

Master Pierre Pathelin

Anonymous

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Narrator: Scene One. We begin in the home of Master Pierre Pathelin and his wife, Guillemette, who are discussing their parlous financial circumstances.

Pathelin: By St Mary, Guillemette, no matter what tricks I try, we can't seem to save money. There was a time when I had clients...

Guillemette: By Our Lady of the law, you're not considered as wise as you once were. I remember when everyone wanted you to win their cases. Now you're just a clientless counsellor.

Pathelin: I don't say this to brag, but in this whole area, there isn't anyone more capable, except the Mayor.

Guillemette: Yes, but he studied a great deal to be a scholar.

Pathelin: Whose case fails, if I really put in the effort? Even if my education isn't the finest, and I only had a little schooling, I can chant along with our priest just as well as if I were Charlemagne in Spain!

Guillemette: But what good is that to us? Absolutely nothing. We're nearly starving, our clothing is threadbare and full of holes, and say what you will, we've no idea where we'll get new ones. What good is all your learning for that?

Pathelin: Be quiet! On my conscience, if put my mind to work, I'll find a way to get some dresses and hats! If it please God, things will

get better and be back on track within the hour! If I really apply myself to my work, they'll never see my equal.

Guillemette: By Saint James they won't! When it comes to deception, you are the master.

Pathelin: By God, at *law*!

Guillemette: By my faith! at *cheating*. I know what I'm saying, for though you've neither education nor common sense, you are held as one of the slyest charlatans in the parish!

Pathelin: There are none so skilled at practicing law as I!

Guillemette: God in Heaven, at deception! At least that's what they say.

Pathelin: They say that of all lawyers- those in their silks and satins, who claim to be lawyers, but they're no more than me! Now, let's leave all this nonsense and have peace. I think I'll go to the market.

Guillemette: The market?

Pathelin: Yes, [*singing*] "Going to market, my pretty maid!" Surely you don't mind if I bargain for some cloth, or some other thing which we might need for the household? All our clothes are worthless!

Guillemette: You haven't any money, not a denier. What will you do?

Pathelin: Ah, my lovely lady, some things you don't need to know! Cloth for both of us, or else I'm a liar! Which colour would you prefer? A greenish grey? Brussels cloth? Anything else? I need to know.

Guillemette: Whatever you can get. Beggars can't be choosers.

Pathelin: [*gesturing to measure yardage*] Two and a half for you, for me, three... no, four...

Guillemette: That's counting on a lot- who will trust *you*?

Pathelin: They'll give it to me, and I'll pay them on the Day of Judgement! Sooner than that it will not be!

Guillemette: Go on, my dear, or some other fool will get there first!

Pathelin: I'll buy either gray or green. And for a coat, Guillemette, I'll need three quarters of something dark, or maybe a yard...

Guillemette: God bless me! Go on... and if anyone offers you a drink, you should take it...!

Pathelin: Take care of everything here. [*waves goodbye*]

Guillemette: Ye gods! What merchant...? Pray God he will get away with it!

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Narrator: Scene Two, as Pierre arrives at the shop of Guillaume, the village clothier.

Pathelin: Is this the right place?... I don't know... Yes, there he is, he's busy with his cloth. God be with you, there!

Guillaume: And God bless you, sir!

Pathelin: Now, God bless me, I am so glad to see you! Are you healthy and strong, Guillaume?

Guillaume: Yes, by God.

Pathelin: [*shaking his hand*] There!... How are you?

Guillaume: Just fine, truly. At your service. And you?

Pathelin: By St Peter the Apostle! I am your servant. So you've good cheer?

Guillaume: Of course. But you must know, us merchants, we can't always do just as we please!

Pathelin: How is business going? Keeping you with enough to graze?

Guillaume: Before God, my good sir, I don't know but I suppose I'm making hay!

Pathelin: What a learned man he was- your father- I pray that God has his soul! By our Lady, I'd heard you looked like him. What a good and wise merchant he was! You do look just like him, by God, the very image. If ever God gave a creature mercy, may he give it to your father's soul!

Guillaume: Amen! By His grace, and to us too, when it pleases Him.

Pathelin: By my faith, he often foretold the times we now live in. I think of that often. He was one of the good....

Guillaume: Please do sit down, sir. I should have asked you sooner, I do beg your pardon!

