

Swedish Anna tended stove and family through feast and famine.

Sorry Little Supper, The Stove and Stories of a Swedish  
Grandmother

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## THE FOURTEENTH STORY

### THE SORRY LITTLE SUPPER

Anna busied herself in the kitchen. Her fall days were filled with harvesting, canning, putting by in readiness for a long, harsh winter. The trick was to manage the food and make it last. Although the root cellar was full, the larder was fairly empty. It was too early in the season to butcher, hang, and smoke the pig that would provide much of their winter meat, so she sent her boys, Sture and Gösta, to fish the farmstead lake. She nodded her approval at Tekla and 'Gitta, studying in the fading light by the window, and she almost smiled when she thought of the boys bringing home their collection of fish strung on a birch twig cut along the way.

Anna could tell simply by the way they walked, slowly with shoulders slumped, fortune had not smiled on the boys' fishing. Sture had become the dreamer. Of late he had not shown much interest in anything but those letters he received from his uncles, Anna's three brothers, who had gone traipsing off to America. He was obedient enough and did what he was told, but he never seemed to see all that needed to be done to support the farmstead and family.

Now, Anna had planned a meal of trout, fried potatoes with onions, and some fall greens seasoned with a little salt pork. No fish, so she sighed, smoothed her apron, squared her shoulders, and set about preparing a supper to ease the stomach pangs of the six who would join her at table.

In the larder, Anna found that little chunk of salt pork. She chopped it into tiny pieces so as not to challenge the fragile teeth of the old folks. She set the salt pork to frying as she peeled, cut, and set the potatoes to boiling. When the meat was crisp, she added diced onions to the pork fat. The aroma made her belly growl and Anna longed for a taste. She knew she must not

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sample even a little, the amount seemed so small. To the drained steaming potatoes she added eggs, salt, and flour and combined them into a sticky dough which she threw upon the floured table. She formed the potato dumplings, and in the center of each she placed a morsel of meat and onion seasoned with allspice. Anna put the dumplings in the pot of boiling water. When they floated, they were done.

She heaped a platter with the *kroppkakor*, using a touch of butter to keep them from sticking to each other. There were so many dumplings, Anna hoped there would be some left over to fry for breakfast. She boiled the greens and threw a little salt and allspice on them, and she summoned her family to table set with a linen runner, mismatched plates, and wooden spoons.

After washing up they took their accustomed places. Anna exchanged a knowing look with her *Mor* and apologized for the sorry little supper. *Kroppkakor*, after all, was the food of peasants.

Then Anna caught her *Far* gazing at the empty space beside his plate. In her haste to get on with the meal, she had forgotten his obligatory glass of *aquavit*, the water of life. Anna hurried to the cabinet, filled the tiny glass, and placed it beside his right hand. *Far* looked her in the eye, gave a *Skål*, and tossed his head back so the fiery caraway liquor ran down his throat.

They all bowed their heads and said the simple table grace that had been repeated for generations. No matter how sorry the supper, one thanked God.

*I Jesu namn till bords vi gå  
Välsigna Gud den mat vi få.  
I Jesu namn, Amen.*

In Jesus name, to the table we go  
And thank God for what we shall eat.  
In Jesus name, Amen.

Anna was ever amazed at the fervor with which her family fell upon the food. She watched her parents help themselves, then

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her Sture, Tekla, Brigitta, and Gösta. The dumplings disappeared from the platter, one, two, or even three at a time. Anna reminded herself that her dear ones were not greedy. They were hungry. She took only two dumplings and a helping of greens for her own plate. As Sture helped himself to just one more, Anna sighed for she knew there would not be any *kroppkakor* to fry for breakfast the next morning.

***Anna's Kroppkakor***  
**Potato Dumplings**

Ingredients:

5 pounds	potatoes (6-7 potatoes)
4 quarts	water
1/2 pound	salt pork, finely diced
1	large onion, finely diced
1 teaspoon	allspice
1	egg
4-5 cups	flour*
4 quarts	boiling water
1 tablespoon	salt
1/4 cup	butter

Peel and quarter potatoes. Bring to boil in about 4 quarts of water. Lower heat to medium and cook potatoes until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain and cool until just warm to the touch.

