



The Yule Lads (Sausage Swiper)

Every Yuletide, there is one visitor that the people of Iceland hope not to see. His official name is Bjúgnakrækir, but we shall call him the Sausage Swiper. The Sausage Swiper lives in the mountains for most of the year. While he is there, the people of Iceland can go about their lives in peace. On December 20th, every year, things change.

Bedtime takes on a new urgency at this time. People have learned to lock their cupboards and bolt the pantry. The icehouse needs to be nailed shut. No matter what they do, they know that the Sausage Swiper will live up to his name.

The Sausage Swiper, you see, has a particular fondness for sausages. During the rest of the year, he has to make do with eating the moss and rabbits in the mountains. For one day a year, he knows that he can eat as many sausages as he can steal. The sight of his long white beard and a swollen red nose is famous around houses in Iceland.

Unfortunately, not all sausages can be hidden away. In one small house in the middle of a field in Iceland, a young boy named Einar sat and waited in the shadows. His parents had locked up the house and retired to their beds long before. Einar had other plans. He was going to teach the Sausage Swiper some manners once and for all.

Long ago, people had realised that the Swiper loved smoked sausages the best. Perhaps it was because they had to be left out in the open to be smoked. Nobody knows. Einar had decided to set a trap for the Swiper. A long string of smoked pylsur hung from the beams like a paper chain. Einar had hidden away under a pile of pillows. He held a thin piece of string that was attached to a wooden box even higher in the rafters. If the Swiper grabbed the sausages, Einar would let go of the string, and the box would trap the sneaky thief. Now, it was just a matter of waiting.

Einar could feel his eyes drooping as the night wore on. Every scratch on the wooden walls or creak of the door would startle him awake. He shook himself off and sipped ice water from a glass to keep himself alert.

Then, just as the moon was at its highest, Einar heard a rustling in the thatch. He held his breath until something dropped down onto the beams. He could hear it muttering under its breath, so he knew that it wasn't a mouse or a rat. He waited until he saw the sausages twitch, then he released the string. The box crashed down onto the thief, who erupted into a long, drawn-out rant. Einar approached the box cautiously. All he could see was a long, swollen red nose poking out of the slats in the side.



VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Which phrase in the text tells you that people panic more at night time?
2. Which word in the text tells you that the Sausage Swiper likes sausages?
3. What does the phrase “retired to their beds” tell you about Einar’s parents?
4. What does the word “alert” mean in this context”?
5. Which word in the final paragraph means the same as “exploded”?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

I

How can you tell that Einar is getting tired?

R

On which date does the Sausage Swiper arrive?

S

What did Einar do as soon as he saw the sausages move?

S

Explain how Einar’s trap worked.

E

Which piece of the story did you find most engaging? Why?

Answers:

1. Bedtime takes on a new urgency
2. Fondness
3. They'd gone to bed
4. Awake and focussed
5. Erupted

I: His eyes droop and he is startled awake.

R: December 20th

S: Let go of the string

S: He left out sausages as bait. He held a box over the sausages on a piece of string that he let go when the Yule Lad arrived.

E: Accept answers that look at the content and structure of the text and vocabulary to engage the reader