Pathelin: It's all right, I'm fine! Your father told me that I would see great wonders. I swear, your ears, your nose, mouth, eyes, no child ever resembled his father more! What a crooked chin! You're his exact image! If anyone ever told your mother that you were not your father's son, your face is an obvious rebuke! I don't think nature in her works ever formed two such perfectly identical faces. You are his carbon copy, of one matter and one order, not a single hair's difference. No, sir, good Laurance, your lovely aunt, has she died?

Guillaume: Oh, no, sir!

Pathelin: I always thought her beautiful and great, a most upright, graceful woman, by the precious Mother of God. You resemble her, as if you were both made out of snow. In this country there is, it seems to me, no family that resembles one another more. By God the Father, the more I look at you, the more I see your father. You resemble him as completely as two drops of water, without doubt! What a gentleman he was, such a good man! And so quick to give credit to whoever wanted it. God have mercy on him! I am so sorry he is gone, he always made me laugh until I cried. Pray Jesus, that the worst of the world was more like him, then we wouldn't fight and steal from one another, that's a fact.... This piece of cloth here is well made! How soft and delicate it is!

Guillaume: It is made entirely from the wool of my own sheep.

Pathelin: Well! What a wise businessman you are! Your father all over again. And you're always busy, earning such a good living.

Guillaume: What else is there to do? If one wants to live, one must work and sweat.

Pathelin: [*gestures to another piece of fabric*] Is this made of wool? It's as strong as the cordwainers' leather!

Guillaume: It's a very good piece from Rouen, very well made, I assure you.

Pathelin: Truly, I am captivated by it. Though I had no intention of buying cloth, by the Lord's Passion, when I came here. I have set aside eighty *ecus*, to pay off an annuity, but you'll easily get twenty or thirty of them. I can see that clearly, because the colour... I like it so much it's almost painful!

Guillaume: *Ecus*? Would it be possible for those you owe to accept less?

Pathelin: Oh yes, if I should ask. It's all just money to me... What cloth is this? Truly, the more I see it, the more I am in awe of it. I must have a coat, and my wife as well.

Guillaume: Of course, cloth is as expensive as cream! You may have some if you wish... you won't get much for ten or twenty francs.

Pathelin: Don't worry, it's worth it!... Besides, I have some money that no one knows about.

Guillaume: Praise God! By Saint Peter, that wouldn't displease me at all.

Pathelin: In brief, I'm very interested in this cloth... I really must have some.

Guillaume: Well, first you have to decide how much you want. Everything is at your command, whatever is here. I could let you take it all, even if you hadn't a penny.

Pathelin: I know well how kind you are!

Guillaume: Would you like some of this pale blue?

Pathelin: How much will it cost me per yard? Of course I must give God his penny, first, as is right and proper. "Let no bargain be made ere God's share is paid". [*puts a coin in a collection box*]

Guillaume: By God, you *are* a good man! I'm very glad about it! Do you want my final say?

Pathelin: Yes.

Guillaume: For you, only twenty-four sous a yard!

Pathelin: No way! Twenty-four sous? Holy Mary!

Guillaume: It's at cost to me, that's why. I'm sorry, but if you have it....

Pathelin: Blast, it's just too much.

Guillaume: You don't know how expensive cloth is! So many of the sheep died in the winter, because of the terrible cold.

Pathelin: Twenty sous, twenty sous!

Guillaume: I swear to you that I can't charge less than twenty-four. But wait for Saturday market and see how much the price rises! Wool now costs me eight pence, used to cost me four.

Pathelin: Then there's no debate. If this is how it goes, I won't try to bargain. Let us measure it.

Guillaume: How many yards do you need to have?

Pathelin: That's easy to know. What's the width?

Guillaume: Brussels width.

Pathelin: Three yards for me, and for her- she's tall- two and a half. That's six yards... Oh, no, how daft of me.

Guillaume: Only half a yard is needed to make six precisely.

Pathelin: I'll take six straight away. I need a hat anyway.

Guillaume: Take that [*hands him an end*], we'll measure it. Without skimping... one, and two, and three, and four, and five, and six.

Pathelin: By Saint Peter's belly, six exactly!

Guillaume: Shall I measure back again?

Pathelin: Nay, there's always a little loss or gain in merchandise. How much is that together?

Guillaume: Let's see... twenty-four sous each, for six yards, comes to nine francs.

Pathelin: Hmm, that's six gold pieces?

Guillaume: Perfectly!

Pathelin: Now, sir, will you trust me, until you come for them? You don't really have to take it as credit, you will take them at my house, in gold or in coin.

Guillaume: By Our Lady! I'm not sure I want to go so far out of my way.

