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GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

A Modern Adaptation
By COLIN CAMPBELL CLEMENTS

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CHARACTERS

DiCCON

HoDCE, Gammer Giirt oil's Servant

Tib. Gammer Gurton's Maid

Gammer Gurton

Cock. Gammer Gurton's Boy

Dame Chat

Doctor Rat, The Curate

Master Baily

Doll, Dame Chat's Maid

The Stage-Manager

GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

PROLOGUE

[Spoken before the curtain by the Stage-Manager]

As Gammer Gurton, with many wide stitches,
Sat piecing and patching Hodge's old
breeches,

By chance, or misfortune, as she her work

tossed,

In Hodge's old breeches her needle she
lost.

When Diccon, the rascal, had heard by
report,

That good Gammer Gurton was robbed in this

sort.

He quietly persuaded, with her in this
trouble.

That Dame Chat, an old gossip, the needle
had

found;

Yet knew she no more of this matter, alas !

Than knows Tom, the clerk, what the priest

says at mass.

Hereof there began so fearful a fray
 Doctor Rat was sent for, these gossips to
 stay -

But hold ! Let's on with the play !

ACT ONE

Scene: The street before Gammer Gurton's
 house.

Diccon [he comes running out of the house
 at the back, in his hands he carries a side
 of
 bacon, which he quickly hides under his
 coat].

Many a gossip's cup in my time have I
 tasted.

And many a broach and spit have I both
 turned

and basted,

Many a piece of bacon have I had from out

their balks

In running over the country with long and

weary walks;

[He turns and looks at the house]
Yet never came my foot within these door

cheeks

To seek fish or flesh, garlic, onions or
leeks,

That ever I saw such a sorry plight
As here within this house appeared to my

sight !

There is howling, sobbing and prowling
Screaming, wailing and growHng !

They are driven to such fits

I'm afraid the folks are not well in their
wits !

[Hodge comes running in from the left]

Hodge.

See! Thus I come from dabbling! In the dirt
She set me digging ! I'd like to tear her
shirt I

[He looks down at his breeches]

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Gog's bones! See how the cloth tears!

By the mass, here's a gash ! A shameful
hole

indeed,
Big enough, I swear, for a man to thrust in
his head.

Diccon.

The very best remedy, in such a case and
hap.

Is to sew on a patch as big as your cap.

Hodge.

Gog's soul, man, two days have not yet
ended

Since Gammer Gurton, I'm sure, these
breeches

mended !

But I am made such a drudge, to trudge at

every need

I would rip them though they were stitched
with sturdy pack thread.

Diccon.

Hodge, let your breeches go. Speak out and

tell me.

What is the matter with Gammer Gurton and
her maid, Tib?

Hodge. What's the matter with them?

Diccon.

First they yell, then sit still as stones
in the

street.

As though they had been taken with gnomes
or

some evil spirit.

Hodge. Has someone stolen her ducks or
hens or taken Gib, her cat?

Diccon.

How the devil can I tell, man? They gave me

no word.

They gave no more heed to my talk than you
would to a lord.

Hodge.

Um ... I cannot but muse what marvelous

thing it is !

I shall go in and find out what matters are
amiss.

Diccon.

Then farewell, Hodge, since you must haste.

[He turns away and looks at a side of
bacon which he has stolen from Gam-
mer Gurton's house]

I will go to good-wife Chat's - and see how
her

ales taste.

[He hurries out right]
 Hodge [looking at his house].
 Perchance some evil spirit may haunt our
 house indeed,

[Backing away from the door]
 Ah, then I were a noddy to venture where I
 have no need !
 [Tib conies running in from the housed

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Tib.
 I am won[^] than mad, by the mass, much the
 worse for this fray !
 I am chiden, I am blamed and beaten all the

hours of the day !

Lamed and hiint;er-?tarved, pricked up all
in

japs.

With no patch to hide my back save a few
rotten rags !

Hodge. Tib . . . Tib, what has happened?
Tib [looking up].

Old Gammer is in a terrible mood, and
frantic

all at once.

Cock, poor boy, and I. poor wench, have
felt

it in our bones!

HoDCE. What is the matter? Why does she
take on so?

Tib. She is undone. Alas, her joy in life
is
pone!

HoDOE. Oh ! Oh !

Tib.

If she does not have some comfort she is
dead —

Swears between her lips she'll never take
an-

other inch of bread!

Hodge.

By our lady ! I am unhappy to see her in
this

dump.

Can it be that her stool broke and she had
a
mighty bump?

Tib.

Oh, if it had only been that we would not

greatly care

For breaking of her bones or smashing of
her

chair.

But great^r is her grief ! Oh, Hodge, we
shall all
feel!

Hodge. Tib, she hasn't lost her —

Tib. Um . . . my Gammer's lost her pre-
cious needle !

Hodge [his hand goes flying to the seat of
his pants]. Her needle!

Tib. Her needle.

Hodge. Her needle?

Tib. Her needle !

Hodge. But how?

Tib.

She was sitting down to rest, and bade me

reach your breeches,

And by and by, a vengeance on it, before
she

had taken two stitches
To clap a patch upon your seat, by chance

aside she leers
And Gib, our cat, in the milk-pan she spied

over head and ears.
"Our cat! Stop, thief!" she cried aloud,
and

threw the breeches down,
Up went her staff, and out leapt Gib— out

doors, into the town.
Since then we can't lay an eye on the
needle!

Hodge.
And my breeches, the ones I'm to wear to-
morrow,

They're not yet sewed up?

Tib.
No, Hodge, they lie with the same great
tear !

[Gammer Gurton enters from the house}

Gammer.

Alas, Hodge, alas! I may well curse and ban
That ever I saw this day, with Gib in the
milk-
pan!

For these and ill-luck together, that maid
and

our boy,

Have took away my dear needle, and robbed

me of my joy.

My fair long needle, that was my only
treasure.

The first day of my sorrow is, and the last
one

of my pleasure !

Hodge.

Might have kept it when you had it ! But
fools

will be fools still !

Lose what is fast in your hands! You need
not

but you will!

Gammer.

Go quickly, Tib, run you jade, to the end
there

of the town.

There where you carried the dust, look
where

you poured it down.

[Tib runs out left]

Hodge.

Your needle lost ! It's a pity you should
lack

care – and endless sorrow,

A pretty matter! How will my breeches be
sewed! Must I go thus to-morrow?

[He turns round and shows a great hole in
the seat of his breeches]

Gammer.

Oh, Hodge, Hodge, if I could find my needle
I'd sew it with a good, strong, double
thread !

Hodge.

Four of you sit idle at home – your needle
to

keep.

What the devil had you else to do? Four
use-

less sheep !

Gammer. I lost it, Hodge, trying to save
the

milk which our cat, Gib, was wasting.

Hodge. Where have you been fidgeting since
your needle got lost?

Gammer.

Within the house, near the door, sitting at
my

post

Where I have been looking for a long hour —

before you came here.

But, alas! All was in vain, my needle is
no-

where near!

Hodge. Get me a candle ! I shall seek for
it I

Gammer [calling]. Cock, come hither! Cock,
I say!

