Clerk Saunders

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Clerk Saunders and May Margaret
Were walking on yon garden green
And sad and heavy was the love I wot
That fell their twa between

"A bed, a bed," Clerk Saunders said
"A bed for you and me"
"Fie no, fie no," quoth May Margaret
"Till ainse we mairrit be"

"Ye'll tak' a napkin in your hands
And bind up baith your bonnie een
Then you may swear and save your oath
You saw me not since late yestereen

"Tak' yer ma sword intae baith your hands
And slowly, slowly lift the pin
Then you may swear and save your oath
Ye ne'er let Clerk Saunders in"

It fell aboot the midnight hour
When they asleep in bed were laid
That in there came her seven brothers
Wi' torches burning red

And up and spak' the fifth o' them
"It were a shame true love tae twine"
And up and spak' the sixth o' them
"It were a sin tae slay a sleeping man"

But up and gat the seventh o' them
And ne'er a word spak' he
But he has striped his bright brown brand
Down through Clerk Saunders's fair body

And they lay still and sleepit sound
Until the sun began tae sheen
She looked atween her and the wa'
And dull and drowsy were his een

Then in there cam' her faither dear
And said "Let a' your mournin' be

I'll carry the dead corpse tae the clay
And I'll come back and comfort thee"

The clinkin' bell gaed through the toon
Tae carry the dead corpse tae the clay
And Clerk Saunders stood at May Margaret's window
I wot an hour before the day

"Is there any room at your head, Saunders?
Or any room at your feet?
Or any room at your side Saunders?
Whaur fain, fain I would sleep?"

"No, there's nae room at my head, Margaret
And nae room at my feet
My bed it is full lowly now
Among the hungry worms I sleep

And fair Margaret and rare Margaret
And Margaret of veritie
Gin ere ye love anither man
Ne'er love him as ye did me"

Then up and crew the milk-white cock
And up and crew the grey
Her lover vanished in the air
And she went weepin' away

Child #69
recorded by Jean Redpath on Lowlands
SOF