Pathelin: You haven't said a single word, by St Giles, that isn't the gospel truth. It's very well said, that you wouldn't want to go out of your way. But you've never before had any reason to come and drink in my house, and this time you shall have a drink there!

Guillaume: And, by Saint John, I hardly do anything other than drink with my customers. But it's poor practice to trust credit on a first sale like this.

Pathelin: Are you worried I'll drag you down? When I offer you gold instead of common coin? By God, you'll even eat the goose my wife is roasting!

Guillaume: He's driving me nuts! Go ahead, then, leave the cloth here and I will bring it along when I come.

Pathelin: Nothing doing! Would I burden you with that? Not in the least. I'll tuck it under my arm.

Guillaume: It is only fit and proper that I bring it.

Pathelin: By St Mary Magdalene, don't worry about it! I can tuck it under my arm, it will make me a beautiful hump. There! And there'll be very good ale, and fun and games at my place, while you're there.

Guillaume: Please give me my money as soon as I get there?

Pathelin: Of course! Ah, no, not until you've had your meal. I'm glad I haven't enough money on me to pay, at least now you will come and try my wine! Your late father, when he'd pass by, always used to call out, "Hey, friend!" or "What's going on?" or "How are you?" But you rich people don't give a hoot for poor men!

Guillaume: I'm poorer than you!

Pathelin: Even so. Farewell, farewell! We'll meet later at my house, and we'll have a drink, on my word!

Guillaume: We will. Go ahead, as long as you pay me the gold!

Pathelin: Gold? What then? Devil take me if I fail to do so! [*he and Guillaume turn away from one another*] Gold! Devil hang him. He wouldn't sell to me at my price, it was his. But it will be paid at *my* price! Does he need gold? He can run all the way to Pamplona before he'll be paid!

Guillaume: The money he promised won't see the sun or moon all year. There's no buyer where there isn't a more clever seller! [*laughing*] He'll pay twenty-four sous a yard! For a cloth which isn't even worth twenty!

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Narrator: Scene Three: back at the Pathelins' house, Pierre arrives home with his fabric trophy.

Pathelin: Guess what I have!

Guillemette: What?

Pathelin: What became of your old dress, darling?

Guillemette: It's just as it was. What do you want to do with it?

Pathelin: Nothing, nothing! I said I'd get fabric and [*pulls out the bolt of cloth*] is this good cloth or what?

Guillemette: Holy Lady! By my salvation, there's been some chicanery! Where did you get it? Unless you've had some windfall, who will pay for it?

Pathelin: Who do you think it will be? By Saint John! He is already paid! The merchant who sold it to me isn't mad, my beautiful lass. I fleeced him white, the great ass!

Guillemette: So, how much did it cost you?

Pathelin: I don't owe anything! He's paid! What more do you want?

Guillemette: Paid! You've no money, not a penny, not a denier....

Pathelin: Oh, yes, by my blood, madam, I did have one Paris penny.

Guillemette: Come on, then, you've made a good deal. Don't hide anything: I know you and your ways. You'll have made some note, given your word. You'll have had to give something as security, and when the debt comes due, they'll take everything we have!

Pathelin: It cost me a penny.

Guillemette: *Benedicite*, that can't be!

Pathelin: I give you this to ponder: if he wants more, he'll not have it; I'll never give him more, no matter how he sings for it.

Guillemette: And who is he?

Pathelin: It's Guillaume, surnamed Joceaume, since you want to know.

Guillemette: But howdid you get it for a single penny? What was your game?

Pathelin: The penny was for God- if I had said, "Let's drink to seal our bargain", the money would have remained with me. But still, it was well worked. God will have to share the money, if He wants some of it, because that is all either of them will have from me, no matter how much they fuss.

Guillemette: How did he let you have the credit, if he's such a loud, difficult man?

Pathelin: By the beautiful Saint Mary, I spoke so much about his noble lineage that he almost gave it to me! I told him that his late father was such a gentleman. "Ah, brother," I said, "what good parentage you have! You are," I say, "of the noblest lineage around here!" But before God, I confess, they are the most disreputable, ugly people in this town- maybe even in the entire kingdom! "Ha," I say to my friend Guilluame, "how much you resemble your dear father, you're just like him!" And at the same time, I'm speaking about the cloth. And then I say, "Holy Mary, how humbly you speak of your wares." But you'd rip out the teeth of his villainous porpoise of a father, or his baboon of a son, before he'd offer credit. But, finally, I stayed so long and spoke so well that he gave me six yards.

