

GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE
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Dramatis Personae:

Diccon – local vice

Gammer Gurton – old woman

Hodge – her son

Tib – her serving girl

Cocke – her house boy

Dame Chat – her neighbor

Bailey – local judge

ACT 1, SCENE 1

[*Enter: Diccon.*]

DICCON: Many a mile have I walked, diverse and sundry ways

And many a good man's house have I been at in my days

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

And many a roast and spit, have I both turned and basted

Many a piece of bacon have I had out of their bulk

In running over the country, with long and weary walks,

Yet came my foot never, within those door cheeks,

To seek flesh or fish, Garlic, Onions or Leeks,

That ever I saw a sort, in such a plight

As here within this house appeareth to my sight, [indicates stage]

There is howling and scowling, all cast in a dump,

With whewling and pewling, as though they had lost a trump

Sighing and sobbing they weep and they wail

I marvell in my mind, what the devil they wail

The old Trot sits groaning, with "alas and alas,"

And Tib wringes her hands, and takes on in worse case

With poor Cocke their boy, they be driven in such fits

I fear me the folks be not well in their wits

Ask them what they ail, or who brought them in this stay?

They answer not at all, but "alack and well-away"

Whan I saw it booted not out at doors I hied me

And caught a slip of Bacon, when I saw that none spyed me,

(indicates inside his coat)

Which I intend not far hence unless my purpose fail
Shall serve for a shoeinghorn to draw on two pots of ale.

ACT 1, SCENE 2

[*Enter: Hodge. Diccon. Played forward of the stage*]

HODGE: See so I am arrayed with dabbling in the dirt

She that set me to ditching, I would she had the squirt. (the runs)

Was never poor soul that such a life had ?

Gogs bones, thy filthy paint has dressed me too bad

Gods soul, see how this stuff tears

I were better to be a Bearward and set to keep Bears

By the Mass here is a gash, a shameful hole indeed.

And one stitch tear further, a man may thrust in his head

DICCON: By my father's soul, Hodge, if I should now be sworn

I can not choose but say thy breech is foul be-torn

But the next remedy in such occasioned hap

Is to place on a piece, as broad as thy cap. [joke]

HODGE: Gogs soul, man, tis not yet two days fully ended

Since my dame Gurton - I'm sure - these breeches mended,

But I am made such a drudge, to trudge at every need

I would rend it though it were stitched with sturdy pack thread,

DICCON: Hodge, let thy breeches go, and speak and tell me soon

What devil aileth Gammer Gurton, and Tib her maid to frown,

HODGE: Tush man, thou art deceived tis their daily look,

They cover so over the coals, their eyes be blear'd with smoke.

DICCON: Nay, by the mass, I perfectly perceived as I came hither

That either Tib and her dame hath been by the ears together (in close
contest)

Or else as great a matter as thou shalt shortly see.

HODGE: Now I beseech our Lord they never better agree.

DICCON: By gogs soul, there they sit as still as stones in the street

As though they had been taken with fairies or else with some ill sprite

HODGE: Well I have heard some say such tokens do not fail,

But canst you not tell, in faith, Diccon, why she frowns or where-at

Hath no man stolen her ducks or hens, or gelded Gib her cat?

DICCON: What devil can I tell man, I could not have one word

They gave no more heed to my talk then thou wouldst to a lord

HODGE: I can not still but must what marvelous thing it is

I'll in and know myself what matters are amiss.

DICON: Then farewell, Hodge, a while, since thou doest inward hast,
For I will into the good wife Chat's, to feel how the ale doth taste.

ACT 1, SCENE 3

[*Enter: Hodge. Tib. Hodge goes up on the stage where Tib stands –
Diccon exits*]

HODGE: I am agast by the mass, I know not what to do
I had need bless me well before I go them to
Perchance some felon spirit may haunt our house indeed,
And then I were but a madman to venture where I have no need
TIB: I am worse than mad, by the mass, to be at this stair
I am chid, I am blamed, and beaten all through on the day,
Lamed and hunger-starved, pricked up all in jags (splinters)
Having no patch to hide my back, save a few rotten rags.
HODGE: I say Tib, if thou be Tib, as I trust sure thou be,
What devil make-ado is this between our dame and thee.

TIB: Gogs bread, Hodge, thou had a good turn thou were not here this
while.