Cock [entering from the house]. You called
me, Gammer?

Gammer.

Go grope behind the old brass pan.

There you will find an old shoe, wherein,
if

you look well.

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You will find an inch or so of white tallow
can-
dle;

Light it and bring it as fast as you can.

Cock. All right, Gammer. [He goes back
into the house]

Gammer [to Hodge, who is down on his
hands and knees, before the door,
searching' for
the needle]. Wait, Hodge, till we have a
light,
then we can see better.

Hodge [looking in at the door]. Hurry, you
worthless boy ! Are you asleep ?

Cock [from within]. I can't get the candle
lighted. There is almost no fire.

Hodge [rising].

Are you deaf, stupid boy? Cock, I say,
can't

you hear?

I'll bet you a penny I'll make you come if I
get hold of your ear.

Gammer. Do not beat him, Hodge, but help him find the candle. [Hodge goes into the house. Tib comes running in from the left] Have you found it, Tib?

Tib [shaking her head]. I've tossed and tumbled over yonder heap to find your needle. Gammer [wringing her hands]. Alas! Alas! Tib. 'Twas all in vain, without success, your needle is - where it was !

Gammer. Alas, my needle ! We shall never meet ! Adieu ! Adieu for aye !

Tib. Not so. Gammer, we might find it - if we knew where it lay.

[Cock, doubled over with laughter, enters from the house]

Cock.

Gog's sock, Gammer ! If you will laugh look in

at the door

And see how Hodge lies tumbling and tossing

around the floor,
Raking there some fire to find among the
ashes

dead.

Where there's not a spark, even as big as a
pin's

head.

At last in a dark corner two sparks he
thinks

he spies

Which were, indeed, nothing but the cat,
Gib's,

two eyes !

"Puff," blows Hodge, thinking thereby to
have

fire without doubt;

With that Gib shut her two eyes – and so
the

fire was out !

Gammer. No!

Cock [still chuckling].

At last Gib hopped up the stairs, among the

posts and bins

Hodge running after her till broke were
both

his shins !

[He lies down and rolls ivith laughter.
Hodge's head appears at an upper win-
dow]

HODCE.

Come up! Come up and help! Gib in her tail
has fire

And is like to burn all if she gets any
higher!

Gammer. Where are you? Come down,
Hodge, and let the cat alone!

Hodge.

Come down, you say? Nay, I'll watch that it

don't catch ;

The house comes down on your heads if fire
gets in the thatch !

Gammer. It's the cat's eyes, fool, that
shine

in the dark !

Hodge. Do you think that the cat has in
every eye a spark?

Gammer. No, but they shine like fire – as
any
man can see.

Hodge. But Gammer, if she burns the house
you'll put the blame on me!

Gammer.
Come down, and help to see that my needle
is

found
Down, Tib, on your knees I say ! Down,
Cock,
to the ground.

[They go down on their hands and knees
to search for the lost needle. Hodge en-
ters from the house]
I'll find that lost needle in one place or
an-
other!

Hodge [brushing the dust from his
clothing].

I hope a vengeance lights on Gib, and on
Gib's

mother
And all the families of cats and kittens,
far and
near !

Gammer [to Cock]. Look on the ground,
noddy! Do you think the needle is here?

Cock.

By my troth. Gammer, methought your needle

I saw

But when I touched it, I knew it was straw!

Tib [sitting down on the ground]. Look!

Whats' this? 'Tis it! By the mass!

[They all gather round her]

Hodge. Ah, throw it away. 'Tis nothing but
a bit of grass!

[During the last few minutes the lights
have been growing dimmer]

Gammer. Come, my needle is where it was
and it's as black as night.

Hodge. Let's come another time when we
have more light.

[They all go into the house. A light is set
in the window of Gammer's house.

Diccon is heard coming down the
street, singing:]

DICCON.

Have I good drink, I surely think

Nothing can do me harm.
 For truly then I fear no man,

Be he never so bold.
 When I am armed, and thoroughly warmed

With joHy good ale and old.

Oh, back and side, go bare, go bare;

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Both foot and hand, go cold:
 But. belly, Gog send you pood ale enough,
 Whether it be new or old!

[He comes staggering in from the right]
 Now a truly wise man by magic could divine
 Which way my journey lies, or where I am to

dine !

But one good turn I have: be it night or
 day.

South, East, North or West I am never out
of

my wa\\

[HoDCE enters from the house. He carries
a piece of black bread in his hand]

Oh, Hodge, have you had your dinner yet?

Hodge.

I am well rewarded, am I not? Don't you

think?

I had a fine dinner – for all my work and

swink !

Neither butter, cheese, milk, onions, flesh
nor

fish.

Nothing but a bit of barley-bread: a
pleasant,

costly dish !

DiccoN. Oh, Hodge, will you share it with
me?

HODC.E.

Gog's name, man, save this bit of dry
horse-

bread

I've had no bite all day, no crumb has gone into my head !

Diccon. Was there no one at home to get dinner for you?

Hodge. Alas, Diccon, I came too late! There was nothing more to get !

Diccon. Nothing more to eat?

Hodge. Gib, a foul fiend light on her, licked the milk-pan dry !

Diccon. 'Twas not so well washed for many weeks, I'll bet my eye!

Hodge.

A pestilence light on all ill-luck! Still, I had

thought, for all this
Of a side of bacon behind the door, at
worst,
I should not miss.

Diccon [trying hard to keep his face straight]. A side of bacon you say?

Hodge [shaking his head].

But when I went to cut a slip, as I very often

do,
Gog's bones, Diccon, the cat had eat the
bacon,
too!
Diccon. Worse luck! Your bacon eaten, too!
That was bad luck, Hodge.

Hodge.
Hungry . . . and see how I'm rent and torn,

my heels and knees and breeches.
And I had hoped to sit by the fire and have
a

few stitches !
Diccon. Your Gammer can mend them.

Hodge [sadly].
No . . . no. Boots, man to tell.
I live with such fools I'd better be in
hell !

My Gammer, alas, has not served me at all
well.

Diccon. What do you mean by such talk,
Hodge?

Hodge. What has she gone and done but
lost her needle !

Diccon [rubbing his stomach]. Her milk, her bacon and her eel! And an eel is such a dainty dish.

Hodge. Tush ! Her needle ! Needle ! Her needle, man ! 'Tis neither flesh nor fish !

Diccon. What the devil is it then?

Hodge.

A little thing with a hole in the end, as bright

as any silver,
Small, long, sharp at the point, and
straight as
any pillar.

Diccon [scratching his head]. You put me all in doubt.

Hodge. A needle! A needle! My Gammer's needle is gone !

Diccon. Her needle! Now I understand.
[Looking down at Hodge's breeches] Oh, what a shameful loss for your breeches!

Hodge. I'd give a crown if they had but three stitches.

Diccon. Hodge, what will you give me if I find your needle?

Hodge. By m' father's soul, I'll give you .
I'll give you a copper kettle.

Diccon. Can you keep your word?

Hodge. Else I'd wish my tongue were out.

Diccon [shaking a dirty finger in Hodge's face]. Just take my advice and I'll get your needle.

Hodge. You will?