Guillemette: And you never have to pay him?

Pathelin: Weren't you listening? Pay him? Like hell I will!

Guillemette: I remember the fable of the raven, who sat on a branch five or six feet high, with a wedge of cheese in his beak. There came a fox who saw it, and thought, "How shall I get it?" Then he began to speak to the raven, dissembling- how beautiful his plumage, and "your song is so full of beautiful melody". And the raven, in his stupidity, hearing his song thus praised, opened his beak to sing. And the cheese fell to the ground, and Master Fox bit it in two with his good teeth, and won it! Just as it is, I vow, with this cloth: you grabbed it by flattery, caught it by using such lovely language, like the fox with the cheese, you took it by cleverness.

Pathelin: He's to come and eat goose, but here is what we will have to do. I am sure he will come and bray for his money immediately. I've got a good plan: I'll go lie down, like a sick man, on my bed, and when he comes, you will say, "Hush, speak low!" and moan and make a long face, "Alas! Do you know, he is still ill, after two months, or six weeks!" And if he tells you, That's all nonsense, he came to my shop today, reply, "Alas! This isn't time for you to be laughing or joking!" Let him be confused, for that's all he'll get from us.

Guillemette: By my very soul, I will do this very well. But if you fail to convince him and you're hauled back into court, the justice will rebuke you and it will be twice as bad as last time!

Pathelin: Now, peace, I know well what I'm doing! You must do this as I say.

Guillemette: Remember the Saturday, for God's sake, that you were put in the stocks. You know how everyone jeered and called you out for a liar.

Pathelin: Now leave this nonsense! He will come, any time now. The cloth must remain with us! I'm going to go to bed.

Guillemette: Go on then.

Pathelin: But don't laugh!

Guillemette: Not when he gets here! I'll cry my eyes out.

Pathelin: We must both be firm in our parts, so that he doesn't suspect a thing.

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Narrator: Scene Four. Guillaume is leaving his fabric shop and making his way to the Pathelin house for the dinner- and the money- that he was promised.

Guillaume: I think it's time for me to go and have a drink, to get going. Ha! No, I won't, I must drink, and eat, at Master Pierre Pathelin's house. By Saint Mathelin, I'll get my money, as well as some plum dining! At the very least, it won't cost me anything else. After all, I can't sell anything more now. [*knocks on the door*] Master Pierre?

Guillemette: Alas, sir! If you want to say anything, speak lower!

Guillame: God save you, lady!

Guillemette: Quieter!

Guillaume: What's the matter?

Guillemette: Bless me....

Guillaume: Where is he?

Guillemette: Where should he be?

Guillaume: Who?

Guillemette: Alas, that's poorly spoken, sir; where is he? God, by his grace, knows he stays where he is, the poor man, a whole week, without leaving....

Guillaume: But who...?

Guillemette: Forgive me, I dare not speak so loud; I think he's resting; he's a bit weary. Alas! he is so exhausted, the poor man...

Guillaume: Who?

Guillemette: Master Pierre.

Guillaume: What! hasn't he just been to buy six yards of cloth from me?

Guillemette: Who, him?

Guillaume: Less than half of a quarter of an hour ago! God spare me! I'm staying far too long here. Now, without further foolishness, my money?

Guillemette: Stop joking. This is no time to laugh about things

Guillaume: My money! Are you crazy? I need nine francs.

Guillemette: Ha! Guillaume, you don't need to mock me. Go prank your coquettes, or anyone else you want to joke with!

Guillaume: I disown God if I am not owed nine francs!

Guillemette: Alas, sir, not everyone is as eager to laugh as you are, nor to gossip.

Guillaume: Please, I beg you, I don't wish to trouble you! But for the love of... Please send Master Pierre out to me.

Guillemette: Ill luck for your future! Must this go on all day?

Guillaume: Is this not the house of Master Pierre Pathelin?

Guillemette: Yes. By Saint Mathelin's malady, you are unkind. Speak low!

Guillaume: Devil take it! Don't I dare ask for what is mine?

Guillemette: God help me! Speak low, you don't want to wake him up!

Guillaume: How "low"? Whisper in your ear, speak in the depths of a well, or in the cellar!

Guillemette: By God, you keep speaking drivel! But that's always your way.

Guillaume: Devil take it all! You want me to speak "low", but just pay me and it won't matter; I won't be here any longer to argue. It is a fact that Master Pierre took six yards of cloth today.

