

Get Up and Bar the Door

(The Goodman and Goodwyfe are getting in their bed on stage. A pan sits on the table in front of the stage)

Goodman

Another Martinmas is here, and soon is come and gone
The days are shorter now I see, still later comes the dawn
Like Martin himself, now a saint, I am but common folk
Who walk the cold land wide about - wearing but half a cloak.
The wind is very fierce tonight, timbers creak overhead
It will feel right a great delight, to lie here in our bed.

Goodwife

My feet as well feel the chill, as winter this way comes
Stand both upon the floor all day, until my legs are numb
But puddings I prepared this day, stand ready in the pan
I'll have them right ready for me and ready for my man

Goodman

As we grow older, I do find that great comfort's lent
To have each one the other still and our life is well spent
Goodnight my dear wife, sleep ye well, and just one thing more:
Before the lamp you do blow out, just go and bar the door.

Goodwife

Fie on you, Goodman, as you lie there in the bed so warm
To send a woman to a man's job, in the path of harm
I'll catch my death of cold down there, the frosty wind is catching
If you'll not bar the door tonight, naught else tonight you're tetching.

Goodman

Listen to me, my goodwife, and give this matter ears
I've been out in that cold all day, it nye brought me to tears
While you stood in beside the stove, warm and dry besides
I worked in frozen muck and mire, just rags to spare my hide.

Goodwife

Since the days of Adam, the man has latched the door
I know not why not bar tonight, as you have barred before.
How the door will spend its night, we shall have to see.
If it wait a hundred years, it won't be barred by me.

Goodman

I know it is our tired minds is why we've so attacked
So I propose we compromise and make ourselves a pact.
We shall lie within the bed all-right, yet open to the moor
Whosoever speaks the first ere light, that one shall bar the door.

(they nod, shake on it, and lie back down)

Robber One

And lo the witching hour is here, when our folk are about
We seek the houses rich or poor whose wares are there to flout
It's darker than a devils mouth, who knows where we are at
But we will find some goods, I trow, to make our packbags fat.

Robber Two

It's colder than the tomb of Cain, and I am glad to find
The very house that lies at hand, the door does open wide
What manner goods shall be inside, it is a mystery
But getting in from out the cold tonight is even luxury

Robber One

Methinks I see the hearth coals here banked low to save their plight
I'll blow a bit upon them now and stir them to make light.
It is a modest home I vow, there won't be much to take
But what a fine surprise is this, the goodwife pudding baked!

Robber Two

Those make my stomach glad to see, I'll eat myself a few
And you can finish off the rest, some light, some dark I'll choose
There is not much to take here, true, for that they'll get no love
But where are those who live herein? I'll check the loft above.

(They walk, eating, up to the stage. The Goodman and Goodwife stay still, eyes open but their covers pulled up to their chins.)

Robber One

Well here are both the householders, I had thought they were asleep
But paralyzed in fear they seem, they do not make a peep.

Robber Two

Because there is no sport below, 'haps some fun here we'll have.
We'll kiss the missus on the lips, the old man's beard we'll shave.

Robber One (laughing)

That is a funny thought you have, as good as day you'er born.
He'll lose his beard tonight I ween, but he will gain a horn!

Robber Two

But with what shall we shave the goat? Water is not at hand.

Robber One

We'll scald the old goat clean with boiling water from the pan!

(Robber Two fetches the large pan from the kitchen and brings it up on stage – giggling)

(The Goodman is getting hopping mad and finally leaps from the bed.)

Goodman

I cannot lie here as you scheme to rudely run our lives

You will not scald me, on my word, and you'll not kiss my wife!

Goodwife (Also leaping up and skipping over to them - crowing)

Aha, my husband! I've the prize, tis I that won the score.

You are the first that spoke this night – now go and bar the door!

(Goodman and Robbers stare at her, she looks at each of them in turn, puts her hand on her hips)

Goodwife

You've had you fun of us tonight, and also ate your fill

Of my good puddings, dark and light, it makes my blood to b'il.

Tis time you went to your own homes and left us solve our spat

What? Are you hard of hearing then? Well, have a taste of that!

(Shoves the pan water onto them – they flee, yelling that they are scalded and their eyes burn)

Goodman (calling out the door)

Take that, you thieves who came to take, what others work to earn!

Fie on you knaves, I hope it marks you, a lesson roughly learned! (throws the lock in mime)

Ah wife, you won the round tonight, though I was sorely pressed.

It's cold out in the house this hour, and I am not so dressed.

Goodwife

At last our contest at an end, and locked is our poor keep.

Goodman

And now content we'll lie us down and get some well-earned sleep.

Goodwife (snuggling into the covers)

It is so nice to be in bed, the covers warm and tight

Oh husband, 'fore you settle in, please go put out the light.

(She rolls over, he glowers at her and out at the audience – Finis)