

What the Goodman Does is Always Right

From the book "Children's Classics in Dramatic Form" by Augusta Stevenson
Adapted from Hans Andersen's What the Goodman Does is Always Right

TIME: Early one morning

PLACE: A very old farmhouse

CHARACTERS:

The Goodman

His Wife

First Peasant

Second Peasant

Third Peasant

Toll-Keeper

Hostler

SCENE I

(The Goodman and his Wife are seated in their spare room because it is Fair-day.)

WIFE: Yes, I think it would be as well to sell our horse. Or, as you say, we might exchange him for something more useful.

GOODMAN: What shall we exchange him for?

WIFE: You know best, Goodman. Whatever you do will be right.

GOODMAN: *(Starting out.)* It is Fair-day. I will ride into town and see what can be done.

WIFE: Wait till I fasten your neckerchief! You shall have a pretty double bow this time, for you are going to the Fair. *(She ties the neckerchief. The Goodman starts out.)* Wait till I have smoothed your hat! *(She smooths his old hat.)* Now you are ready.

GOODMAN: *(Going.)* Be at the window, Wife.

WIFE: *(Nodding.)* Yes, surely, and I will wave at you as you ride y.

SCENE II

TIME: Two hours later

PLACE: Near the toll-gate on the road to the Fair

(The Goodman is seen riding his horse. Enter, from a country lane, a Peasant, driving a cow.)

GOODMAN: *(Stopping; calling.)* Halloo, there—you with the cow!

FIRST PEASANT: *(Stopping.)* Yes, Goodman.

GOODMAN: Your cow gives good milk, I am certain.

FIRST PEASANT: *(Nodding.)* None richer in this country!

GOODMAN: A horse is of more value than a cow, but I don't care for that. A cow will be more useful to me; so if you like, we'll exchange.

FIRST PEASANT: To be sure I will. Here is your cow.

GOODMAN: Here is your horse.

(The First Peasant goes off riding the horse. The Second Peasant, driving a sheep, enters from a field nearby.)

GOODMAN: *(Sees him and calls.)* Halloo, there—you with the sheep!

SECOND PEASANT: *(Stopping.)* Yes, Goodman.

GOODMAN: I should like to have that sheep.

SECOND PEASANT: She is a good, fat sheep.

GOODMAN: There is plenty of grass for her by our fence at home, and in the winter we could keep her in the room with us.

SECOND PEASANT: Do you wish to buy her?

GOODMAN: Will you take my cow in exchange?

SECOND PEASANT: I am willing. Here is your sheep.

GOODMAN: Here is your cow.

(The Second Peasant goes off driving the cow. Enter, from a farmyard nearby, the Third Peasant, carrying a goose.)

GOODMAN: What a heavy creature you have there!

THIRD PEASANT: *(Stopping.)* She has plenty of feathers and plenty of fat.

GOODMAN: She would look well paddling in the water at our place.

THIRD PEASANT: *(Stopping.)* She would look well in any place!

GOODMAN: She would be very useful to my wife. She could make all sorts of profits out of her.

THIRD PEASANT: Indeed she could, Goodman!

GOODMAN: How often she has said, "If now we only had a goose!"

THIRD PEASANT: Well, this goose is for sale.

GOODMAN: I will give you my sheep for your goose and thanks into the bargain.

THIRD PEASANT: I am willing; here is your goose.

GOODMAN: Here is your sheep.

(The Third Peasant goes off with the sheep. The Goodman discovers a hen in the Toll-Keeper's potato field.)

GOODMAN: *(Calling.)* That's the finest fowl I ever saw, Toll-Keeper!

TOLL-KEEPER: You're right about that, Goodman.

GOODMAN: She's finer than our pastor's brood-hen! Upon my word she is! I should like to have that fowl!

TOLL-KEEPER: She is for sale.

GOODMAN: I think it would be a good exchange if I could get her for my goose.

TOLL-KEEPER: Well, it wouldn't be a bad thing.

GOODMAN: Then here is your goose.

TOLL-KEEPER: Here is your fowl.

(Enter a Hostler carrying a sack.)

GOODMAN: *(To Hostler.)* What have you in that sack, friend?

HOSTLER: Rotten apples—to feed the pigs with.

GOODMAN: Why, that will be a terrible waste. I should like to take them home to my wife.

HOSTLER: *(Astonished.)* To your wife?

GOODMAN: *(Nodding.)* You see, last year our old apple tree bore only one apple, which we kept in the cupboard till it was quite rotten. It was always property, my wife said.

HOSTLER: What will you give me for the sackful? Your wife would then have a great deal of property.

GOODMAN: Well, I will give you my fowl in exchange.

HOSTLER: Here is your sack of rotten apples.

GOODMAN: Here is your fowl.

(The Hostler goes with the fowl.)

TOLL-KEEPER: Toll, Goodman!

GOODMAN: I will not go to the Fair today. I have done a great deal of business, and I am tired. I will go back home.

SCENE III

TIME: Two hours later

PLACE: The old farmhouse

(Enter the Goodman, carrying the sack. The Wife waits for him in the spare room, because he has been away.)

GOODMAN: Well, Wife, I've made the exchange.

WIFE: Ah, well, you always understand what you're about.

GOODMAN: I got a cow in exchange for the horse.

WIFE: Good! Now we shall have plenty of milk and butter and cheese on the table. That was a fine exchange!

GOODMAN: Yes, but I changed the cow for a sheep.

WIFE: Ah, better still! We have just enough grass for a sheep. Ewe's milk and cheese! Woolen jackets and stockings! The cow could not give all those. How you think of everything!

GOODMAN: But I changed the sheep for a goose.

WIFE: Then we shall have roast goose to eat this year. You dear Goodman, you are always thinking of something to please me!

GOODMAN: But I gave away the goose for a fowl.

WIFE: A fowl? Well, that was a good exchange. The fowl will lay eggs and hatch them. We shall soon have a poultry-yard. Ah, this is just what I was wishing for!

GOODMAN: Yes, but I exchanged the fowl for a sack of rotten apples.

WIFE: My dear, good husband! Now, I'll tell you something. Do you know, almost as soon as you left me this morning, I began thinking of what I could give you nice for supper. I thought of bacon with eggs and sweet herbs.

GOODMAN: But we have no sweet herbs.

WIFE: (*Nodding.*) For that reason, I went over to our neighbor's and begged her to lend me a handful.

GOODMAN: That was right; they have plenty.

WIFE: (*Nodding.*) So I thought, but she said, "Lend? I have nothing to lend, not even a rotten apple." Now I can lend her ten or the whole sackful. It makes me laugh to think of it. I am so glad.

GOODMAN: So you think what I did was right?

WIFE: What the Goodman does is always right.