

## The Housewife's Lament

Words & Music © Vera Johnson

*I love many of the songs Vera's written, particularly "The Word," "The Minsk from Pinsk," and my favourite of all, a beautiful parody of the symbolic bawdy ballads about occupations. She's one of the best contemporary songwriters I know and a much cherished friend. —Edith Fowke, Bulletin 29.1 (March 1995).*

C F C Am C

Mon-day morn-ing I sat at home, I heard a knock at the door, And there I saw a jol-ly

F C G7 C G C

tink-er-man I nev-er had seen be-fore; He said, "Have you got a-ny holes to block, a-ny

G D7 G C D7

pots or pans to mend? I can block a hole with a deal of skill, I'm the house-wife's dear-est

G7 C F C Am

friend." With the great-est of pleas-ure I asked him in, and I hoped for a while he would stay, But he

C C7 F C G7 C Am

fixed two pots and a fry-ing pan and then went on his way. Chorus: Ah me, for the old ways,

G Am C G7 C

Ah me, for the old days, when a work-man used quite dif-f'rent tools and he did the job much bet-ter.

Monday morning I sat at home, I heard a knock at the door,  
 And I saw a jolly tinkerman I never had seen before;  
 He said, "Have you got any holes to block, any pots or pans to mend?  
 I can block a hole with a deal of skill, I'm the housewife's dearest friend."  
 With the greatest of pleasure I asked him in, and I hoped for a while he would stay,  
 But he fixed two pots and a frying pan and then went on his way.  
*Chorus:* Ah me, for the old ways, Ah me, for the old days,  
 When a workman used quite diff'rent tools, and he did the job much better.

Tuesday morning I sat at home, I heard a knock at the door,  
 And there I saw a jolly fiddler I never had seen before;  
 He said, "Would you like me to play tune of a merry pleasant kind?  
 I can play it fast, I can play it slow, just as you may be inclined."  
 With the greatest of pleasure I asked him in and I hope for a while he would stay,  
 But he played two jigs and an eightsome reel and then went on his way.

*Chorus*

Wednesday morning I sat at home, I heard a knock at the door,  
 And who should I see but a lusty smith I never had seen before;  
 He said, "Any blacksmith work today? Now I hope you won't say no,  
 For my forge is hot and my hammer hard and I'm ready to strike a blow."  
 With the greatest of pleasure I asked him in and I hoped for a while he would stay,  
 But he shod my cow (for I had no horse) and then went on his way.

*Chorus*

Thursday evening I sat at home, I heard a knock at the door,  
 And who should I see but a jolly miller I never had seen before;  
 He said, "Have you got any corn to grind? Now the truth to you I'll tell,  
 All the ladies say when I grind their corn that it's never been ground so well."  
 With the greatest of pleasure I asked him in and I hoped for a while he would stay,  
 But he ground a peck and a half of corn and then went on his way.

*Chorus*

Friday morning I sat home, I heard a knock at the door,  
 And there I saw a little chimney-sweep I never had seen before;  
 He said, "Is your chimney clogged up tight? I can sweep it neat and clean,  
 For my brush is stiff and can do the job, it's the finest brush you've seen."  
 With the greatest of pleasure I asked him in and I hoped for a while he would stay,  
 But he filled up a couple of pails with soot and then went on his way.

*Chorus*

Saturday morning I sat at home, I heard a knock at the door,  
 And who should I see by an odd-jobs man I never had seen before;  
 He said, "Have you got any jobs for me? I can milk or clean the barn,  
 But the job that I like best is winding up a ball of yarn."  
 With the greatest of pleasure I asked him in and I hoped for a while he would stay,  
 But he wound a skein of angora wool and then went on his way.

*Chorus*

Sunday morning I sat at home, I heard a knock at the door,  
 And there was a German musicianer I never had seen before;  
 He said, "Is your instrument out of tune? I can fix it up, it's true,  
 With my tuning fork I can go to work, it will be as good as new."  
 I said, "Be off with your promises, I've met your kind before,  
 Go home and fiddle with your music-box and don't come back no more.

*Chorus*

The Vera Johnson Songbook, which includes this and many other delights, is available from the Society's Mail Order Service and from 3572 Cordiale Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5S 4H3. The price is \$5.00—a steal!



*Northrop Frye's praise of Edith in his 1954 review of Folk Songs of Canada, of which she must have been very proud, still rings true. "Mrs. Fowke's knowledge of her subject is almost as complete as the average Canadian's ignorance of it, yet her scholarship is quiet and unobtrusive. She has humour but no condescension; she is appreciative but never writes advertising copy.... The French songs are given both in the French and in English translations, the latter being better than most of the translations we know, especially when Mrs. Fowke does them.... [W]hen the blurb calls this book 'a major contribution to Canadian culture,' one can only agree." Quotes from "Turning New Leaves," reprinted in The Bush Garden. Toronto: Anansi, 1971.*