

Clerk Saunders

June Tabor

Oh, it was a sad and a rainy night
And the rain did rain from town to town
Clerk Saunders and his lady gay
Were a-walking through the fields so brown.

"Oh, a bed, a bed," Clerk Saunders cried
"A bed, a bed for you and me."
"Oh, never a bed," says the gay lady
"Until that we two married be.

"For it's I have seven brothers bold
And unto you they bear no good will,
And if they catch you in my bower
Oh, they'd value not your blood to spill."

"Oh, I'll take the sword all from my scabbard
And slowly, slowly lift up the pin
That you might swear and save your oath
That you never let Clerk Sandy in."

"Then take me up all in your arms
And carry me unto your bed
That you might swear and save your oath
Clerk Sandy never i' your bower did tread."

So he's taken the sword out from his scabbard
And slowly, slowly lifted the pin,
That she might swear and save her oath
That she never let Clerk Sandy in.

Then she's taken him up in her two arms
And carried him unto her bed
That she might swear and save her oath
Clerk Sandy never i' her bower did tread.

And then it's in and came her brothers bold
And all their torches burning bright
They say, "We have but the one sister
And see, she's lying with a knight."

And then it's up and spoke the first o' them
"I know they have been lovers dear."
And up and spoke the next o' them
"Oh, they've been in love for many's the year."

And then it's up and spoke the third o' them
"'Twould be a shame these two to twain."
And up and spoke the fourth o' them,
"Oh, it's a sin to kill a sleeping man."

And then it's up and spoke the fifth o' them
"I swear they'll never be harmed by me."
And up and spoke the sixth o' them,
"Oh, we'll take our leave and we'll go our way."

And then it's up and spoke the seventh brother
Saying, "Though there be no man but me

I bare the brand all in my hand
Shall surely make Clerk Sandy die!"

And then he's taken out his nut brown sword
And drawn it three times through the straw
And through and through Clerk Saunders' body,
Oh he's got that rusty rapier go!

And they have lain all night in each other's arms
Until the day began to dawn
And kindly to him she did say
"Oh, it's time, my love, that you were away.

"Oh, you are the sleepiest young man
That ever my two eyes did see
For you've lain all night all in my arms
And I'm sure it is a shame to be."

And then she's drawn the blankets to the foot
And turned the sheets unto the wall
And there she's seen his bloody wounds
And his two grey eyes all pale and cold.

And it's "Cursed be my bloody brothers!
Aye, an an ill death may he die!
For you dared not fight him in the field
But you slew him as he lay with me.

"And it's I will do for my love's sake
What many a lady will not do.
Seven long years shall come and go
Before I wear stocking or I wear shoe.

"And there's never a shirt goes on my back
And never a comb goes in my hair
Never a fire nor a candle light
Shine in my bower anymore."