

ANTA CLAUS OF ANTARCTICA Serialized



19. West Wind

Jingle! Jingle! Jingle!

Where was she? Her head rested on something soft and smelled of peppermint. She opened her eyes and raised her head. She lay in the back of a sleigh, a shiny red one with gold trim. Her pillow was an empty red sack. How soft it felt and good it smelled.

In the front seat sat a large man wearing a red coat and pointy hat. Santa Claus! His eight reindeer pulled the sleigh as silently and gracefully as kites. *Jingle! Jingle! Jingle!* went the silver bells on their harnesses.

Carol smiled, remembering how Anta hated those bells.

The sleigh flew over a layer of marshmallow clouds. It reminded Carol of a field of snow. In fact, here and there stood puffy white forms, cloud-people, who were building cloud forts and throwing cloud balls. Some lay on their backs making cloud angles.

“Merry Christmas, Santa,” called a cloud-man, waving to the passing sleigh.

“Christmas greetings, Carol,” a cloud-woman called.

Carol knew the sleigh was flying eastward. The sky ahead was bright, blue, and the sky to the rear still twinkled with stars.

A strong wind pushed the sleigh from behind.

“West Wind,” Carol said. “The gentle and peaceful wind.”

Once more, she heard whispers in the wind.

“*Carol Snow. Carol Snow. Way to go, Carol Snow. Good show.*”

“What? What did I do?” Carol asked. “Where is Santa taking me?”

“*Not long to go, Carol Snow,*” West Wind whispered. “*Then you’ll know.*”

Carol yawned. Before she woke she was having the best dream ever. She dreamed of having Christmas at her house in Princeton. Her mother and father were

there, along with her grandmother. A tall fir tree, decorated with glass ornaments and tinsel, stood in the corner with an angel on top. Piles of present lay under it, and in the middle hung her favorite ornament, the red glass ball with CAROL stenciled on it in silver glitter. Tinsel hung from the raptor skeleton. Blinking Christmas lights were strung through its bones.

Carol glanced toward Santa. He turned his head and smiled. *Jingle, jingle* went the reindeer's bells.

Carol wished to continue her dream. She curled up on the seat and placed her head on Santa's empty toy sack. Her eyelids drooped. How soothing West Wind and the jingling bells sounded. She returned Santa's smile. Soon she was back in the land of dreams.