

“Lutefisk Lament”

'Twas the day before Christmas with things all a bustle,
As Mama got set for the Christmas Eve tussle.
Aunts, Uncles and Cousins would soon be arriving
With stomachs all ready for Christmas Eve dining.
While I sat alone with a feeling of dread,
As visions of lutefisk danced in my head,
The thought of the taste set my stomach to churning.
For I'm one of those who good Norwegians rebut,
A Scandahoovian boy who can't stand the stuff.
Each year, however, I played at the game
To spare Mama and Pap the undying shame.
I must bear up bravely, I can't take the risk
Of relatives knowing I hate lutefisk
I know they would spurn me, my presents withhold
I the unthinkable, unspeakable truth they were told.

Then out in the yard I heard such a clatter
I jumped up to see what was the matter
There in the snow, all in a jumble
Three of my uncles had taken a tumble.
My aunts as usual, fave the what for,
And soon they were up and through the door
Then with the talk, and more cheer, an hours was passed
As Mama finished the Christmas repast.

From out in the kitchen an odor cam stealing
That fairly set my senses to reeling.
The smell of lutefisk crept down the hall
And wilted a plant, in a pot on the wall.
The others reacted as though they were smitten,
While the aroma lad low on my small helpless kitten.
Uncles Oscar and Lars said, “Oh, that smells yummy.”
And Kermit's eyes glittered while he patted his tummy.
The scent skipped off the ceiling and bounced off the floor
And the bird in the cuckoo clock fell on the floor.

Mama announced dinner by ringing a bell:
They pushed to the table with a lump and and a yell.
I liked my eyes to heaven and sighed,
And a rose on the wallpaper withered and died.
With leaden legs I found my chair
And sat in silence with an unseeing stare.
Most of the food was already in place;
There remained only to fill the lutefisk's space.
Then Mama came proudly with a bowl on a trivet.
You would have thought the crown jewels were in it.

She placed in carefully down and took her seat,
And Papa said grace before we would eat.
It seemed to me, with my whirling head,
The shortest prayer he'd ever said.

Then Mama lifted the cover on the steaming dish
And I was face to face with that quivering fish.
“Me first,” I hear Uncle Kermit call,
While I watched the paint peel off of the wall.
The plates were passed for Papa to fill;
I waited, in agony, between fever and chill.
He would dip in the spoon and hold it up high;
It oozed onto the plates, I thought I would die.
Thence my plate and to my fevered brain
There seemed enough lutefisk to derail a train.
It looked like a mountain congealing glue;
Oddly transparent, yet discolored in our.
With butter and cram sauce I tried to conceal it;
I salted and peppered, but the smell would reveal it.
I drummed up my courage, I tried to be bold.
Mama reminds me to eat it before it gets cold.
I decided to face it. “Uff da,” I signed,
“Uff da, indeed,” my stomach replied.

Then I summoned that resolve for which our breed is known
My hand took the fork as with a mind of its own.
And with reckless abandon that lutefisk I ate,
With twenty seconds I’d cleaned up my plate.

Uncle Kermit flashed me a ear-to-ear grin,
As butter and cream sauce dripped from his chin.
Then, to my great shock, he whispered in my ear,
“I’m sure glad this is over for another year!”

It was then that I learned a great and wonderful truth,
That Swedes and Norwegians, from old men to youth,
Must each pay their dues to have the great joy
Of being known as a good Scandahoovian boy.

An so to you all, as you face the great test
Happy Christmas to you, and you all my best.