It had been better for some of us to have been hence a mile
My Gammer is so out of course, and frantic all at once
That Cocke our boy and I, poor wench, have felt it on our bones.
HODGE: What is the matter, say on Tib, where-at she taketh so on.
TIB: She is undone she sayth (alas,) her joy and life is gone
If she hear not of some comfort, she is sayth but dead
Shall never come within her lips, one inch of meat nor bread.
HODGE: But, Lady, I am not very glad, to see her in this dump
I told a noble her stool hath fallen and she hath broke her rump
TIB: Nay and that were the worst, we would not greatly care
For bursting of her huckle bone (pelvis), or breaking of her chair
But greater, greater is her grief, as Hodge we shall all feel.
HODGE: Gogs wounds, Tib, my Gammer has never lost her needle?
TIB: Her needle.
HODGE: Her needle?
TIB: Her needle by him that made me, it is true Hodge. I tell thee.
HODGE: Gogs sacrament, I would she had lost the heart out of her
belly
The Devil or else his dame, they ought her sure a shame
How by illness came this chance - say Tib - unto our dame?

TIB: My gammer sat her down on her foot and bade me reach thy
breeches

And by and by, a vengeance in it, for she had taken two stitches
To clap a patch upon thine tail, by chance aside she leers
And Gib our cat in the milk pan, she spied - over head and ears
“Ah trot! Out thief?” she cryed aloud, and swept the breeches down
Up went her staff, and out leapt Gib, outdoors into the town
And since that time was never wight (spirit) could set their eyes upon
it

Gogs curse, I have, Cocke and I, bid twenty times light on it.

HODGE: And is not then my breeches sewed up, tomorrow it I should
wear?

TIB: No, in faith Hodge, thy breeches lie, for all this never the near'r.

HODGE: (*walking away upset*)

Now a vengeance light on all ye sort, it better should have kept it,
The cat, the house, and Tib our maid, it better should have swept it
See where she commeth crawling, come on in twenty devils way
Ye have made a fair days work have you not? Pray you say.

ACT 1, SCENE 4:

[*Enter: Gammer*]

GAMMER: Alas Hodge, alas I may well curse and ban (ban=curse)
This day that ever I saw it, with Gib and the milk pan
For these and ill luck together, as knoweth Cocke my boy
Have stuck away my dear needle, and robbed me of my joy
My fair long straight needle that was mine only treasure
The first day of my sorrow is, and last end of my pleasure.
HODGE: Might have kept it when ye had it, but fools will be fools
still.

Lose that is fast in your hand, ye mean not to but ye will.

GAMMER: Go hie thee Tib, and run thou girl, to the end here of the
town

Didst carry out dust in thy lap, seek where thou pour'st it down
And as thou sawest me raking, in the ashes where I burned.

So see in all the heap of dust, thou leave no straw unturned.

TIB: That I shall, Gammer, swift and tight, and soon be here again.
(*exits*)

GAMMER: Tib, stoop and look down to the ground, to it and take
some pain.

HODGE: Here is a pretty matter, to see this here how it goes
By gog's soul, I think you would lose your tail and it were loose
Your needle lost, it is pity you should lack care and endless sorrow
Gog's death, how shall my breeches be sewed, shall I go thus
tomorrow?

GAMMER: Ah Hodge, Hodge, if that I could find my needle, by the
reed (cross)

I would sew thy breeches, I promise ye, with full good double thread
And set a patch on either knee, should last these months twain (two)
Now God and good Saint Sithe I pray, to send it home again.

HODGE: Where-to served your hands and eyes, but this your needle
to keep

What devil had you else to do, ye kept I know no sheep.

I am sure about to dig and delve, in water, mire and clay

Sossing (wallowing) and tossing in the dirt, still from day to day

A hundred things that be about, I am set to see them well

And four of you sit idle at home, and can not keep a needle.

GAMMER: My needle, alas, I lost it, Hodge, what time I me up hasted
To save the milk set up for thee, which Gib our cat hath wasted

HODGE: The Devil he burst both Gib, and Tib, with all the rest

I am always sure of the worst end, who ever have the best

Where have you been fidge(et)ing about, since you your needle lost?

GAMMER: Within the house and at the door, sitting by this same post
Where I was looking a long hour, before these folks came here,

But well-away, all was in vain, my needle is never the near'r.

HODGE: Set me a candle, let me seek and grope where ever it be

Gogs heart, ye be so foolish (I think) you know it not when you it see

GAMMER: Come hither, Cocke! what Cocke, I say!

COCKE: How Gammer? (Entering)

GAMMER: Go hie thee soon and grope behind the old brass pan,

Which thing, when thou hast done

There shalt thou find an old shoe, wherein if thou look well

Thou shalt find lying an inch of a white tallow candle,

Light it, and bring it right away.

