

The Air-Yaks

Tis and Twas led Anta to a grassy meadow.

“This is the air-yak pasture, Anta,” said Tis.

“The yaks graze here during the summer,” said Twas. “In the winter we ride them down to a lower meadow.”

Anta turned a full circle. All he saw was tall grass waving in the wind.

“Great bother, this,” he said. “I see no wooly beasts.”

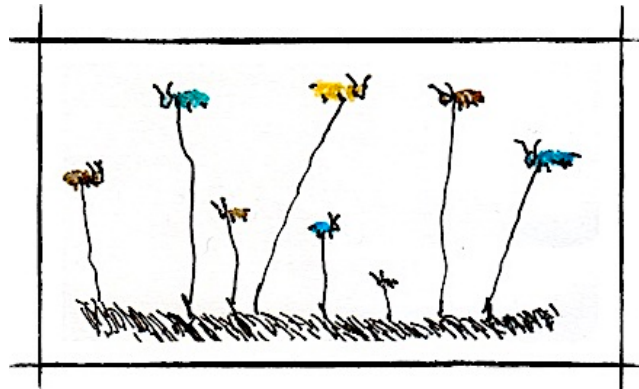
Again, the trolls laughed and slapped their thighs.

Tis, pointed to the blue sky. "Look up, Anta," she said.

"On breezy days air-yaks like to stay aloft with the wind," said Twas.

Here and there, Anta spotted wooden stakes in the ground. Tied to each stake was a rope. The ropes ran upward. Anta tilted back his head and saw them.

Tethered to each rope was a large yak with long curved horns and colorful fur. Like so many balloons at a fair, they bobbed and swayed in the breeze. And what wonderful colors they were. A pink yak floated straight overhead. A purple, green, and red yak bobbed close by. A hundred air-yaks floated in the herd.



"When the air-yaks want a meal, they let out their breath and float down to the grass," said Tis.

"When they need exercise, we ride them around the mountain peaks," said Twas.

"Ride them?" said Anta. "You can ride those magnificent creatures."

"Care to try one out, Anta?" said Twas.

"Oh! Oh, would I!" Anta said.

The two trolls pulled one of the tether ropes. A yak with black wool lowered to the ground. Anta Claus climbed onto its back.

Tis handed him the rope. "Hold on tightly, Anta," she said.

"Air-yaks fly faster than the Four Winds," said Twas.

"Oh! Oh! Here I go," said Anta. "Get on, Blackback Yak!"

The air-yak leaped into the air. It flew toward the mountaintops.

This was Anta's first time flying, and he was instantly hooked. What views! The white-capped mountains below, and the big bowl of blue above were thrilling.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" he called out. "Flying is the way to go!"

Anta pointed to the highest peak in the range. "That's Mount Everest, the tallest mountain in the world," he said. "Let's take a quick flight around it."

The air-yak orbited the mighty mountain in seconds flat. So close to the summit did the beast fly that a tuft of its black fur scraped off on a rock.

Anta wrote in his travel journal: *The first mountain climbers to reach the top of this mountain will wonder how a piece of yak fur got up there.*

Back at the troll's cottage, Anta found Tis sitting at a wind-powered spinning wheel, spinning black and white yak wool into yarn. Twas sat at a wind-powered loom weaving the yarn into cloth. In the morning, the trolls gave Anta a black woolen coat with white trimming.

"Made from the finest wool in the world," Anta said. "I'll wear this coat wherever I go."

Outside Anta found another gift. The black-back yak stood in the snow. Around his neck, he wore a new leather harness.

"He's yours, Anta," said Tis.

"Riding the air-yak will allow you to explore the world faster and farther," said Twas.

The Four Winds

The following year, Anta and Blackback Yak circled the world many times. As before, whenever Anta saw children playing games he stopped to watch. As before, he saw naughty boys or girls enter the games and ruin the fun.

"Great bother, this," he said. "North, south, east, and west, there are naughty children everywhere."

Shortly before Christmas, Anta rode Blackback Yak over the North Pole. He wished to visit Santa Claus, but he knew the famous *Giver of Gifts* would be too busy at this time of year to greet visitors.

Anta wrote in his journal: *Maybe one day I'll have a chance to meet this other Mr. Claus who lives on the opposite pole from me.*

The next day, Anta Claus flew over Null Island, the home of the Four Winds. Directly above the tiny island the air-yak froze in midair. It didn't rise or fall. It didn't go backward or forward. It remained floating in the same spot as still as a star.

"Great bother, this," Anta called. "The Four Winds have us trapped. North Wind is pushing South Wind; East Wind is pushing West Wind, and they're all pushing on Blackback Yak. Oh! Oh! Oh!"

In the next instant, Anta heard whispers. The Four Winds were talking to him.

“Anta Claus! Anta Claus!” South Wind called. *“Santa Claus needs your help.”*

“Over the past hundred years, the world has gained many children,” said East Wind. *“Santa no longer has time to deliver gifts to every boy and girl on Christmas Eve.”*

“On the night before Christmas we send Santa two lists,” called North Wind. *“The Nice List and Naughty List.”*

“Will you take charge of one of these lists?” West Wind asked. *“Will you handle the Naughty List and be the Giver of Gifts to naughty children on Christmas Eve?”*

How could Anta refuse a request from the winds? He wrote in his travel journal: *The Four Winds have given me a great challenge. I’ll try to do good by helping children be good.*

South Pole

Anta rode Blackback Yak back to Troll Valley. He found Tis and Twas flying box kites on the glacier. He explained to the trolls about the Naughty List and his new job.

“I’ll need some helpers,” Anta said. “Would you like to come to the South Pole and work with me? Santa has a hundred elves to help him. But one troll can do the work of fifty of them.”

“Being naughty is not nice,” said Tis. “We would like to help you.”

“In the off-season we can continue with our wind farming,” Twas said.

“Splendid,” said Anta. “The South Pole will never be the same.”

Tis and Twas built a sturdy sleigh and painted it black. They pulled seven air-yaks from the sky and, along with Blackback Yak, hitched them to the sleigh.

In happy spirits, Anta Claus, Tis, Twas, and the eight air yaks took off for the South Pole.

“Fa-la-la-la! Fa-la-la!” the trolls sang the entire way.

“Oh! Oh! Oh!” Anta sang in harmony.

The black sleigh reached the South Pole on December 21, the first day of summer. With a colony of curious penguins watching, Anta and the trolls added a workshop onto Anta’s cottage. They built a windmill outside to supply them with electricity. For the yaks, they built a barn nearby. By Christmas Eve, everything was ready.

“Now we wait,” Anta said as he sat by the crackling fireplace. “We wait for the Four Winds to deliver my first Naughty List.”

A knock came on the door. The door blew open, and a scroll of tarnished paper sailed into the room.

Anta studied the ancient paper. “Great bother, this,” he said. “The list is longer than I expected.”

“We’ll get busy with the presents,” said Tis.

“We wove you a woolen black sack to carry the load,” said Twas.

That evening, Anta Claus wrote in his travel journal: *My wandering is over. A new life has begun.*

A few hours later, for the first time in history, Anta Claus flew northward in his black sleigh drawn by the eight colorful yaks.

“Get on Whiteback Yak! Get on Blackback Yak!” he cried. “Get on the rest of you lads! Be wary of Christmas, naughty children! Oh! Oh! Oh! Anta Claus is coming to town!”