While potatoes are cooking and cooling, fry the salt pork. When almost crisp, add the diced onion and fry until translucent. Drain and cool this mixture on paper towels and sprinkle with allspice.

Set 4 quarts of water to boiling and add the tablespoon of salt.

Rice or mash the potatoes. Add the egg. Work flour into the potatoes until the dough is moldable.

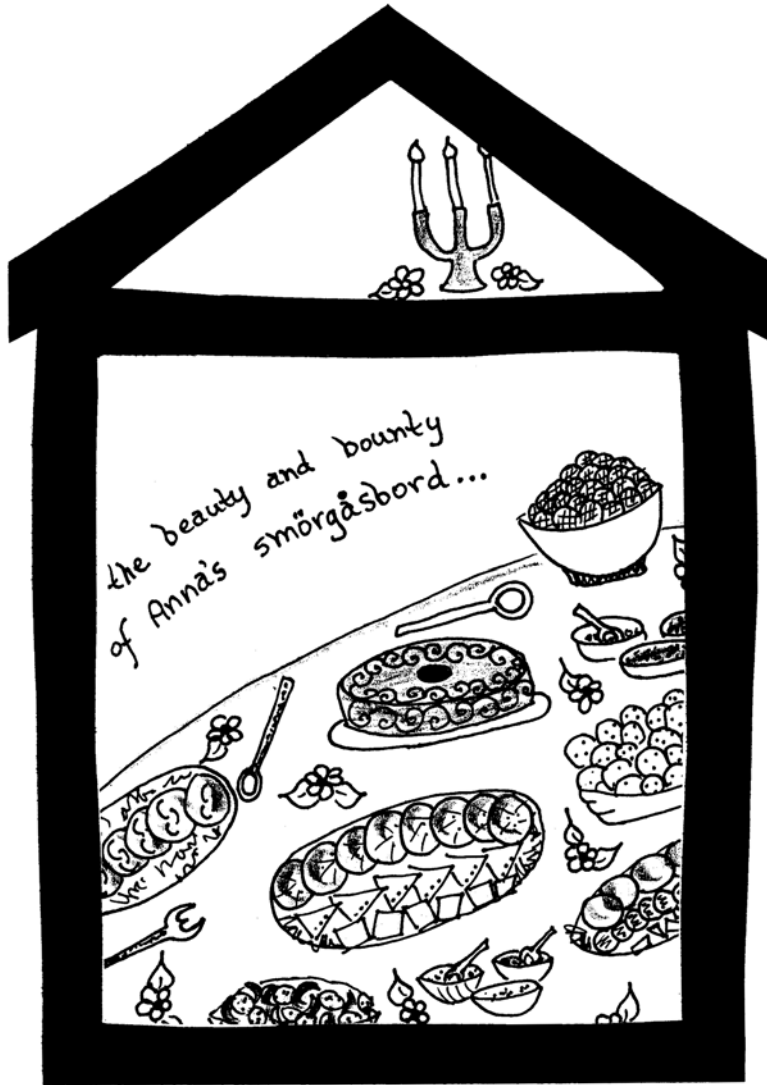
On a floured board, roll out the dough to about 1/4 inch thickness. Cut in 2 inch circles. Place a heaping teaspoon of the salt pork and onion mixture between two circles and seal the dumpling, pressing with your fingers. Re-roll the scraps using more flour as needed. Cut and shape the remainder of the dumplings.

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Carefully drop the dumplings, about 6 at a time, in boiling water. Cook them for about 10 minutes or until they float. Remove dumplings with a slotted spoon and layer them on a platter with a little butter to keep them from sticking. Serve hot or cold. Fry any leftovers with a touch of butter.

Makes about two dozen dumplings.

\*The amount of flour needed to make a moldable dough depends on the moisture in the potatoes. This tends to be a sticky dough.



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