COCKE: That shall be done anon! (walks over to edge of stage -
pantomime)

GAMMER: Nay, tarry, Hodge, til thou hast light, and then we'll seek
each one.

HODGE: Come away, ye stupid boy, are ye asleep; ye must have a
crier.

COCKE: I cannot get the candle t'light, there is almost no fire.

HODGE: I will hold the 'apenny! I will make ye come, if yet I may
catch thine ears

Art deaf, thou noddy boy? Cocke, I say, why canst not hear?

GAMMER: Beat him not, Hodge, but help the boy and come you two
together.

ACT 1, SCENE 5

[Hodge joins Cocke, Tib returns]

GAMMER: How now, Tib? Quick, lets hear, what news thou hast
brought hither

TIB: I have tossed and tumbled yonder heap o'er and o'er again

And winnowed it through my fingers as men would winnow grain

No so much as a hens turd but in pieces I tear it

Or what so ever clod or clay I found, I did not spare it

Looking within and also without, to find your needle - alas

But all in vain and without help, your needle is where it was.

GAMMER: Alas, my needle! We shall never meet, adieu, adieu for
aye.

TIB: Not so, Gammer, we might it find if we knew where it lay.

COCKE (*crossing to Gammer and Tib*)

Gogs cross, Gammer, if ye will laugh look in but at the door!

And see how Hodge lieth tumbling and tossing amid the flour
(flour=dust/ashes)

Raking there some fire to find among the ashes dead

Where there is not one spark, so big as a pin's head,

At last in a dark corner two sparks he thought he sees

Which were, m'dede, nought else but Gib our cats two eyes!

(m'dede=I swear)

"Puff" quoth Hodge thinking thereby to have fire without doubt

With that Gib shut her two eyes, and so the fire was out

And by and by them opened, even as they were before,

With that the sparks "appeared" even as they had done in yore,

And even as Hodge blew the fire as he did think

Gib as she felt the blast straight way began to wink,

Till Hodge fell of swearing as came best to his turn,

The fire was sure bewicht and therefore would not burn:

At last Gib: up the stairs, among the old posts and pins,
And Hodge: he hied him after, till broke were both his shins:
Cursing and swearing others, were never of his making,
That Gib would fire the house, if that she were not taken.
GAMMER: See here is all the thought that the foolish Urchin taketh,
And Tib, me think, at his elbow, almost as merry maketh!
This is all the with ye have when others make their moan,
Come down, Hodge, (where art thou?) and let the Cat alone.
It is the cat's eyes, fool, that shineth in the dark.
HODGE: Hath the Cat, do you think, in every eye a spark?
GAMMER: No, but they shine as like fire -as every man see.
HODGE: By the mass, and she burn all, you should bear the blame
for me
GAMMER: Come down and help to seek here our needle that it were
found
Down, Tib, on thy knees I say, down, Cocke, to the ground.
To God I make a vow, and so to good Saint Anne
A candle shall they have a piece, get it where I can,
If I may my needle find in one place or in other.
HODGE: Now a vengeance on Gib's light, on Gib and Gib's mother
And all the generation of cats both far and near
Look on the ground, knaveson, thinks thou the needle is here?
(addressed to Cocke)
COCKE: By my truth, Gammer, me thought your needle here I saw
But when my fingers touched it, I felt it was a straw.
TIB: (*showing Hodge something*)
See, Hodge, whats this? May it be within it?
HODGE: Break it, fool, with thy hand and see and thou canst find it.
TIB: Nay break it you, Hodge, according to your word. (hands it to
him)
HODGE: (*breaking it open*)
Gog's sides, fie it stinks; it is a cat's turd!
It were well done to make thee eat it, by the mass!
GAMMER: This matter amendeth not! My needle is still where it was
Our candle is at an end, let us all in, quiet
And come another time, when we have more light [Exit all]