Guillemette: What is this? Will you go on all day? Devil take it! Agh, what do you mean, "took"? Ha, may he who lies be hanged! That poor man is in such a state that he hasn't left his bed for a fortnight! Do you really think what you say is true? What's wrong with you? You will leave my house, because, by God's suffering, you weary me!

Guillaume: You told me to speak quietly, but holy mother, you are screaming!

Guillemette: It is you, by my soul, who only speaks in noise!

Guillaume: Look, so that I can leave just give me....

Guillemette: Speak quietly, will you!

Guillaume: You'll wake him yourself! You speak four times louder than I bloody well do! I demand you give me my money!

Guillemette: In heaven's name, are you drunk? Or out of your wits? By God the Father!

Guillaume: Drunk?! May St Peter curse you! What a thing to ask!

Guillemette: Please, lower your voice!

Guillaume: I ask you, by Saint George, payment for six yards of cloth, lady....

Guillemette: I'll give you 'payment'... And who did you give it to?

Guillaume: To him.

Guillemette: He's in a fine state to need cloth! Alas, he can't even move! He has no need of a new gown, he'll never wear one again, only his eternal shroud, he'll only leave the house feet first....

Guillaume: Has this happened since this morning? Because I spoke to him and he was fine.

Guillemette: Your voice is so loud, do speak lower, for charity!

Guillaume: It is you, by God, who's likely to bloody wake him up! By God's blood, this is such a pain! Will someone just pay me? So I can leave! By God, every time I offer credit I end up having to do all this extra work!

Narrator: from the upstairs of the house, in his bed, we hear Pathelin call out feebly.

Pathelin: Guillemette? A little rose-water! Life me up, help me sit up! Tut, who was I talking to? The water jug! A drink! Rub my feet!

Guillaume: I hear him!

Guillemette: Yes, even so.

Pathelin: Ha, naughty girl! Come on, did I make you open these windows? Come and cover me! Stay away from these people in mourning black! *Marama, carmari, carmara*. Bring them to me, bring them!

Guillemette: What's the matter? How you behave! Are you out of your senses?

Pathelin: You don't see what I smell! There's a monk in black who flies! Take him, give him a stole... To the cat, to the cat! How it rises!

Guillemette: And what is this? Aren't you ashamed? Oh, god, he's all stirred up!

Pathelin: These physicians killed me with these broths that they made me drink; and yet you have to believe them; they can mould us like wax.

Guillemette: Alas! Come and see him, good sir, he is so very patient in his suffering.

Guillaume: Has he truly become ill since returning from the market?

Guillemette: From the market?

Guillaume: By Saint John, exactly that! I know that he was there- for I gave him that fabric on credit. Master Pierre, I need my money!

Pathelin: Ha! Doctor John. They were harder than stone- I shit two little turds, black, round like balls. Do I need another enema?

Guillaume: How should I know? What do I have to do with such things? I need my nine francs, or six crowns!

Pathelin: Those three little pieces- do you call them pills? They hurt my jaws. Ugh, there is no more bitter thing! For God's sake, don't make me take any more, Doctor John, they made everything come back up.

Guillaume: No, for my father's sake, my nine francs haven't been returned.

Guillemette: People who are so tiresome should be hanged by the neck. Go away, for the sake of the devil, since it can't be for God's sake!

Guillaume: By the God who gave me birth, I will have my cloth, as sure as I'm standing, or my nine francs.

Pathelin: And does my urine tell you that I should die? For God! Make sure he doesn't stay! Let me not die!

Guillemette: Go away! Isn't it wrong to make him suffer so?

Guillaume: God damn- bless- you all! Six yards of fabric now! Tell me, by your faith, do you think it is right that I should lose them?

Pathelin: Could you clear up my shit, Doctor John? It is so very hard that I don't know if I will survive when I sit on the close stool.

Guillaume: I need nine francs right away, or by Saint Peter of Rome....

Guillemette: Alas! This man is suffering so, how can you be so rude? You can clearly see that he thinks you're the physician. Alas, the poor soul has had such bad luck, eleven weeks he has been ill, the poor man...

Guillaume: By God's blood! I don't know how this illness happened to him because he came to my shop today and we bargained together.

At the very least, that's what I thought. Otherwise I don't know what happened!

Guillemette: By our lady, my good sir, your memory is failing you. Why don't you go and rest a while? Besides, many people might say that you came here to see me! Go on, the doctor will be here soon, and I don't want anyone to get the wrong impression about things.

Guillaume: I'm furious! What do I care what anyone thinks? By God, I still think he... and don't you have a goose cooking?