Diccon. I will.

Hodge.

I'll run, I'll ride, I'll dig, I'll delve,
I'll toil,

you'll see,
I'll hold, I'll scrape, I'll pull, I'll
pinch, I'll bend

a knee;

I'll be your bondman, Diccon. I swear by

moon and sun.

If nothing stops the gap in my seat, I'm
utterly
undone !

Diccon [winking]. Tell me. What is the real
cause for all this sorrow?

Hodge [shifting from one foot to the
other]. Kirstian Clack, Tom Simpson's maid,
by the mass, comes here to-morrow!

Diccon. Ho-ho! So that's it? I thought as
much.

Hodge. There's no telling what may happen
between us.

Diccon [poking Hodge in the ribs]. Does she
smile on you? Eh?

Hodge. She did. A week ago come Sunday.

Diccon. Will you swear to be no blab,
Hodge ?

Hodge. Yes . . . oh, yes . . . Diccon.

Diccon. Then lay your hand on your heart

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and repeat after me - [Suddenly] Have you
no book?

Hodge. I have no book. I -

DICCON.

Then put your hand upon my heart
And repeat after me - mind your part -
[Hodge repeats after Diccon, line for
line :]

I, Hodge, breechless,
Swear to Diccon, richless.
By the hand that I shall kiss,
To keep his council close,
And always me to dispose
To work what his pleasure is.
[Diccon pushes Hodge, who smacks
loudly, in the face with his open hand]
Now, Hodge, mind you take heed
And do just as I say.

For so I judge it best;
This needle again to win,
There is no shift therein,
But conjure up a sprite.
Hodge [trembling]. You mean . . . you
mean the devil, Diccon ! I say !
Diccon.

Yes, in good faith, that is the way —
We'll fetch him up with a pretty charm.
Hodge.

Wait, Diccon, do not be so hasty, yet,

By the mass, I'm beginning to sweat !

I'm afraid . . . afraid of some harm!

Diccon [he takes Hodge by the shoulders
and stands him in the middle of the street,
then

with his finger makes a big circle in the
dust

around his frightened victim. In a deep
voice:]

There you are, Hodge, stir not, budge not.

Move not out of this circled plot.

Hodge. And shall I be safe here from his claws ?

Diccon.

The master-devil with his long paws
Cannot within this charmed circle reach.

[He begins to hum softly]

Hodge.

I say, Diccon, I say,

Go softly in this matter.

Oh, pray, go softly in this matter !

Diccon. What the devil, man, are you afraid of nothing?

Hodge [after a long pause]. My nose, my nose itches, Diccon.

Diccon. Do not budge! [He goes on with his strange noise]

Hodge [after another long pause]. Can we tarry a little – till I get a drink of water?

Diccon. Stand still to it! Why should you fear him ?

Hodge. Gog's sides, Diccon, I think I hear him ! Wait . . . wait ... I shall mar all.
 Diccon. The matter is no worse than I told.
 Hodge.

My leg's asleep. I can no longer hold.

Too bad ! I must move or I'll fall !
 Diccon [with a finger against his nose].
 Stand to it, Hodge! Oh - o-o-o-a boon!
 I smell the devil ! He'll be here soon !
 Hodge. I'm gone! I'm gone! [With a wild
 whoop he breaks and runs into Gammer Gur-
 ton's house]

Diccon [looking after him].

Fie, dirty knave, and out upon you !
 Above all other louts, fie on you !
 [He stands with his chin in his hatid for a
 moment thinking, then throws back his
 head and laughs]

Within a time quite short.

If you mark my words and note,
 I will give you leave to cut my throat
 If I do not have some sport.

[He calls off right]

Dame Chat ! I say ! Are you within ?

Dame Chat [within]. Who's out there mak-
 ing such a din?

Diccon. A right good fellow.

Dame Chat [she enters from the right].

Well, Diccon, come in and rest.

Diccon.

Nay, nay, there is no time to tarry, I must
say
ado,

[He turns and goes close to her]

But first, just for your ears, I have a
word or
two.

Dame Chat [bending over]. Oh, yes?

Diccon [he glances over his shoidder at
Gammer Gurton's door, then, taking Dame
Chat by the hand, leads her several paces
away. He whispers:] I would not even tell
my
sister, the matter is so great.

Dame Chat [her head bobbing]. Yes . . .
yes.

Diccon.

First you must swear by our Lady of

Boulogne,

Saint Dunstan, and Saint Dominic, with the

three Kings of Cologne,
That you will keep what I have to tell you
a
secret.

Dame Chat.

That will I do ! That will I do !

As secret as my own thoughts, by heaven —
and
the devil, too !

Diccon.

Sh ! Now Gammer Gurton, your neighbor, is
in

a sad plight:

Her fair, fat, red rooster was stolen, yes,
stolen
last night.

Dame Chat. What ! That rooster with the
yellow legs that crowed so much o' nights?

Diccon. Sh ! . . . sh ! Yes, that rooster
was
stolen.

Dame Chat. Was he taken out of the hens'
roost ?

Diccon. I don't know where the devil he
was kept.

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Dame Chat. No-o.

Diccox. But Tib, the maid, has whispered
in Gammer's ear that you stole 'he rooster!

Dame Cu.^T. That I- the fat i.ide! By bread
and s.ilt -

DiLXO.N. Soft. Chat, I sav ! He still!
Don't
say a word until -

Damk CuAr Irc/Z/ni: ;</> lu-r slrcvrs\ . \i\
the
mass. I will! I'll have the young wench by
the
head, and the old trot by the throat!

Duv(i\ Icnii'yitts the situation]. Sh ! Not
a
word. Dame Ch.nt.

Dame Chat [shakin! : her head back and forth].

Shall such a beggar's brawl as that, do you think, make me a thief?

The blight li>ht on the jade's sides, a pestilence and mischief !

[She calls:]

Come out. you hungry, needy witch! Too bad my nails are short !

Diccon. Hold your tongue, woman !

Dame Chat.

Would you allow, Diccon, such a sort to revile

you,

With nasty words to blot your name, and so detilc you ?

Diccon. No. But you must see that I get no blame. You promised.

Dame Cii.\t. Your name will not be mentioned !

Diccox.

It's twenty pounds to a goose-quill Good Gam-

mer will come

To fight about her rooster, for well I heard Tib

say

That he was roasted in your house for
break-

fast yesterday!

Dame Chat. By heavens, I'll break her
head!

Diccon.

Sh ! Give her your mind, and spare not,
Keep Diccon blameless, and then go to, I
care

not.

Dame Chat [shaking her fist at Gammer's
house]

Let the drab beware her throat ! I can wait
no

longer !

In faith, old witch, it shall be seen,
which of us

is the stronger!

Dicco.v [pushing Dame Chat toward the
right].

Tush, go in the house, keep your words for
an

hour,

But when Gammer comes then let them pour.

Now farewell.

[Dame Chat goes out, grumbling. Diccon laughs to himself]

Now the fun has begun!

r Hodge enters from the house. He stands near the door

HouGE. Gog's soul, are you still alive?

Diccon. As you see.

Hodge. Dare I come?

Diccon. Yes, of course, why not?

