



The Yule Lads (Stubby)

It was the fourteenth day of December, and snow was falling thickly. Each unique flake swirled and danced in the wind. One of them landed with a soft hiss on the nose of a very small, very gruff man. The deepening snow wasn't a good sign for this particular man because he was no taller than a rabbit. His legs were short and stubby, and he was buried up to his chest.

The man had several names: some knew him as Shorty, others called him Stubby. He preferred Stúfur. Whatever people called him, they knew to expect him on the fourteenth of December. It didn't matter what the weather was like or how deep the snow was, he would be there.

"I'm getting too old for this," the old man grunted to nobody in particular as he lifted one of his legs and pushed it through the snow. Normally, Stúfur would have preferred to climb a tree and leap from branch to branch. However, this house was surrounded by nothing but open fields. On the other hand, it was a large farmhouse, and Stúfur could already smell the delicious scent of food burning on a hot stove. If he was lucky, it would be sausages and fried beans.

Like all of the Yule Lads, Stúfur wasn't too keen on following the rules. He knew how to catch his own food and spent most of the year doing just that. On the fourteenth of December, though, he preferred to break the rules. On that day, he stole other people's food.

Some of Stúfur's brothers stole important things, like sausages, milk or candles. Stúfur had a more particular taste. He relished the burnt and scorched bits of food that were left in the pan after a meal had been cooked. That's why he hoped the farmer's wife was cooking sausages and fried beans. Nothing left bits on the pan as well as sausages and fried beans.

Finally, Stúfur made it to the stone wall of the farmhouse. He edged his way around until he came to the chimney breast. The stones were warm from the fire burning inside. Stúfur held his palms against them for a while until the feeling returned to his fingers. Then, he used the crevices between the stones to clamber up to the top of the chimney.



He knew he should probably wait until everybody was in bed, but Stúfur was feeling very hungry. He dropped down the chimney and hopped out of the fire before it could burn him. Luckily, nobody was around to see this scruffy, soot-covered old man leaping across their rug. He could smell the food cooking in the next room, so he scurried across the floor like a mouse.

What Stúfur saw in the kitchen filled his heart with glee. Sat around a large table were more than a dozen people. They were all tucking into slabs of meat and vegetables, including a towering plate of sausages and a deep bowl of fried beans. He knew that a feast that size would leave a lot of scorched pans.

With his stomach rumbling, Stúfur made his way into the kitchen to enjoy his Yuletide feast.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Which word tells you that each flake of snow was different to the rest?
2. Find and copy a word that tells you the snow is getting deeper.
3. Which word or phrase tells you that Stúfur wanted to eat something more specific?
4. Find a word that tells you Stúfur walked around the side of the house.
5. Which phrase in the text describes Stúfur as being dirty from the chimney?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

S

Why were the stones on the house warm?

R

What did Stúfur warm up on the stones?

I

What drew Stúfur to the house?

I

How would Stúfur normally reach a house?

S

Why did Stúfur expect lots of food in the kitchen?

Answers:

1. Unique
2. Deepening
3. Particular taste
4. Edged
5. Soot-covered

S: The fire burning inside had heated them up

R: The palms of his hands

I: The smell of food cooking

I: Climbing a tree and jumping from branch to branch

S: There was a feast with lots of people. This meant there would need to be more food.