Guillemette: Why, sir, that's not very good food for the sick! Eat your own goose, don't come to my house and mock us! In my opinion, you're taking too many liberties!

Guillaume: Please don't be offended, I did firmly believe... again, by the holy sacrament of God... or the Devil... But I know what I saw... [exits] I know very well that I definitely had six yards of fabric, all in one piece, but this woman has completely undone my understanding and reason... Did he really get them? No, he can't have done!... Yet I have seen that he is near death, or he's faking it... Yes, he definitely had the cloth in his hands, and tucked it under his arm, by the beautiful Saint Mary!... No! I don't know what I'm thinking. Was I dreaming, or did I give my cloth away while I was asleep? But I don't give credit to anyone, so by my judgement, that wouldn't happen... but he bloody well got them! But, no, dammit, he didn't!.. What am I coming to? Yes, by Our Lady's blood, misfortune to my body and soul if I can tell who came off better or worse, between them or me! I just can't make sense of it! [leaves the house]

Pathelin: Has he gone?

Guillemette: Hush! I'm listening. He's muttering so, he's furious about his loss.

Narrator: Guillaume exits hastily towards his shop.

Pathelin: Isn't it time to get up? We did well with that!

Guillemette: I don't know if he'll come back. No, don't move yet! Our deed would be completely undone if he found you up.

Pathelin: Saint George! He's so suspicious, but what a good job we did! This joke fit him better than a crucifix on a church!

Guillemette: The villainous old shark took the bait as if it were a piece of bacon! That's well, he doesn't even give at church on Sundays!

Pathelin: For God's sake, no laughing! If he came back, it would do such harm! I do think he will come back.

Guillemette: By my oath, you can stay serious if you want, but I can't!

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Narrator: Scene Five. Guillaume once again prepares to depart from his shop and return to the Pathelins' to try to retrieve either his fabric or his money. Pathelin remains, dramatically, in his bed.

Guillaume: And, by the holy sun that shines, I will return to that idiot lawyer's house, no matter what anyone says. Dear God, that man would swindle his own parents and relatives! Now, by Saint Peter, he has my cloth, that false deceiver, I gave it to him right here!

Guillemette: When I remember the face he made when looking at you, I laugh! He was so adamant in asking....

Pathelin: Now peace, peace! I'm glad I didn't spoil it. But if he happens to come back and hear you, we might as well bury ourselves, he'd be so harsh.

Guillaume: This lawyer is as mercurial as three lessons and three psalms! Does he take us all for fools? He does, by God! He's as hangable as a branch! He has my fabric, I am certain! [*knocks on the Pathelins' door*] Hello! Where are you?

Guillemette: Oh my oath, he has heard me! He seems to be raving!

Pathelin: I will pretend I am dreaming. Go on.

Guillemette: [*opens the door*] How you scream!

Guillaume: By God, you were laughing? You've got my money!

Guillemette: Holy Mary! What do you think I have to laugh about? No one could be sadder! He's fading away, you've never heard such a storm, such a frenzy. He's hallucinating. He dreams, he sings, and then muddles through so many languages, and mixes them up. He won't live half an hour. I love him, so I laugh and cry together.

Guillaume: I'm not laughing or crying. I tell you briefly, I have to be paid.

Guillemette: For what? Are you misguided? Are you going to begin all that again?

Guillaume: I have not yet learned to be paid in words, when I sell my cloth. Are you trying to convince me that bladders are lanterns?

Pathelin: Soon! The queen of guitars! Suddenly, she approached me... I know well that she gave birth to twenty-four guitars, children of the Abbot of Inverneaux; I must be his friend.

Guillemette: Alas, think of God the Father, my dear, not the father of guitars!

Guillaume: What sort of nonsense is this?... But as soon as I am paid, in gold or in coin, for my cloth which you took....

Guillemette: Devil take you, you've already had your doubts once, must you make him suffer more?

Guillaume: Do you know what's going on, lady? By God, I don't know how you think I can be mistaken! What should be done is, either I am paid or you are hanged! What harm do I do you if I come here to ask for what's mine? What? By Saint Peter of Rome....!

Guillemette: Alas! How well you torment this man! I can see clearly, in your face, that you're an idiot. If I had help, sinner that I be, I would kill you! You're utterly mad!

Guillaume: I'm mad because I don't have my money!

Guillemette: What a way to speak of yourself! *Benedicite!* Quick, cross yourself!