[Diccon enters: speaks to the audience before the stage]
DICCON: Here is a matter worthy glosing (discussing)
Of Gammer Gurton's needle losing
And a foul piece of work,
A man I think might make a play
And need no word to this they say
Being but half a clerk.
Soft, let me alone. I will take the charge
This matter further to enlarge
Within a time short,
If ye will mark my toils and note
I will give ye leave to cut my throat
If I make not good sport,
Dame Chat, I say, where be ye within?
CHAT: (*joins Diccon before the stage*)
Who have we there maketh such a din?
DICCON: Here is a good fellow maketh no great danger,
CHAT: What, Diccon? Come near, ye be no stranger,
We be fast set at trump, man, hard by the fire, (trump=playing
cards)
Thou shalt set on the king if thou come a little nearer.
DICCON: Nay, nay, there is no tarrying: I must be gone again
But first for you in counsel I have a word or twain. (two)
CHAT: Come hither, Doll. Doll, sit down and play this game,
And as thou sawest me do, see thou do even the same
There are five trumps beside the Queen, ye hindmost you shalt find
her
Take heed of Sim the Glover's wife, she hath an eye behind her,
Now Diccon, say your will.
DICCON: [*indicating something privy to be discussed*]
Nay, soft a little yet,
I would not tell it my sister, the matter is so great,
There I will have you swear by our dear Lady of Bullaine,
S Dunstove, and S. Donnike, with the three Kinges of Kullaine,
That ye shall keep it secret.
CHAT: Gog's bread, that will I do,
As secret as mine own thought, by god and the devil, too.

ACT 2, SCENE 1

DICCON: Here is Gammer Gurton, your neighbor, a sad heavy wight (spirit)

Her goodly fair red cock, at home, was stole this last night.

CHAT: Gog's soul! Her cock with the yellow legs, yet nightly crowded so just?

DICCON: That cock is stolen.

CHAT: What, was he led out of the house roost?

DICCON: I can not tell where the devil he was kept, under key or lock,

But Tib hath tickled in Gammer's ear, that you should steal the cock

CHAT (Enraged) Have I? Strong lies! By bread and salt!

DICCON: What soft, I say, be still.

Say not one word for all this gear.

CHAT: By the mass, that I will,

I will have the young tart by the head, and the old trot by the throat

DICCON: Not one word, Dame Chat, I say, not one word for my coat.

CHAT: (fighting mad)

Shall such a beggar's brawl as it thinkest you make me a thief?

The pocks light on her trots sides, a pestfence and a mischeif

Come out, thou hungry needy witch, O that my nails be short!

DICCON: Gog's bread, woman, hold your peace! This here will else pass sport

I would not for an hundred pound this matter should be known,

That I am author of this tale, or have about it blown

Did ye not swear ye would be ruled before the tale I told?

I said 'ye must all secret keep' and ye said 'sure ye would.'

CHAT: Would you suffer yourself, Diccon, such a sort to revile you

With slanderous words to blot your name, and so to defile you?

DICCON: No, goodwife Chat, I would be loth such drabs should blot my name

But yet ye must so order all, yet Diccon bear no blame.

CHAT: Go to then, what is your reed? Say on your mind, ye shall me rule herein.

DICCON: Godamercye to Dame Chat, in faith thou must the here begin

It is twenty pound to a goose turd, my gammer will not tarry

But hitherward she comes as fast as her legs can her carry,

To brawl with you about her cock, for well I heard Tib say

The cock was roasted in your house, to breakfast yesterday,

And when ye had the carcass eaten, the feathers ye out flung
And Doll, your maid, the legs she hid a foot deep in the dung.

CHAT: (furious) Oh, gracious god! My heart it bursts.

DICCON: Well rule yourself a space

And Gammer Gurton when she commeth anon into this place
Then, to the Queen, let's see tell her your mind and spare not

So shall Diccon blameless be, and then go to I care not.

CHAT: Then, trot, beware her throat, I can abide no longer

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

And Diccon but at your request, I would not stay one hour.

DICCON: Well keep it in til she be here, and then out let it power,

In the meanwhile get you in, and make no words of this

More of this matter within this hour to here you shall not miss

Because I know you are my friend, hide it I could not doubtless

Ye know your harm, see ye be wise about your own business

So fare ye well.

CHAT: Nay, soft, Diccon, and drink, what, Doll, I say

Bring here a cup of the best ale, let's see, come quickly away. (both exit)

ACT 2, SCENE 2

[Diccon re-enters, Gammer Arrives]

DICCON: [aside]

Now this here must forward go, for here my gammer commeth,

Be still a while and say nothing, make here a little roomth.

GAMMER: (distracted)

Good lord, shall never be my luck my needle again to spy?

Alas, the while tis past my help, where tis still it must lie.

DICCON: Now Jesus, Gammer Gurton, what driveth you to this sadness:

I fear me, by my conscience, you will sure fall to madness.

GAMMER: Who is that, what - Diccon? I have lost man fie fie.

DICCON: Mary fie on them yet be worthy, but what should be your trouble?

GAMMER: Alas, the more I think on it, my sorow it waxeth double

My goodly tossing sporiars' needle, I have lost I know not where.

(sporiar=wool spinner)

DICCON: Your needle, woman?