Hodge [in a subdued voice]. Tush, man, is Gammer's needle found yet?

Diccon.

She can thank you it's not found, for if you had

kept your stand

The devil would have brought it at your com-
mand.

Hodge [coming closer]. But — but could he not tell where the needle might be found?

Diccon. You foolish dolt, you wished to seek, even before we got our ground.

Hodge. But Diccon, Diccon, didn't the devil cry, "Ho . . . ho . . . ho"?

Diccon. If you had stayed where you stood you would have said so!

Hodge.

I'd swear on a book I heard him roar as I left.

Tell me, Diccon, what did the knave have to say?

Diccon. The devil talked of many things. Sometimes of a cat, sometimes of a rat, but most of all I heard the word, "chat, chat."

Hodge. Oh!

Diccon.

This I understood, before off to hell he slid,

Between Chat, Doctor Rat and Gib, the cat,
our needle is hid.

Hodge. Um . . . um . . .

Diccon.

Now whether Gib, the cat, has eaten it in
her

maw,

Or Doctor Rat, the curate, has found it in
the

straw.

Or old Dame Chat, your neighbor, has stolen

it, only Gog knows.

But by to-morrow at this time, we shall
learn

how the matter goes.

Hodge. Can't you learn tonight, man?

Don't you see what's here?

[He turns round and shows the seat of his
breeches]

Diccon. Why, you've changed your breeches,
Hodge !

Hodge [a little shamefacedly]. Yes . . .
but this pair is as bad as the other. Now
if we
could find Gammer Gurton's needle -

Diccon [scratching his head]. I'm afraid
we'll not be able to find it to-night.

Hodge. Alas, Diccon, then there is no hope?

Diccon. No-o-o.

Hodge. Then I'll get me along to Sim
Glover's
shop.

Diccon. For what?

Hodge. To seek a bit of string. I can tie
up
my breeches like a bag. There's nothing
else
to do.

Diccon. Then, to-morrow, perhaps, I'll have
some news.

Hodge. Yes, I hope so, Diccon.

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[He goes out left. Gammer Gurton enters from Iter hotise]

Gammer.

Good Lord, shall I ever have the luck my

needle to spy?

What's that? Ho, Diccon! I am lost, man!

Fie!

Fie!

Diccon. Marry, tell me. Gammer, what is your trouble?

Gammer.

Alas, the more I think of it, my sorrow becomes double !

My very goodly treasured needle I've lost:

I

know not where.

Diccon [with pretended surprise]. Your needle?

Gammer [wiping a tear from her eye].

My needle, alas, I cannot well spare.

Oh, Diccon, I'm doubled with care.

Diccon. If it's only your needle, Gammer, I promise you all is safe.

Gammer [with new hope]. Why, do you know which way my good needle is gone?

Diccon. Yes, that I do ! And you shall hear anon.

Gammer [running to him]. Tell me, Diccon, tell me !

Diccon. Sh ! Sh ! You promise not to tell who told you?

Gammer. I'll promise anything, Diccon, anything.

Diccon [he makes a horn of his hand and shouts into Gammer Gurton's anxious ear]. Well, just as I was standing here, within these twenty hours - [He points to the right] - even at that gate before my face, a neighbor of yours -

Gammer. Dame Chat !

Diccon. She stooped down, and took up a needle or a pin !

Gammer. It was my needle, Diccon, I know !
Diccon.
And when she took it up, here before your very

doors,

"Now wait, Dame Chat," said I, "that same
is

none of yours."

"Go 'way," said she, "you fool, for it is
none

of yours!"

Each other word I was a knave and you a
queen of evil-doers.

Just because I up and spoke and said the
needle

was yours!

Gammer [indignantly].

Thinks the callet by such a slight I'll my
needle

lack?

If she hopes to keep my needle . . . I'll
break

her wretched back !

Diccon [shaking his finger].

But, good Gammer Gurton, of this take heed,
I'm not to be mentioned, no matter how fast
you speed !

Gammer. No, Diccon, I promise you.

Diccon. Remember that !

Gammer [she starts toward the house].
I'll go in and put a clean apron on;
And if the needle I find, I'll well reward
you,
my son.

[She goes into the house. Diccon stands
looking after her and chuckling to him-
self as the curtains close. No sooner have
they closed than Diccon's head appears
between them]

Diccon [whispering to the audience].
My Gammer sure intends to break Chat's

bones
With staffs or clubs or else with
cobblestones.

[To the musicians]
In the meantime, fellows, wake up ! Your
fid-
dles ! A tune, I say !
And let your friends hear such songs as you
can play !

curtain

ACT TWO

Scene: The same as the first act.

[Hodge enters from the left. In his hands he carries a nail and a long piece of 'string. Mumbles to himself:]

Hodge.

Sim Glover, how I thank him ! I'm mighty well

fi.xed now,

Sim is as good a fellow as ever kissed a cow!

Here is a nail he gave me - I'll use it for a

needle,

And here a piece of thong, as strong as any steel.

Gammer [she enters from her house].

Now, Hodge ! Come here, I have good news to

give;

I know who has my needle; and soon I'll have

it, as I live !

Hodge. The devil you do !

Gammer. It's true ... I do.

Hodge. Do you know where you lost it?

Gammer. I know who found it !

Hodge. Oho ! If that is true, farewell both nail and thong! [He throivs them away] But

who is it has your needle, Gammer?

Gammer. That false vixen, Dame Chat, who counts herself so honest !

Hodge. Who told you so?

Gammer. She picked it up. 'Twas Diccon who saw it done.

Hodge.

Diccon! That sly old knave? Gammer, he's a

witch's son !

Of late I saw him call up a devil who bellowed

and thundered,

"Ho-ho," he cried. I shook in my boots — and wondered !

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GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

Gammer. Were you not afraid, Hodge, to

sec the devil in this place?

HocGE [expamihis his chest]. No. If he had come near me I should have laid him on his face.

G.\MMER. But, Hodge, had he no horns to push ?

HODOE.

As long as your two arms. With a great long cow's tail.

And crooked, cloven feet, and many a hooked

nail !

Gammer [liftitis her hutids]. Gogamercy, Hodse!

Hodge.

The devil, when Diccon asked him - I heard

him very well -

Said plainly, here before us, that Dame Chat

had your needle.

G.\MMF.R.

Then let us go and ask if she means to keep
it ;

Seeing we know so much 'twere madness to
sleep on't.

HoDCE [edging around behind G.xmmerI.

Go to her. Gammer, no doubt she's now in-
doors;

Bid her give you the needle. 'Tis none of
hers

but yours.

Gammer [she calls'].

Dame Chat, I ask you fairly, let me have

what is mine !

I have not, these twenty years, taken one

breath of thine;

Therefore, give me my needle and let me
live

beside thee.

Dame Chat [she enters from the right].

Why have you crept from home here to my

own door to chide me?

Go along, doting drab, begone, or I shall
set

you further!

Have you and that knave there come out to
do murder?

Gammer. Tush, do not gape at me so,

woman ! Do you wish to eat me ?

Dame Chat. Don't meddle with me . . .
don't meddle!