Guillaume: I'll feel better if I never again sell cloth on credit! [*noise from Pathelin*] What a sick man!

Pathelin: [in Pig Latin] Other-may of Od-gay, owned-cray in eaven-hay, ay-bay ay-may aith-fay, I ish-way oo-tay oh-gay cross-ay uh-they ee-say, or I renounce-ray Od-gay! Od-gay's elly-bay, at-thay an-may eels-stay and ivs-gay othing-nay in etern-ray. On't-day ing-ray the ell-bay, et-lay ee-may ap-nay. On't-day et-lay im-hay eek-spay to ee-may of oney-may!

{Mother of God, crowned in heaven, by my faith, I wish to go across the sea, or I renounce God! God's belly, that man steals and gives nothing in return. Don't ring the bell, let me nap! Don't let him speak to me of money!}

Guillemette: He had an uncle from Limousin, the brother of his beautiful aunt; this is what made him speak in Limousinois dialect, I'm sure.

Guillaume: The Devil, he sneaked out of my shop with my cloth under his arm!

Pathelin: [in bubble talk] Cu-bum ibin, swee-beet may-bade, wha-but du-buzz tha-bat ga-bang a-buv scow-boun-drebels wabant? Ge-bet ba-back, ebee-vibil nay-baves! Hubu-ree-bee, I-by wabant to-boo bee-bee a pre-beast! May-bay the-buh debbe-vible bee-bee pub-art above the-buh a-bayn-che-bent pre-beast-hoo-bood! Aband may-bay the-buh pre-beasts labaff whe-ben they-bay shou-bould bee-bee say-bay-ibing mabass! {Come in, sweet maid, what does that gang of scoundrels want? Get back, evil knaves! Hurry, I want to be a priest! May the devil be part of the ancient priesthood! And may the priests laugh when they should be saying mass!}

Guillemette: Alas! Alas! The hour is approaching! Let him have his last sacrament!

Guillaume: But how can he speak Picardian dialect properly? Where is this absurdity coming from?

Guillaume: His mother was from Picardy, that's why he's speaking it now.

Pathelin: Where do you come from, you fool? [*babbles like the Swedish Chef, incoherently, under the discussion between Guillaume and Guillemette*]

Guillaume: What is this? Will he never stop babbling in various languages? If he'd at least give me my money, I'd leave!

Guillemette: By God's anguish, you tire me! You're the most peculiar man. What do you want? I don't know how you can be so stubborn!

Pathelin: [*continues to babble, momentarily louder, like the Swedish Chef*]

Guillaume: How can he handle talking so much? He's losing his mind!

Guillemette: The man who taught him in school was Norman, so it happens that now it's the end, he's remembering it! He's leaving us!

Guillaume: Ah, holy Mary! This is the worst madness I've ever seen! I would never have doubted that he had been at the market today!

Guillemette: You truly thought so?

Guillaume: By Saint James, I did. But now I see the opposite. Alas, for God's sake, hear him! He fades fast! How he gurgles! But what the hell is he talking about? Holy Lady! How he babbles! By God's body, he burbles his words, and you can't understand a thing. It's no Christian language he's speaking, nor any that makes sense!

Guillemette: He's dying, this shows he needs his final sacraments. By my oath, he's going to die from all this talk! How he foams! He's practically steaming! How he values divinity! His humanity is fading away! Alas, I will live drunk and miserable.

Guillaume: It would be better if I left before he passes. If he has anything private he wants to say, any secrets to tell you, he wouldn't want to do so with me here. Forgive me, for I swear to you that I truly believed that he had my cloth. Farewell, lady, and for God's sake please forgive me!

Guillemette: May you have a blessed day, even as we mourn him.

Narrator: Guillaume departs, muttering to himself as he goes.

Guillaume: By the goodness of holy Mary, I stand even more confused! The Devil in his likeness must have taken my cloth to confuse me. *Benedicite!* May he leave us all in peace! And as for the fabric, I give it, by God, to whoever took it.

Pathelin: Now! Didn't I teach you well? How the mighty Guillaume has fallen! My God, how his brains came apart, making sense of such confusion. I bet he'll lie awake all night trying to make sense of it all.

Guillemette: He was really blown away! Have I not played my part well?

Pathelin: By God's body, I say, you have worked very well indeed! And now at least we have enough cloth to make some new clothes!

SCENE VI: *the Draper's shop*

Guillaume: Dammit! Everyone pecks at me, steals my goods, and takes what they can get from me! Now I'm the king of misery! Even the shepherds of the fields insult me; even my own, who I've always treated well. He won't get away with cheating me, though, by the crowned Virgin!

