

ANTA CLAUS OF ANTARCTICA Serialized



3. Anta's Journey

Anta Claus's black sleigh, pulled by the eight colorful yaks, raced northward. The evening sunlight sparkled upon the ice and snow below.

Inside the sleigh, Anta Claus dropped back in his seat. He unrolled the Naughty List and studied the names again.

"Oh! Oh!" he grumbled. "Asia to Africa, North America to South America, children are naughty everywhere."

Anta pulled a map of the world from under the seat.

"Time to plan our route tonight, lads," he called to the yaks. "This is always tricky. We must time our deliveries so we follow the night. It must be past bedtime wherever we land."

The yaks snorted.

"We also want to avoid crossing paths with the other Mr. Claus," Anta said. "The one who lives on the opposite pole. How I shudder when that happens. Santa Claus is always so jolly. He and his *Ho! Ho! Ho's!*"

The yaks snorted again.

"And those puny reindeer and pint-size elves Santa has! Ridiculous!" Anta went on. "I'll take my shaggy yaks and strong troll helpers any Christmas Eve. Oh! Oh!"

Anta studied the map some more.

"But the most irritating thing about Santa is his jingling sleigh bells!" he said. "What a racket! I can hear those jingling jangling bells for miles around."

Soon the white expanse of Antarctica gave way to the purple ocean spotted with icebergs. A brisk breeze brushed back Anta's black whiskers. Looking forward, he saw a hilly shoreline.

"First stop, Wellington, New Zealand," he said. He pulled on the reigns. "We

must visit a naughty girl named Phillis Pill."

The yaks dipped their horned heads and flew toward the dark ground. They landed on the roof of a small white house.

Anta Claus stepped from the sleigh. He double-checked the Naughty List. "Says here Phillis is a candy stealer," he said. "She steals candy from her classmates' desks and the candy jar at home. Great bother, this."

Anta grabbed his black sack from the back of the sleigh. He climbed up the brick chimney and stared down the dark square hole.

"Good to be skinny," he said. "I wonder how chubby Santa Claus manages to drop down these things."

Anta jumped and shot straight down the chimney shoot. Once inside the fireplace, he found a single limp stocking hanging from the mantle. He rummaged through his sack and pulled out a chunk of rock salt.

"Oh! Oh!" he said. "Tis and Twas packed the perfect present for Phillis, the candy stealer."

Anta Claus stuffed the lump of salt in the stocking. In no time he was back in his sleigh.

"Get on Redback Yak! Get on Purpleback Yak!" he cried, cracking his whip in the air. "Get on, the rest of you lads! Oh! Oh! Ohhh!"

Anta Claus drove his sleigh across New Zealand, Australia, and Thailand. In China, he left a pair of earplugs for a boy who screams whenever he doesn't get his way. In Russia, he left a bar of soap in the stocking of a girl who says foul words on the school playground.

"Oh! Oh!" Anta said. "From houses to huts, yurts to yachts, and cabins to condos. Naughty children live in all places."

Anta steered the yaks westward toward Europe. In Germany, he stuffed an old sponge into the stocking of a girl who spits at her classmates. In England, he gave a pair of burnt pants to a boy who lies a lot.

"Good one, Tis and Twas," Anta said. "Liar liar pants on fire."

In the northern darkness, the sleigh headed westward across the Atlantic Ocean.

"Onto the United States, lads," Anta called. "Now there's a country with a good share of naughty children. Oh! Oh! Ohhh!"

Soon the tall New York City skyline came into view. As was his Christmas Eve custom, Anta Claus waved to the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor before

making deliveries throughout the city.

“A black banana goes to Sammy Dismay who hits people,” he said. “And Jessie Messy gets a dust rag for refusing to clean her bedroom.”

The black sleigh headed northward. A bright round moon hung overhead. Through the frosty moonlight, the yaks soared over fields as shiny as marshmallow tops, past mirror-frozen lakes, and over gnarly woods that cast fingerlike shadows on the silvery ground.

In Connecticut, Anta checked his list again. He pointed to a towering gray mansion. A high stone wall surrounded the grounds.

“There’s the next stop, lads,” he said. “That’s where the first-timer, Carol Snow, lives. Down we go.”

This landing would be tricky. A dozen brick chimneys stuck up from the steep roof. After circling the big house several times, the yaks flew downward. Anta pulled the reins to the right and the left.

“It’s going to be tight, lads,” he said. “Steady now. Steady.”

He pulled hard on the reins. Each yak made a perfect four-point landing between the two tallest chimneys. The black sleigh slid to a stop on the peak of the snowy rooftop.

“Well done, lads,” Anta said. “An extra round of turnips for you all when we get back to the South Pole.”

Anta Claus uncurled his list. He shook his head. “Oh! Oh! The Four Winds heard many complaints from Carol’s grandmother and teachers this year about her sneakiness. I wonder what Tis and Twas packed for this sneak.”

Anta studied the dozen chimneys on the roof. He scratched his black whiskers.

“Big houses are bothersome,” he said. “They have too many fireplaces. I can only guess on which mantle Carol hung her stocking.”

Anta stepped to the closest chimney and climbed to the top.

Whoosh!

Down he dropped.

the hallway, Anta Claus dressed for his journey. On a row of hooks by the front door hung his black sleigh-riding outfit. First he stuck his skinny legs into pair of black trousers and tugged the wide, white belt tightly around his narrow waist. Next he pulled on his furry white-fringed black jacket. A black, pointy hat went on his head and white mittens warmed his hands.

With a swipe a mitten he batted the cottonball attached to the hat’s tip away from

his face.

“Work, work, work,” Anta said, as he pulled on a pair of white, rubber boots. “Does anyone appreciate how hard I work?”

His outfit complete, Mr. Anta Claus grabbed a large empty sack left the warmth of the cottage. Snow swirled around him like confetti as he trudged down a path to the black barn. Against a fierce wind he yanked the barn doors open.

“Evening, lads,” he greeted the eight yaks, who stood in their tidy stalls, munching hay and swishing their short tails. “Bad news, I’m afraid. You’ll need to pull the sleigh one more time tonight. Be prepared for some foul flying weather.”

The yaks were magnificent beasts. Each boasted a pair of fine curved horns. Each one had remarkably long, shaggy wool hanging from its belly. What is more, each yak’s wool was a different color.

Mr. Anta Claus hitched his colorful team to the black sleigh in pairs--green and yellow first, followed by orange and red, blue and purple, and the white and black yaks in the lead, a white yak.

The yak team grunted at the cold, as Anta led his sleigh outside. Puffs of steam shot from their nostrils. They swayed restlessly side to side.

Anta tossed the empty sack in the back seat of the sleigh and climbed into the front. He grabbed the reins in one hand and a long whip in the other.

Crack! The whip snapped above his head.

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

In graceful unison, the colorful animals hurdled upward. Over the barn, over the cottage, away from the South Pole they flew.

And from the black sleigh, now high up in the fluttering sky, came a shout, a shout known all too well in the southern half of our planet.

“Oh! Oh! Oh! Bury Christmas! Bury Christmas everyone! Oh! Oh! Oh!”

