

ANTA CLAUS OF ANTARCTICA Serialized



12. The Bully

“The Rocky Mountains,” said Carol. She could almost reach out and touch the snowy mountaintops.

The sleigh landed on a steep rooftop in Colorado

Anta checked his list and grumbled. To Carol’s surprise, he said, “I can use your help with this delivery.”

Carol beamed. “You mean you want me to go down the chimney with you?”

“Tommy Tease lives here,” Anta said. “Tommy’s name has been on the Naughty List for many years. He is a school bully, and he’s proud of it. The Four Winds hear teachers complain about Tommy all school year long. This year he tied a kindergartner to a tetherball pole and buried a first-grader in the sandbox. He locked a second-grader in the ball cupboard and let the air out of a third-grader’s kickball.”

“School bullies are the worst,” said Carol.

“By now, Tommy knows me well,” said Anta. “On Christmas Eve he hides and waits up for my arrival. When I step from the fireplace, he leaps out and blasts me with water from his super squirt gun. Last year I left this house soaked to the skin. Not a good thing on a freezing night.”

“How can your helper help?” Carol asked.

“You can be my lookout,” said Anta. “While I fill Tommy’s stocking, try to find where he’s hiding. That way he won’t take me by surprise.”

“Your helper will do her duty, Anta,” Carol said. “What do Tis and Twas usually pack for this bully?”

“Bullies receive the traditional naughty children gift,” said Anta. “A lump of coal.”

Anta and Carol plodded through the snow to the chimney. Carol climbed

onto Anta's shoulders, and Anta climbed to the chimney top.

"Hold onto my hat," Anta said. "A chimney drop can be wild."

Carol grabbed the white ball on the tip of Anta's pointy hat. She found the hat was attached firmly to Anta's head.

"One, two, three," Anta said, and he jumped. "Oh! Oh! Ohhhhhh!"

Carol expected to drop quickly down the chimney. Instead, she fell as slowly as a snowflake. Instead of smelling soot and ash, she sniffed peppermint. What is more, instead of seeing black chimney walls around her, she saw swirling red and white candy cane stripes.

Carol tightened her grip on Anta's hat. "What's happening, Anta?" she said. "It's like we're traveling through Christmas candy."

"Chimneys change on Christmas Eve," Anta said. "And every chimney I drop down is different. My last chimney drop felt like I was falling through a gingerbread house."

Anta landed inside a large dark fireplace.

Still on Anta's shoulders, Carol looked out upon a moonlit room. The chairs, tables, and sofa appeared as dark outlines. A single stocking hung from the fireplace mantle.

Carol tapped Anta on the shoulder. "There are plenty of places out there for Tommy to hide," she whispered in his ear.

Anta nodded. "Get ready. I'll step out of the fireplace, stick a lump of coal in Tommy's stocking, and pop back in here."

Carol caught a glint of moonlight at the edge of the sofa.

"Wait, I see him," she said. "Tommy's hiding behind the sofa."

"Good," Anta said. "Let me know the instant he makes his move."

"I have a better idea," said Carol. "You told me Tommy has been on the Naughty List for many years."

Anta nodded.

"So, the lumps of coal haven't persuaded him to stop his bullying."

Anta shrugged.

"Then let's try something different," said Carol. "I've dealt with bullies at school before."

Anta turned his head. Carol caught a twinkle of moonlight in his eye.

"Everything in the room appears as a dark silhouette," Carol said. "That means, when you leave the fireplace, Tommy will see you as a silhouette, too."

Anta nodded again.

“If I remain up here on your shoulders, our dark shape will appear as something scary, a tall monster,” said Carol.

“Oh! Oh!” Anta said, a little too loudly. “So, you think we can scare that school bully into being good.”

“We can try,” said Carol. “Most school bullies I know are big cowards.”

Carol stuffed her pigtails and mittens inside her stocking cap. This would make her head appear extra-large.

“All set,” she said.

Anta wrapped his arms around Carol’s knees. Leaving his sack behind, he stomped from the fireplace.

Carol stuck her arms straight out. She waved them up and down. In a deep spooky voice, she said, “Woooooooooooo, Tommy! I have come for you. Woooooooooooo!”

A head appeared at the side of the sofa. It quickly disappeared.

“Woooooooooooo, Tommy!” Carol called, waving her arms some more, “I am the Ghost of Naughty Children. Woooooooooooo!”

Anta stepped farther into the room. He was careful to stay out of direct moonlight.

“Woooooooooooo, Tommy,” Carol cried. “I know where you are hiding. Come out and show yourself. Leave behind your squirt gun and come out with your hands in the air. Woooooooooooo!”

A peep of fear came from behind the sofa.

“Show yourself, Bully!” said Carol. Her voice sounded even spookier. “Come out or I will come get you.”

After a pause, the dark head reappeared. The boy crawled into view. Like a captured bank robber, he held his hands up high.

“What do you want, ghost?” he said. His voice quivered. “I didn’t do anything. Where’s the skinny guy who usually comes on Christmas Eve and leaves me a lame lump of coal?”

Beneath Carol, Anta grumbled.

Carol waved her arms some more. “Woooooooooooo! I’ve come to warn you, Tommy Tease. You will stop tying kindergartners to the tetherball pole and burying first-graders in the sandbox. You will stop locking second-graders in the ball cupboard and letting out the air of the third-graders’ kickballs.”

Tommy lowered his arms. "How do you know all that?"

"The Ghost of Naughty Children knows everything about bullies," Carol said. "And if you don't stop your bullying at school I will haunt you in your classroom. I will haunt you in the hallway and on the playground. I will make your school days as rotten as you make them for the kids you bully."

"No, no, I'll be good," Tommy said. "I'll cut out all the bad stuff. No more bullying."

"By next Christmas Eve, I expect you to be on Santa's Nice List," Carol said. "If not, I'll be back."

"Yes, I'll be good," Tommy said. "Please don't come back to my house. Please don't come to my school."

. "Woooooooooooo!" went Carol, louder than ever. "Remember the Ghost of Naughty Children will be watching you. Woooooooooooo!"

While Carol continued to wail and wave her arms, Anta stepped backward into the dark fireplace.

Back in the sleigh, Anta said, "Oh! Oh! Good job, helper. For a while, you had *me* scared. I don't think I'll be visiting this house ever again."

Carol grinned. "Sometimes it takes a kid to understand a kid," she said.