

ANTA CLAUS OF ANTARCTICA Serialized



5. Carol Meets Anta

Carol heard a voice. She peeked out from under the canvas tarp. The dark silhouette of a bearded man appeared on top of the closest chimney. He wore a pointy hat with a ball on the tip.

“That’s him,” Carol said. “That’s Santa Claus.”

The man climbed down to the rooftop. He plodded through the snow toward the sleigh. A large sack was slung over his shoulder.

“But how skinny Santa looks,” Carol told herself. “Maybe he’s been on a diet. Good for him.”

Carol hid again under the tarp. Something heavy landed on her legs.

“Off we go, lads,” said a voice in the front seat. “After we finish delivering presents in North America, we’ll fly south through Central America and South America. Then it’s back home to the South Pole. Oh! Oh! Oh!”

A whip cracked. Carol felt a surge in her stomach.

“The sleigh is taking off,” she said under her breath. “I’m flying in the sleigh with Santa Claus!”

She squirmed to move the weight off her legs.

“Goodbye, Grandmother,” she said. “Goodbye boring house. I must be over the wall by now. I’m free.”

In the front of the sleigh, Anta gripped the reins tightly. He heard a thump behind him and turned. His black sack was wobbling.

“Oh! Oh!” he said. “Tis and Twas must have packed some live snakes and toads.”

Underneath the tarp, Carol heard every word the man said.

“Who are Tis and Twas?” she asked herself. “And why did Santa call the South Pole his home? Santa Claus lives on the North Pole with his elves.”

The sleigh rocked back and forth. After a short while, Carol felt a bump. The sleigh had landed again. The weight lifted off her legs.

“Great bother, this, lads,” the mysterious man said. “A girl named Laura Leary lives in this house. The Naughty List says Laura is a picker. All year long she’s picked on her little brother and the kindergartners at school. Oh! Oh!”

Carol heard crunching footsteps fade away. She sat up. She watched the man drop down a nearby chimney with the sack over his shoulder.

“That man can’t be Santa,” she said. “He’s an imposter. A fraud. Who can he be?”

She climbed from the sleigh. She stepped forward to inspect the eight large beasts standing before it. Their long colorful coats glistened in the moonlight. Their curved horns looked like swords pointing to the twinkling sky. They swayed back and forth humming their tune.

Carol stroked the beast with blue fur.

“You’re not a reindeer,” she said. “You’re a yak. I read about yaks in school. You come from the Himalaya Mountains far away in Asia.”

The eight yaks kept swaying and humming.

Carol stroked the yak with orange fur. “I think I made a mistake,” she said. “I thought I was in Santa’s sleigh. But this driver isn’t Santa. I don’t know who he is. He seems friendly enough. But he says a lot of things I don’t understand. Who is he?”

A noise came from the top of the chimney. The thin man climbed out.

Quickly Carol hid again under the tarp. A whip cracked and the sleigh flew off the roof.

“On to Maine, lads,” the man said. “Spitters, hitters, cheats, and sneaks. Naughty children live in every state.”

Carol had heard enough. She needed to find out who was driving the sleigh. She pulled off the canvas and stood on the back seat.

“You’re not Santa Claus!” she called out.

Anta Claus turned his head. He nearly jumped out of his skin.

“Great bother, this,” he said.