Gammer. Poor folks must have their rights.
And I want my needle !

Dame Chat.
Give you your rights and hang you up with
all

your beggar's broods!

What, will you make me a thief and say I
stole

your goods?

Gammer [shaking her stick].

I'll say nothing, I warrant you, but what I
can

prove well -

You took my goods from in front of my
house, that I can tell !

Dame Chat. Did I, old witch, steal what was
yours? How should that be known?

Gammer. I cannot tell; but you took it up,
as though it had been your own.

D.\me Cuat [taking a step forward].
Marry, fie on you, jou old gib, with all my
very heart !

Gammkr [taking a step forward]. Nay, fie
on you, you ramp, you rig, with all that
take
your part !

Dami: Chat. A vengeance on those lips that
lay such things to my charge!

Gammer. A vengeance? A vengeance on
those callet's hips whose conscience is so
large!

Dame Chat. Come here, hog!

Gammer. Come nearer, dog, and let me have
a right.

Dame Chat. You arrant witch!

Gammer. You bawdy jade! I'll make you
cur.se this night !

Dame Chat. A bag and wallet!

Gammer. A cart for a callet !

Dame Chat.

I'll bet you a goat
I'll patch your coat.

Gammer.

And I'll bury your bones in a pail!
You jade ! You drab ! You rake ! You blab !
Will not shame make you hide?

Dame Chat. You scold ! You bold ! You rotten ! You glutton ! I'll no longer chide !
 But I
 will teach you to keep at home!

[She lays a hand on Gammer's shoulder]
 Gammer. Will you, you drunken beast!
 [With her left hand she pulls Dame Chat's cap down over her eyes and with the right hits her a sharp clap on the ear. Then the fight begins]
 Hodge [jumping up and down with excitement].
 Stick to her, Gammer! Take her by the head!

Punch her, Gammer!
 Bite her, I say, Gammer! Oh, was ever such a

fight seen!
 Where are your nails ? Claw her jaw !
 Pummel

her old face green !
 Gog's bones. Gammer, hold up your head !
 Dame Chat [hits Gammer full in the face].
 Take this, old trot, for amends, and learn your tongue to tame !
 [Hitting her again]

And say you met at this pickering, not your fellow, but your dame!

[Gammer falls down on her hands and knees, Ch.m gives her a kick which lays her fiat on her stomach]

Hodge [wildly swings his arms].

Where is the strong-armed drab? I'll give her

a lasting mark!

Stand out of my way so that I kDl none in the dark!

[Dame Chat chases him into the house and then walks away]

Gammer [trying to get up] Oh! Oh!

Hodge [trying to reach Gammer].

GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

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Up, Gammer, if you are alive ! I'll fight now for

us both.

You scald callet! I'll wring your neck as though it were cloth!

Dame Chat. Are you here again, you hoddy-

peg? Doll! Doll, fetch me my spit!

Hodge [he picks up G.ammer's staff].

By our father's spirit! I'll break you with it,

by cracky, by hoy -

Watch the door, Cock! Hold her out . . .
you ninish boy.

[Doll runs in with Dame Chat's spit which she gives to her mistress and then turns to Cock]

Dame Ch.at.

Hold the boy! Keep Hodge from running in!
I'll break all their heads, by sin!

[She hits Hodge]

Hodge. Ouch! Ouch! Gog's wounds! Cock,
pull the latch! [He runs into the house]

Dame Chat. In faith. Sir Loose-breech, had you tarried, you should have found your match !

Gammer. Now beware your throat, fool,
you'll pay for all! [She sneaks behind Dame

Chat and grabbing her by the back of the neck
shakes her]

Hodge [from the window].

Well said. Gammer, by my soul.

Hoist her, souse her, bounce her, trounce her,

pull out her throat-bole!

Dame Chat.

You withered witch, if I once get my foot,
You old tar-leather, I'll teach you who
belongs
to't !

[She hits Gammer in the mouth]

Take this one in the mouth ! When I get my
breath I'll give you more.

[She runs out. Hodge hurries from the
house and helps Gammer to her feet]

Hodge.

Up, Gammer, stand on your feet; are your

legs very sore?

Faith, if I had Chat by the face, I would
crack her bawdy crown!

Gammer. Ho, Hodge, Hodge, where was
your help when the vixen had me down?

Hodge.

By the mass. Gammer, but for my staff. Chat

would have killed you !
I think the varlet would not have cared if
she'd stilled you !
But shall we lose our needle thus?

Gammer.

No, Hodge, I shall never do so.
Do you think I'll take that at her hand?
No!

Hodge.

I wish this fight were settled, our needle
safe

at home,
It's in my bones someone to kill, wherever
it
be or whom !

Gammer [a little amazed at his words].

We have a parson, Hodge, you know, a man

esteemed and wise.

Good Doctor Rat, I'll send for him and ask

for his advice.

He'll right this fight and clear this hate.
We'll have our needle or Chat never comes

within Heaven's gate.

Hodge.

Yes, marry. Gammer, I think it best some word to send.

Gammer.

The sooner Parson Rat comes, the sooner this matter will end.

Hodge.

Listen, Gammer ! Diccon's devil, as I remember well.

Of Doctor Rat, of Gib, our cat, and Chat a

felinous tale did tell.

I'll bet you forty pounds that is the way to get your needle again.

Gammer. Let's send for Doctor Rat! Call out the boy. We'll make him take the pain.

Hodge [calling]. Hey, Cock! I say, come out ! What the devil ! Can't you hear ?

Cock [he enters from the house]. How now, Hodge? Hello, Gammer! Is the weather now clear? What is it? What would you have me do?

Gammer. Come here, Cock. Go swift to

Doctor Rat. And pray him come speak with me; I am not well at ease.

Cock. Doctor Rat, the curate?

Gammer [nodding].

You'll find him at his chamber, or else at

Mother Bee's;

Else seek him at Hob Filcher's shop, for I

have heard reported

There the ale is best of all in town, the place

is much frequented.

Cock. And shall I bring him with me, Gammer?

Gammer. Yea, good Cock.

Cock [running out left]. I'll have him here before the clock has struck !

Hodge [who is evidently a little weary].

Now, Gammer, shall we go in and wait for his

coming?

What the devil? Pluck up! Take heart, leave

off this glooming.

Though she were stronger at the first, as I am

sure you found her.

Why, Gammer, you hit the drunken drab each time you got behind her.

Gammer [shaking her head].

Nay, nay, I'm sure she'll not forget from the

end to the beginning;

I do not doubt but that she will make great boast of herself winning.

Tib [she comes running in from the house].

Sec, Gammer, Gammer, Gib, our cat, I'm afraid

she is ailing!

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GAIVIMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

She stands behind the door sasping as though

her wind were failing.

Gammkr. Poor Gib!

Tib. Poor Gib! What does it mean that she

should so dote?

Hoih;e. Where is she? I'll bet twenty pounds
your needle's in her throat! [He runs into the
house]

G.VMMER. Grab her, I say!
HoiH'.E [entering from the house ivith Gib
in
his arms]. I believe I feel it! Docs it
prick your
hand?