GAMMER: My needle (alas) I might full ill it spare,
As god himself he knoweth never one beside I have.

DICCON: If this be all, good gammer, I warrant you all is saved.

GAMMER: Why know you any tidings which way my needle is gone?

DICCON: Yea that I do, doubtless, as ye shall hear anon,
A see a thing this matter toucheth within these 20 hours,

Even at this gate, before my face, by a neighbor of yours,

She stooped in down, and up she took a needle or a pin:

I durst be sworn it was even yours, by all my mothers kin.

GAMMER: It was my needle, Diccon, I wot, for here even by this post

I sat, what time as I up-start, and so my needle it lost:

Who was it live son? Speak, I pray thee, and quickly tell me that!

DICCON: A subtle queen as any in this Town: your neighbor here,
Dame Chat.

GAMMER: Dame Chat, Diccon, let me be gone, I will thither in post
haste.

DICCON: Take my counsel yet 'for ye go, for fear ye walk in waste,
It is a murrion crafty drab and forward to be pleased,

And ye take not the better way our needle yet ye lose it:

For when she took it up even here before your doors

“What soft, Dame Chat - quoth I - that same is none of yours”

“Avant - quoth she - sir knave, what pratest thou of that I find:

I would ye hadst kissed me I wot where!” - she meant, I know, behind

And home she went as brag, as it had been a body-louse,

And I, after, as bold as it had been, the goodman of the house:

But there and ye had heard her, how she began to scold

The tongue it went on pains, by him that judas sold,

Each other word I was a knave, and you a queen of trots,

Because I spake in your behalf, and said the needle was yours.

GAMMER: (*Angry*)

Gog's bread, and thinks ye callet thus to keep my needle me fro?

(*callet=trot*)

DICCON: Let her alone and she minds none other but even to dress
you so

GAMMER: (*Furious*) By the mass, I will rather spend the coat that is
on my back

Thinks the false queen by such a slight, that I will my needle lack

DICCON: Sleep not you, here I counsel you, but of this take good
heed

Let not be known I told you of it, how well so ever ye speed.

GAMMER: I will in, Diccon, a clean apron to take, and set before me,
And I may my needle once see, I will sure remember thee (exits)

ACT 2 SCENE 3.

DICCON (*to audience*) Here will the sport begin, if these two once
may meet.

My gammer sure intends, will prove scarcely sweet

With staves or with clubs, or else with cobblestones.

Dame Chat, on the other side, if she be far behind

I am right far deceived she is given two it of

He that may tarry by it a while, and that but short

I warrant him trust to it, he shall see all the sport

Into the town will I, my frends to visit there

And hither straight again, to see the end of this here [Exits }

ACT 3, SCENE 1

[*Enter: Gammer: Hodge.*]

GAMMER: How, Hodge, mayst now be glad, I have news to tell thee
I know who has my needle, I trust soon shalt it see

HODGE: The devil thou does, hast heard gammer indeed, or does't
but jest

GAMMER: Tis as true as steel, Hodge.

HODGE: Why, knowest well where didst lose it?

GAMMER: I know who found it and took it up, shalt see 'for it be
long.

HODGE: (*feeling the back of his trousers*)

God's mother dear, if that be true, farwell both nail and thong

But who has it, Gammer, say on: could faine here it disclosed?

GAMMER: That false vixen, that same Dame Chat, that counts herself
so honest.

HODGE: Who told you so?:

GAMMER: That same did Diccon the bedlam, which saw it done.

HODGE: Diccon: it is a vengeable knave, Gammer, tis a bonable
knaveson,

Go to her gammer, see ye not where she stands in her doors

Bid her give you the needle, tis none of hers but yours. (end at stage right)

ACT 3, SCENE 2

[Chat enters at right – they meet at center]

GAMMER: (Boldly but matter of fact)

Dame Chat, I hold pray thee fair, let me have it is mine

I will not this twenty years take one pence that is thine

Therefore give me mine own and let me live beside thee

CHAT: (Furious) Why art thou crept from home hither, to mine own doors to chide me?

Hence, dotting drab, avaunt, or I shall set thee further.

Intends thou and that knave, me in my house to murder?

GAMMER: (moving closer, fists clenched)

Tush! Gape not so on me woman, shalt not yet eat me,

Nor all the friends thou hast, in this shall not intreat me

Mine own goods I will have, and ask thee no believe,

What woman: poor folks must have right, though the thing you agree.

CHAT: (starting to puff chests and point fingers)

Give thee thy right, and hang thee up, with all thy baggers brood!

