

Let me tell the story
of the lads of few charms,
who once upon a time
used to visit our farms.

They came from the mountains,
as many of you know,
in a long single file
to the farmsteads below.

Grýla was their mother
- she gave them ogre milk -
and the father Leppalúdi;
a loathsome ilk.

They were called the Yuletide lads
- at Yuletide they were due -
and always came one by one,
not ever two by two.

Thirteen altogether,
these gents in their prime
didn't want to irk people
all at one time.

Creeping up, all stealth,
they unlocked the door.
The kitchen and the pantry
they came looking for.

They hid where they could,
with a cunning look or sneer,
ready with their pranks
when people weren't near.

And even when they were seen,
they weren't loath to roam
and play their tricks - disturbing
the peace of the home.

The first of them was Sheep-Cote Clod.
He came stiff as wood,
to pray upon the farmer's sheep
as far as he could.

He wished to suck the ewes,
but it was no accident
he couldn't; he had stiff knees
- not to convenient.

The second was Gully Gawk,
gray his head and mien.
He snuck into the cow barn
from his craggy ravine.

Hiding in the stalls,
he would steal the milk, while
the milkmaid gave the cowherd
a meaningful smile.

Stubby was the third called,
a stunted little man,
who watched for every chance
to whisk off a pan.

And scurrying away with it,
he scraped off the bits
that stuck to the bottom
and brims - his favorites.

The fourth was Spoon Licker;
like spindle he was thin.
He felt himself in clover
when the cook wasn't in.

Then stepping up, he grappled
the stirring spoon with glee,
holding it with both hands
for it was slippery.

Pot Scraper, the fifth one,
was a funny sort of chap.
When kids were given scrapings,
he'd come to the door and tap.

And they would rush to see
if there really was a guest.
Then he hurried to the pot
and had a scrapingfest.

Bowl Licker, the sixth one,
was shockingly ill bred.
From underneath the bedsteads
he stuck his ugly head.

And when the bowls were left
to be licked by dog or cat,
he snatched them for himself
- he was sure good at that!

The seventh was Door Slammer,
a sorry, vulgar chap:
When people in the twilight
would take a little nap,

he was happy as a lark
with the havoc he could wreak,
slamming doors and hearing
the hinges on them squeak.

Skyr Gobbler, the eighth,
was an awful stupid bloke.
He lambasted the skyr tub
till the lid on it broke.

Then he stood there gobbling
- his greed was well known -
until, about to burst,
he would bleat, howl and groan.

The ninth was Sausage Swiper,
a shifty pilferer.
He climbed up to the rafters
and raided food from there.

Sitting on a crossbeam
in soot and in smoke,
he fed himself on sausage
fit for gentlefolk.

The tenth was Window Peeper,
a weird little twit,
who stepped up to the window
and stole a peek through it.

And whatever was inside
to which his eye was drawn,
he most likely attempted
to take later on.

Eleventh was Door Sniffer,
a doltish lad and gross.
He never got a cold, yet had
a huge, sensitive nose.

He caught the scent of lace bread
while leagues away still
and ran toward it weightless
as wind over dale and hill.

Meat Hook, the twelfth one,
his talent would display
as soon as he arrived
on Saint Thorlak's Day.

He snagged himself a morsel
of meet of any sort,
although his hook at times was
a tiny bit short.

The thirteenth was Candle Beggar
- 'twas cold, I believe,
if he was not the last
of the lot on Christmas Eve.

He trailed after the little ones
who, like happy sprites,
ran about the farm with
their fine tallow lights.

On Christmas night itself
- so a wise man writes
- the lads were all restraint
and just stared at the lights.

Then one by one they trotted off
into the frost and snow.
On Twelfth Night the last
of the lads used to go.

Their footprints in the highlands
are effaced now for long,
the memories have all turned
to image and song