G.AMMER [feeling the cat]. I cannot feci
it.
HoDC.E [feeling the eat from her nose to
the
tip of her tail]. No . . . no. There's
nothing
in this land.

Tib.
Faith, she has eaten something that will
not

easily down ;
I cannot tell whether she got it at home or
abroad in the town.
Gammer.

Alas, I fear it is some crooked pin !
 Ah, then farewell, Gib ! She's undone and
 lost -

all save the skin !

Hodge.

'Tis your needle, woman, I say ! Tib, go
 get

me a knife

And I'll have it out of her maw, or else
 lose

my life !

Gammer. What ! Nay ! Hodge, fie ! Kill not
 our cat, 'tis all the cat we have now!

Hodge. By the mass. Dame Chat has so
 moved me I care not what I kill now!

[Giving Tib the cat]

Here, then, Tib, hold up her head, so.
 There,

take her.

I'll see what the devil is inside her. I'll
 rake her !

G.AMMER. Rake a cat, Hodge? How can you?

Hodge.

Do you think I'm not able?

Doesn't Tom Tanliard rake his cow in the
 stable ?

[Cock comes running in from the left]
Gammer. Quick ! Let us hear what news you
bring from Doctor Rat.

Cock.

Gammer, I've been there - you know well
what

about,

He is coming over at once, I'll swear to't.

Gammer. Where did you find him, boy?

Cock.

At Hob Filcher's house - full of joy,
A cup of ale in his hand, and a crab lay in
the

fire;

I had much trouble going and coming, all
was

so of mire.

I'll lay a penny Doctor Rat will find your
nee-

dle soon.

Gammer.

I'm glad to hear that, Cock, for if he does
'twill prove a boon.

But come, let us go in, the Doctor will be
here
soon.

[They all follow Gammer Gurton into
the house. Doctor Rat enters from the
right]

Doctor Rat [mumbling to himself],
A man were better twenty times a Cheshire
cat

and smirk
Than here among such a sort be parish
priest

or clerk,
Where he can never be at rest one minute of

the day,
But he must trudge about the town this way

and that way.
I had not sit the space to drink two pots
of ale
But Gammer's boy was straightway on my

trail.
Saying she was sick, that I must come, to
do

I know not what !

If once her finger's end but ache, trudge!
 Call
 for Doctor Rat !

[Gammer Gurton enters from her house]
 What ! Gammer Gurton ? Here's your friend
 the curate. Doctor Rat.
 Gammer. Oh ! Good Master Doctor ! I have
 troubled you, I know well that!

Doctor Rat. How do you know, woman?
 Are you lusty or are you not well at ease?

Gammer. By -gab. Master, I am not sick
 . . . still I have a disease !

Doctor Rat. What is the matter?

Gammer.

Alas! I have lost my needle! A drab came by

and spied it.

But when I asked her for it she" up and
 denied

it!

Doctor Rat. What did she say?

Gammer.

She began to scold and brawl -

Come hither, Hodge ! This wretch can tell
 you
 all!

Hodge [he enters from the house]. Good
 morrow, Gaffer 'Vicar!

Doctor Rat. Come, fellow, tell your tale.
Gammer. Tell him the truth, Hodge!
Hodge [taking a long breath before he begins].

My Gammer Gurton, here, see now,
Sat her down at this door, see now;
And as she began to bestir her, see now,
Her needle fell on the floor, see now;
And while her staff she took, see now,
At Gib, her cat, to fling, see now.
Her needle was lost on the ground, see now;
Then came a jade. Dame Chat, see now.
To ask for her black cup, see now;
And right here in this street, see now,
She picked our needle up, see now;
My Gammer then asked her, see now,
To give the needle back, see now.
Chat up and beat her head, see now!
Is not this a wondrous thing, see now?

GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

She scratched my Gammer's face, see now !
I thought she'd stopped her throat, see
now.

When I saw this I was mad, see now !
I jumped between the two, see now,
Else, I durst take an oath, see now,
My Gammer had been slain, see now.

Gammer. It's the truth ! Help us or we'll
be
beaten – and lose our needle, too !

Doctor Rat.

Tell me what you wish me to do –
Are you sure Dame Chat the lost needle
found ?

Gammer [she sees Diccon coming down the
street].

Oh, here comes the man who saw her take it
from the ground.

Ask of him the truth – if you won't believe
me.

Oh, help me get my needle. Doctor Rat, for
Saint Charity !

[Diccon comes sauntering in]

Doctor Rat. Come here, Diccon.

Diccon. Aye, Doctor Rat.

Doctor Rat. Will you swear Dame Chat has

Gammer's needle, lad ?

Diccon. By Saint Benet, I will not ! Do you think I am mad?

Gammer. But you told me so ! For shame ! Can you deny it?

Diccon. But I said I'd not abide by it — not for heaven or hell !

Doctor Rat. Then we're no nearer the truth, for the truth you won't tell !

Diccon [looking to the right].
Sh! If Dame Chat sees us here she'll know

what's the matter.

Faith, I advise you to go into the house, and

pull the shutter.

Doctor Rat. 'Tis better so.

Diccon. And safer.

Gammer. Yes.

Diccon.

I'll into Dame Chat's house and see the needle,

no time to lose.

As soon as I learn, I'll come straight back with

the news.

Gammer [moving toward the house]. Now, gentle Diccon, do so; and, sir, let us trudge.

Doctor Rat [protestingly]. But Gammer, I can't stay long to be your judge.

Diccon [pleadingly].

Wait a little while, man. Pray take that much

pain !

If I see no needle I'll come straight back again.

Hodge. Tarry awhile, good Master Doctor, out of gentleness !

Doctor R.^t. Then let us get into the house.

Diccon, hurry your business !

[Gammer Gurton, with Doctor Rat and Hodge at her heels, goes into the house. Diccon moves away toward the right. The shutter of Gammer's window is closed, which leaves the street in semi-darkness]

Diccon [talking to himself].
But with Dame Chat, my gossip, talk first I
must.
For she must be the chief captain to lay
Rat
in the dust.

[Dame Chat enters from the right]
Oh, good even, Dame Chat! Faith, we're well
met in this place.

Dame Chat. Good even, friend Diccon. Why
are you walking this space?

Diccon. By my truth, to your house. To
hear how the world goes -

Dame Chat [she points with her thumb to
G.'\mmer's house. Laughing]. Gog's legs, I
wish
you had seen ! Oh, Lord, I gave them such
blows !

Diccon.
Hodge, by heaven and hell, said he'd wreck
his

sorrow
And leave you never a hen alive by this
time

to-morrow.

Dame Chat. The knave might as well hang himself as walk on my ground !

Diccon.

But let me help you save your hens while they

are still sound.

Have you not behind your furnace or lead
A hole where a crafty knave could creep in
of
need?

Dame Chat. Yes, my word, a hole broke
there just these two days back !

Diccon [making sure that no one is about].
Hodge intends to slip in there this night
with
a sack !

Dame Chat.

By Gog's bones, when he comes, now that I

know the matter.

He shall crawl into a pot of boiling hot
water !

And a good beating besides ! When he will
let

him come!

Diccon [chucking Dame Chat under the chin]. I've told you as my sister. And you know the meaning of "mum."