What wilt thou make me a theif, and say I stole thy good?

GAMMER: I will say nothing (I warrant thee), but that I can prove it well

Thou fet(ch) my good even from my door, I am able this to tell,

CHAT: Did I, old witch, steal ought was thine: how should that thing be known?

GAMMER: I can not tell, but up thou takest it as though it had been thine own,

CHAT: Mary fie on thee, thou old gib, with all my very heart.

GAMMER: Nay fie on thee, you ramp, thou rig, with all that take thy part.

CHAT: A vengeance on those lips yet layeth such things to my charge.

GAMMER: A vengeance on those callats hips, whose conscience is so large

CHAT: (raising fists) Come out, hog!

GAMMER: (raising fists) Come out, dog, and let me have right.

CHAT: Thou arrant witch.

GAMMER: Thou bawdie stitch, I will make thee curse this night.

CHAT: A bag and a wallet.

GAMMER: A cart for a callet.

CHAT: Why weenest (expect) thou thus to prevail,

I hold thee a groat, (coin)

I shall patch thy coat,

GAMMER: Thou would as good kiss my tail:

Thou cat, you rat, you rakes, you jakes - will not shame make ye hide thee?

CHAT: Thou skald, thou bald, thou rotten, you glutton,

I will no longer chide thee

But I will teach thee to keep home.

GAMMER: Wilt thou, drunken beast?

(cat fight starts)

HODGE:

Stick to her, Gammer, take her by the head, I will warrant you this feast.

Smite I say, Gammer,

Bite I say, Gammer,

I trow ye will be keen:

Where be your nails? Claw her by the jaws, pull me out both her eyes, Gog's bones, Gammer, hold up your head,

CHAT (holding off Gammer and threatening Hodge)

I trow, drab, I shall dress thee.

Tarry you, knave, I hold thee a groat, I shall make these hands bless thee

Take you this, old trot, for amends, and learn thy tongue well to tame (smacking Gammer)

And say thou met at this bickering, not thy fellow but thy dame!

(slaps her to the ground)

HODGE: (Acting like he will enter but he is pulling his head back and closing his eyes in defense)

Where is the strong stewed trot, I will bear a trot's mark!

Stand out one's way, that I kill none in the dark

Up, Gammer, and ye be alive, I will fight now for us both,

Come no near me, thou scalded callet, to kill thee I were loth.

CHAT: (threatening Hodge who is circling and punching the air, eyes squinted closed)

Art here again thou hoddy peck (dun crow) , what, Doll, bring me out my spit.

HODGE: I will roast thee with this, by my father's soul, I will conjure that foul spirit: (wants to escape)

Let door stand, Cocke, why comes indeed? Keep door, you knaveson boy!. (flees onto the stage)

CHAT: Stand to it, you dastard, for thine ears, else I teach ye a slavish toil.

HODGE: Gog's wounds, trot, I will make thee avault, take heed, Cocke, pull in the latch! (Cocke mimes)

CHAT: I faith, sir loose breech, had ye tarried, ye should have found your match.

GAMMER: Now were thy throat loosed, thou should pay for all

HODGE: Well said, Gammer, by my soul,

Hoise her, souse her, bounce her, trounce her, pull out her throat bowl

CHAT: (*standing over Gammer*)

Comst behind me, thou withered witch, and I get once on foot

Thou shall pay for all, you old tarlet, I will teach thee what (be)longs to it

Take ye this to make up thy mouth, til time thou come by more (showing her fists)

(Chat stalks out – Hodge sneaks out to help Gammer to her feet, Cocke exits)

HODGE: Up, Gammer, stand on your feet, where is the old tart?

Faith, would I had her by the face, I could rack her callet crown

GAMMER: Ah Hodge, Hodge! Where was thy help, when vixen had me down?

HODGE: By the mass, Gammer, but for my staff I had gone near to spill (ruin) you

I think the harlot had not cared, and I had not come to kill you

But shall we loose our needle thus?

GAMMER: No Hodge I would loth do so.

Thinkest thou I will take that at her hand? No, Hodge, I tell thee: no *HODGE*: I hold yet this fray were well take up, and our own needle at home

It will be my chance else some to kill, wherever it be or whom

GAMMER: We shall make our complaint, fast standing at the bar Where we shall have our complaints heard and get our needle fair.

ACT 3, SCENE 3

[*Enter Bailey, then Gammer, Hodge, Chat.*]

BAILEY: I can perceive none other, I speak it from my heart But either ye are in all fault or else all ye in part

CHAT: What have I stolen from thee or thine: thou ill-favored old trot?