Dame Chat. Never a word will I breathe.

Diccon. Go in then, and wait.

[She goes out right. Rat enters from Gammer Gurton's house].

Doctor Rat. What news, Diccon? Is Dame Chat at home?

Diccon. She is, sir!

Doctor Rat. You saw the needle?

Diccon. I have seen it, indeed, sir!

Doctor Rat. How, Diccon?

Diccon. Will you hear?

Doctor Rat. Marry, I will !

Diccon.

As she sat there sewing a halter or a band,

I saw it ! Gammer Gurton's needle in her hand !

When there's a knock, if the filth is in doubt,

She blows but one puff and her candle is out.

Now I, .sir, knowing of every door the pin,
Went quietly, saying no word till I was in,

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GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

And there saw the needle, with my own two

eyes ;

Whoever says the contrary, I'll swear he lies!

Doctor Rat. Oh, I wish I'd been there!

Diccon. I can bring you to the place where you'll catch the drab with the needle in her hand.

Doctor Rat. Bring me to the place, Diccon.

Diccon. Very well, sir.

Doctor Rat. And I'll give you a quart of the best ale in town.

Diccon. You must lay aside your gown.

Doctor Rat [liurricdly taking oS his gown'\
It's off!

Diccox [he puts his arm around Doctor Rat's shoulder and points off right]. See what is there? A hole wherein you can

creep,

Into the house and suddenly, unawares, among

them leap!

Doctor Rat. I see!

Diccon [walking to the right]. Follow me.

Doctor Rat. Are you sure, Diccon, there are no swill-tubs about?

Diccox.

Come, give me your hand — have no doubt.

Do as I bid you. Come, we'll go together.

Crawl into that hole, and find the jade with

the needle !

[They go out right]

Doctor Rat [from within]. Help! Help! I shall be slain among them !

Diccox. If they don't give up the needle tell

'em you'll hang 'em !

Doctor Rat. Help ! Help ! Oh ! Oh-o-o-o.

Diccox [running in from the right].

Now, my wenches, you have caught the fox
Who wished to steal the hens and cocks!

Doctor Rat. Help ! Oh-o-o-o-o ! Help ! Let me out!

Diccox [looking vp]. Hoho ! So!

Doctor R.\t. Oh-o-o-o ! Ho ! Oh-o-o-o !

Diccox [putting his thumb to his nose].

He's getting well paid for all his pains,
Lord, I hope they don't beat out his
brains!

[He hurries up the street and exits left.
Doctor Rat, with his face well beaten
and his clothes in rags, runs in from the
right]

Doctor Rat.

Woe! Curse the hour that I came here I
Master Baily, I vow, if he is worth his
ears

Will hang these murderers amid rejoicing
and
cheers !

[Nursing his wounds, he hurries up the street and off left]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

Scene: The same early next morning. Stools and a wooden bench have been placed before Gammer Gurton's house. Gammer, with Tib near her, is seated facing Dame Chat and Doll. Doctor Rat, his head bound in bandages, and HoDGE are seated on the bench near the door. Baily, who conducts the court, is seated in the middle of the semi-circle.

Baily. Dame Chat, Master Doctor has complained that you and your maid —

HoDGE [he points to Doll who sticks her tongue out at him]. That's her!

Baily. Yes, complains that you meant to do murder.

Dame Chat. That I meant to murder him?
Fie on him, wretch !

Baily. Quiet I Quiet ! I beseech I

Dame Chat [pointing to Hodge].

There is the knave that got the blow;

It was Hodge, so far as I know.

Doctor Rat [pointing to Chat]. 'Twas she!

Dame Chat. What, man, you say I broke
your head?

Doctor Rat. I'll swear to it – living or
dead !

Dame Chat [to Baily]. I've not seen him
this last fortnight.

Doctor Rat. She saw me not because she
blew out the light !

Baily. For Gog's sake, explain this thing I

Dame Chat.

Good Baily, last night a kind friend gave
me

warning,

And bade me keep watch of my roost and my
pens,

[She looks over at Hodge, who winces un-
der her gaze]

For a sly, silly knave was out after my
hens

And I, to save my goods, quietly took my

watch.

[She crosses her arms]

You know, fortune served me well, I got my catch !

Baily. But you've not told me the name of the thief!

Dame Chat [she rises and points to Hodge]. There's the bag of mischief!

Hodge. Me!

Dame Chat. You.

Hodge. Me?

Dame Chat. Y'ou!

Gammer. You false jade, shame!

Baily [covering his ears]. Stop! Stop! In heaven's name !

Gammer [to Dame Chat]. I'll punch your head to jelly!

Baily.

You knave, I'll teach you to steal hens and

cocks,

By Gog, you'll sure kiss the stocks!

Doctor Rat. Why, he wasn't even there!

GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

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Baily. Not there?

Dame Ca\T. Look on his pate!

Doctor Rat. I wish my head were half so whole !

Baily [to the nervous Hodge]. Answer me this, is your head whole or broken ?

Hodge. Is my head whole ? Look ! Whole, by every good token!

Baily. Come over here.

Hodge. Yes, that I dare.

[He rises from his end of the bench and

Doctor Rat, with a yell, topples over.

Hodge runs to Baily and sticks his head up into Baily's astonished face]

Baily [examining Hodge's head]. By our

Lady, the head's not harmed.

Gammer. It was the jade Chat who stole from me !

Dame Chat. What have I ever stolen of yours, you ill-tempered old trot?

Gammer. My needle . . . my needle. Did you not?

Hodge. Give Gammer back her goods you stole.

Gammer [to Bally].

This drab she keeps my goods. May she step

in the devil's snare !

I pray you that I have a right action on her !

Baily. What can you charge her with ? Tell me. Well -

Gammer. Marry, a vengeance to her heart. The trot stole my needle !

Dame Chat.

Your needle, old witch ! How so ? It were

alms your soul to knock !

'Twas yesterday you said I stole your
yellow-
legged cock !
And roasted him for my breakfast – which
shall

not be forgotten,
The devil pull out your tongue, and the
lies of
it so begotten !
Gammer. Give me my needle !
Baily.
Silence ! You must leave off being so bold
!
Silence! Do you think court's a place to
scold?
Do you know Dame Chat has your needle?
Who told you so?
Gammer. Diccon, Master, Diccon, I am very
sure you know him.

Baily.
A false knave. Gog's pity. You should not
trust

that fool!
Did he not also say she stole your rooster
from
his stool?
Dame Chat.
It was that wench Tib who said the cock was

stolen.

The lying cat, she also said that in my house

'twas eaten !

Gammer [shaking her finger].

Surely, there somebody lied

My cock is safe and sound inside.

Baily. This is a case. You're sure you've lost your needle?

Gammer [shaking her head vigorously]. Yes, kind sir, I'm sure it is!

Baily'. Dame Chat says she has no rooster of yours. Do you insist she has your cock?

Gammer. No, Mr. Baily, for I know she's not!

Baily [to Dame Chat]. Will you confess to taking the needle?

Dame Chat. No, sir, I wdI not!

Baily.

I think the end will prove this brawl did first

arise

Upon no other ground save only Diccon's
dev-

ilish lies.

Dame Chat.

Though some are lies, as you, Baily, have

spied them.

Yet others may be true, I have some proof,
and

I believe them,

For 'twas Diccon told me Hodge would come;

he came indeed.

But, as it so happened, with greater haste
than

speed — •

This truth was said, and true was found,
and

truly I report.

Baily. If Doctor Rat was not deceived it
was

of another sort.

Dame Chat. A pair of foxes !

Baily [to Dame Chat]. Didn't Diccon ap-
point the place where you were to meet him?

Dame Chat. Yes, by the mass, and if he

came told me to beat him.

Baily [he chuckles]. The villain has deceived you all, inside and out!

Doctor Rat.

He is the cause of all this brawl, the dirty, lying lout !

He set me in the black hole creeping on my two knees,

[Feeling his bruised head. He looks at Dame Chat]

I know the weight of your door-bar, if you please !

Hodge.

Thank Gog my poor head was saved the bolt, Had I not had the better wit, I'd have been made a dolt !

Dame Chat. Fie on Diccon ! Fie ! Fie ! You all agree, that's plain.

Gammer. Fie on the knave ! Fie and fie and fie again !

Doctor Rat. Fie ! Fie on him may I best say whom he almost had slain!

[Diccon, a little tipsy, comes sauntering in from the left]

Diccon. God bless you, God bless you all!
So many all at once!

Dame Chat. Come, knave, it were best to
beat you, by Gog's bones! D'you see . . .
d'you see your handiwork?

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GAIMIMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

Diccon [pointing to Doctor Rat]. Him?
Whv, my hands came nowhere near him!

Bailv [unibl'iiis Dkxon]. Have you not
told a lie or two and set these folks by
the ears?

Ducon l7<iMi;/>wgl.
They've been tV::htin!;! Oh, and I— and I
missed sccint; the Tight !
I haven't scon a good one these many years.

IDoiiblhiss over 'icitli hiushtcr]

You make me lauiih till my eyes arc full of
tears!

Doctor Rat! Hasn't the old fool wit to save
his cars?

Doctor Rat. In Gog's name, Baily, I charge
you to hold him fast.

Diccon [still hiiighing]. What, fast at
run-
ning or fast asleep? That's the thing I did
last.

Doctor Rat. Do! Fast in chains, false var-
ict, according to your deeds.

Baily. Master Doctor, that is no remedy!
For this one needs some other sort of
punish-
ment -

Doctor Rat.
Yes, by all Hallows!

His punishment, if I were judge, would be
the
gallows.

Baily. I'll give him good punishment, but
yours is far too great.

Gammer.

It is a shame, I tell you plain, with such
false

knaves to treat !

Why, he has almost killed us all, and
that's

as true as steel.

Yet for all this great ado I'm never the
nearer

my needle !

Baii.y. Can you tell us anything of that,
Diccon?

Diccon. Yes, marry, sir, this much I can
say - [They all sit on the edge of their
stools

expectantly] Well . . . well, the needle is
lost!

[Doll's stool slips from under her and
with a ujhoo she sits on the ground.

Dame Chat takes her by the ear and
re-seats her]

Baily. .\nd can you tell where that needle
will be found?

Diccon. Yes, marry, sir, I can.

[They are on the edges of their stools
again]

Baily. Well, where can Gammer Gurton's
needle be found?

Diccon. It can be found, the needle can be found –

Gammer. Speak out, knave!

Diccon. Your needle can be found where it is – lost! [Tib's stool goes out from under her.

Gammer siii'ings at her, Tib ducks and Hodge is struck full in the face] But I can't tell where it is for an hundred pound !

Hodge [holding his face]. You liar! You promised the needle would be found. It's not been seen.

Diccon [he winks]. But you ran away from the devil ! You know what I mean !

Baily.

Doctor Rat, you must both learn and teach

us, to forgive.

Since Diccon has confessed and is so cleanly

shrive

If you'll consent I'll try to amend the
heavy

chance

And make him do some open penance —

Dame Chat. Say yes. Master Vicar.

Doctor Rat.

My part was the worse, still, since you all
agree,

I'm ready to forget, that goes from me !

Baily. Well, Doctor, are you willing and
ready on me to depend?

Diccon. Of course. Master. Do what you
like. I know you for a friend.

Baily.

Before them all you must kneel down and so

confess,

And take an oath upon poor Hodge's old torn
breeches,

[Diccon kneels down and Baily takes hold
of his hair. Pulling it vigorously]

First, for Master Doctor, upon pain of his

curse —

Where he will pay for all, you must never
draw

a purse.

To Dame Chat you must bow and swear, in

the likewise,

If she refuses your money once, never to offer

it twice;

For good Gammer Gurton's sake, sworn you

must be

To help her find her needle again, to this you

must agree.

Last of all, for Hodge, your given oath to scan.

You must never, never take him for a fine gentleman.

Hodge. Come on, fellow Diccon, I shall be even with you now !

Baily. You will not do this, Diccon? You promise and vow?

Diccon.

Yes, my father's skin, I promise and lay my

hand to it !

Look, as I have promised, I will not deny it even now!

[He gives Hodge a slap on his torn breeches]

Hodge [grabbing his leg]. Gog's bones!
Baily. What ! Is he beating you again ?
Hodge. He thrust me in the leg with a bodkin or a pin !

Diccon. A bodkin?

Gammer. A pin?

Hodge [discovering the needle]. I say, Gammer ! Gammer !

Gammer. How now, Hodge, how now?

Hodge [dancing about], Gog's malt. Gammer Gurton!

GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

Gammer. You're mad!

Hodge. The devil, Gammer!

Gammer. What is it?

Hodge [hopping about with one leg in the air]. I have it, bj' the mass. Gammer!

Gammer. What, Hodge? What?

Hodge. Your needle !

Dame Chat. Her needle !

Tib. Her needle !

Gammer. No . . . fie, you joke !

Hodge. I can't pull it out, Gammer ! But
it's
in my leg - I feel it !

Gammer. For all the loves on earth, Hodge,
let me see it !

Hodge [bending over]. Can you see it?

Gammer [trying to pull the needle out of
his
leg]. My needle! My needle!

Tib. I see it!

Dame Chat. The needle?

Gammer. Gog's light on you ! You have made me whole forever !

Hodge. I knew I must find it - if I wished peace ever.

Dame Chat. By my troth. Gossip Gurton, I am as glad as though I had found it !
 B.^LY. And I ! Come, we'll pull it forth !
 Doctor R.'\t. I rejoice so much at it . . .
 three needles' worth !

Diccon. Gammer, say "Thank you, Diccon," for springing the game.

Gammer. Thank you, Diccon, twenty times! Oh, how glad I am.

Baily. Come, let us pull the needle out.
 [Hodge leans over, Baily takes him about the waist. Tug-of-war fashion; Diccon takes Baily. On the other end is Gammer Gurton, grabbing the end of the needle with both hands, Dame Chat,

Tib and Doll. They ptdl and pull – ajid
 pull. At last the needle comes out of
 Hodge's leg. With a wild yell everyone
 falls backivard]

curtain

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