GAMMER: A great deal more (by Gods blest,) then I ever by thee got, That thou knowest well I need not say it.

Yea, master Bailey, there is a thing, you know not on may hap

This drab she keeps away my good, ye devil he might her snare I pray you that I might have, a right action on her.

CHAT: Have I thy good, old filth, or any such old sows?

I am as true, I would thou knew, as skin between thy brows

GAMMER: Many a truer hath been hanged, though you escape the danger

CHAT: Thou shalt answer by gods pity, for this thy foul slander

BAILEY: Why, what can ye charge her withal? to say so, ye do not well.

GAMMER: Mary a vengeance to her heart, that sow has stolen my needle.

CHAT: Thy needle old witch, how so? It were alms thy skull to knock So didst thou say, the other day, that I had stolen thy cock

And roasted him to my breakfast, which shall not be forgotten,

The devil pull out thy lying tongue, and teeth that be so rotten

GAMMER: Give me my needle, as for my cock, I would be very loth That I would here tell he should hang, on thy false faith and troth.

BAILEY: Keep ye content a while, see that your tongues ye hold, Me thinks you should remember, this is no place to scold,

Who has told you that Dame Chat, your fine needle had?

GAMMER: To name you sir the party, I would not be very glad.

BAILEY: Yea but we must needs hear it, and therefore say it boldly.

GAMMER: Such one as told the tale, full soberly and coldly,

What time this drunken gossip, my fair long needle up took

Diccon, master, the Bedlam, I am very sure ye know him.

BAILEY: A false knave by Gods pity, ye were but a fool to trust him, I durst adventure well the price of my best cap,

That when the end is known, all will turn to a jape, {joke}

Told he not you that besides she stole your cock that tide?

GAMMER: No master no indeed, for then he should have lied,
My cock is, I thank Christ, safe and well and fine

CHAT: Yea but that ragged colt, that trot, that Tib of thine
Said plainly thy cock was stolen, and in my house was eaten,
That lying tart is lost, that she is not swinged and beaten,
And yet for all my good name, it were a small amends

I pick not this gear - hearest thou - out of my fingers ends
But he that heard it told me, who thou of late didst name
Diccon, whom all men know, it was the very same.

BAILEY: This is the case, you lost your needle about the doors
And she answers once again, she has no cock of yours,
Thus in your talk and action, from that you do intend,
She is whole five mile wide, from that she doth defend.

Will you say she hath your cock?

GAMMER:

No merry sir that I will not,

BAILEY: Will you confess her needle?

CHAT:

Will I? No, sir, I will not

BAILEY: Then there lieth all the matter.

GAMMER:

Soft, master, by the way,

Ye know she could do little, and she could not say nay.

BAILEY: Yea but he that made one he - about your cock stealing,
Will not stick to make another, what time lies be in dealing
Tween, the end will prove, this brawl did first arise,
Upon no other ground, but only Diccon's lies.

Sir knave, make haste Diccon were here, fetch him wherever he be
[Hodge goes to get Diccon]

CHAT: Fie on the villain, fie, fie, yet makes us thus agree,

GAMMER: Fie on him knave, with all my heart, now fie, and fie
again.

Lo here he commeth at hand, belike he was not far

[Diccon/Hodge Enter]

BAILEY: Diccon, here be two or three, thy company cannot spare.

DICCON: God bless you, and you may be blest so many all at once
BAILEY: Nay soft, thou must not play, ye knave, and have this
language to

Confess the truth as I shall ask, and cease a while to fable.

And for thy fault I promise the, thy handling shall be reasonable
Hast thou not made a lie or two, to set these two by the ears?

DICCON: What if I have? Five hundred such have I seen within these
seven years:

I am sorry for nothing else but that I see not the sport

Which was between them when they met, as they themselves report
BAILEY: Without repentance waste is made.

HODGE:

Nay by all Hallowes,

His punishment if I may judge, shall be naught else but the gallows

BAILEY: I grant him worthy punishment, but in no wise so great

GAMMER: It is a shame I tell you plain, for such false knaves intreat
He has almost undone us all, that is as true as steel:

And yet for all this great ado, I am never the nearer my needle.

BAILEY: Canst you not say anything to that, Diccon, with least or
most?

DICCON: Yea mary sir, thus much I can say well, the needle is lost,

BAILEY: Nay canst not thou tell which way, that needle may be
found?

DICCON: No, by my fai(th), sir, though I might have a hundred
pound.

BAILEY: If ye to me consent, to amend this heavy chance,
I will injoin him here, some open kind of pen-ance.

Of this condition, where ye know my fee is twenty pence
For the bloodshed, I am agreed with you here to dispence,
Ye shall go quiet, so that ye grant, the matter now to run,
To end with mirth among us all even as it was begun.

How sayest thou, Diccon, art content this shall on me depend?

DICCON: Go to, Master Bailey, say on your mind, I know ye are my
friend.

BAILEY: Then mark ye well, to recompence this thy former action
Because thou hast offended all, to make them satisfaction,

Before their faces, here kneel down, and as I shall thee teach

For thou shalt take on oath, of Hodges leather breeche

First for Dame Chat, upon paine of her curse,

Where she will pay for all, thou never draw thy purse,

And when ye meet at one pot, she shall have the first pull,

And thou shalt never offer her the cup, but it be full

For Gammer Gurton's sake, again sworn shalt thou be

To help her to her needle again if it do lie in thee

And likewise be bound: by the vurtue of that

To be of good bearing to Gib, her great cat

Last of all for Hodge, the other to scan,
 Thou shalt never take him, for fine gentleman.
HODGE: Come on fellow Diccon, I shall be even with thee now.
 (Hodge moves to trade his trousers with Diccon, Diccon draws back in horror)
BAILEY: Thou wilt not stick to do this, Diccon, I trow?
DICCON: No, by my father's skin, my hand down I lay it!
 Look: as I have promised, I will not deny it,
 But Hodge, take good heed now, thou do not besoil me.
 [*Gives Hodge a good blow on the buttocke. Hodge yelps and dances away, gripping his rump*]
HODGE: Gogs heart thou false villain dost thou bite me?
BAILEY: What, Hodge, doth he hurt thee 'for ever he begin?
 (Hodge is still feeling around his backside)
HODGE: He thrust me into the buttock, with a bodkin or a pin!!!
 (Pauses in the act, head to one side)
 I say, Gammer, Gammer?
GAMMER: How now, Hodge, how now?
HODGE: Gods malt, Gammer Gurton.
GAMMER: Thou art mad, I trow.
HODGE: Will you see the devil, Gammer?
GAMMER: The devil son, god bless us.
HODGE: I would I were hanged, Gammer.
GAMMER: Mary, so ye might dress us.
HODGE: I have it, by the mass, Gammer!
 (Draws a huge needle out and holds it up)
GAMMER: What? Not my needle, Hodge?
HODGE: Your needle, Gammer, your needle. (Moves to center front, holding needle aloft in awe)
GAMMER: No, fie, dost but dodge. (Moves over beside him – looks at it in awe)
HODGE: I have found your needle, Gammer, here in my hand be it
GAMMER: For all the loves on earth, Hodge, let me see it. (He lowers it for her inspection)
HODGE: Soft, Gammer. (She places her hand on his shoulder affectionately)
GAMMER: Good, Hodge.
HODGE: Soft I say, tarry a while.
GAMMER: Nay, sweet Hodge, say truth, and do not me begile.

HODGE: I am sure on it I warrant you -- it goes no more a-stray
GAMMER: Hodge, when I speak so fair: wilt still say me nay
HODGE: Go near the light, Gammer, this well in faith good luck: I was almost undone -- twas so far in my buttock
GAMMER: Tis mine own dear needle, Hodge, sincerely I wot
HODGE: Am I not a good son, Gammer, am I not?
GAMMER: Christs blessing light on thee, hast made me forever
HODGE: I knew that I must find it, else I would 'ave had it never.
CHAT: (*coming near to look at needle over their shoulders*)
 By my troth, Gossip Gurton, I am even as glad
 As though I mine own self as good a turn had:.
BAILEY: And I, by my conscience, to see it so come forth,
 Rejoice so much at it, as three needles be worth.
DICCON: Nor I, much the gladder for all this noise:
 Yet say "gramercy, Diccon", for springing of the game?
GAMMER: Grammercy, Diccon, twenty times, oh how glad I am,
 If that it could do so much, your masterdom to come hither,
 Bailey, Hodge, goodwife Chat, and Diccon together:
 I have but one halfpenny, as far as I know it,
 And I will not rest this night, till I bestow it.
 If ever ye love me, let us go in and drink
DICCON: Soft sirs, take us with you, the company shall be the more,
 As proud comes behind they say, as any goes before,
 But now my good masters since we must be gone
 And leave you behind us, here all alone:
 Since at our last ending thus merry we be,
 For Gammer Gurton's needle sake, let us have applauditie.
 (Company leaves in a group, still worshipping the needle in awe)