Thibault: God give you good day, and good evening, my good lord!

Guillaume: Ha! There you are, you stupid shit! What a good scoundrel! What do you want?

Thibault: Your pardon, sir. I don't know what his title was, but some gentleman, all confused, who held a whip without a cord, said to me—well, in truth, I don't really remember what he said. He spoke to me of you, my master, with some sort of summons? I couldn't really understand. As for me, by Saint Mary, I was all confused by his talk of "sheep" and "afternoon court", and he made a great deal of some things you said about me....

Guillaume: If I don't drag you before the judge now, to tell all, I pray to God to bring me a storm and a flood! Never again will you kill one of my sheep, by my faith, never forget it. Whatever happens, you will

give me back my six yards... I mean, you'll pay for the harm you've caused my beasts, and the damage you've done me for these last ten years.

Thibault: What cloth? Oh, my lord, you are, I believe, angry about something else. By St Loy, my master, I dare not say anything when you're like this.

Guillaume: Leave me alone, go away, and do with your day as you please.

Thibault: My lord, let us talk this through ourselves. For God's sake, don't drag me into court!

Guillaume: Go, and keep your business well. I won't make concessions. But, by God, I will let the judge decide what should be done. If I don't put a stop to this, people will keep cheating me.

Thibault: God give you joy, sir. So I shall have to defend myself!

*

Narrator: Scene Seven. Pathelin has emerged from his bed and come downstairs, as Thibault Aignelet, a local shepherd who works for Guillaume, comes knocking on the door.

Thibault: Anybody home?

Pathelin: Hang me by the neck if he hasn't come back!

Guillemette: That can't be, pray St George! That would be the worst!

Thibault: God be with you and bless you!

Pathelin: God bless you, friend, what's the matter?

Thibault: If I don't show up in court, I'll be fined. Please come, master, and defend my case, because I know nothing about it. And I will pay you very well, though I am poorly dressed.

Pathelin: Come here. Speak up! Who are you? The plaintiff or defendant?

Thibault: I'm dealing with a merchant- you understand, good master? For whom, for a long time, I have been shepherd to his sheep, and I look after them. By my oath, he paid me very little... must I tell you everything?

Pathelin: Surely: for my best advice, you must say everything.

Thibault: It is true, sir, beyond denial, that I knocked some sheep over, and many have passed away and died, even though they were healthy and strong. And then, I told him, so that he wouldn't blame me, that they were unwell and going to die anyway. He'd say, don't leave the sick ones mixed with the others, and I'd say, "I won't!" But I did it another way, because, by Saint John, I ate them, because I knew they were really healthy. What do you want me to tell you? I kept this up for so long, I knocked over and killed so many he finally noticed it, and when he found out I had been lying, by God, he sent someone to spy on me because you could hear them bleating, you know, when I did it. For my part, I can never really deny it. But I can pay you very well- can't we work together to get the better of him? I know he has good cause, but I know you can find some trick in the law, so he can come off worst.

Pathelin: By your faith, you will be well pleased- what if I overturn the opposing party's case, and send you home, absolved of it all?

Thibault: I will not pay you in sous, but in beautiful gold crowns.

Pathelin: Then your case will be good, even if it's twice as bad as you think. The higher the leap, the better I do when I want to apply myself! You'll see how well I do when he's shown my argument!

Now, come here; by the precious holy blood, you're quite mischievous enough to understand what I'm about to teach you. What are you called?

Thibault: By Saint Mary, Thibault Aignelet.

Pathelin: Then, Aignelet, have you deprived your master of many milk-lambs?

Thibault: By my oath! It may well be that I ate more than thirty in three years.

Pathelin: Ten a year... that's enough money for candles and some dicing! I believe I've a good idea. Do you think he can find someone to help him prove these facts? That's the crux of the trial.

Thibault: Prove, sir! Holy Mary! By all the saints in Paradise! If he can find one, he can find ten who will testify against me.

Pathelin: That makes it much more difficult... Here is my idea: I will pretend that I'm not there for you, that I have never seen you before.

Thibault: Do not! Oh, gods!

Pathelin: No, we won't do that. But see if this will suit you: if you speak, you'll be caught, and that will really demolish your position, for in such cases confessions are very harmful, they're the very devil! So for this, it will be necessary, when we call you to appear in court, for you not to respond in any way except bleating "Baa", and give nothing away. If it happens that they curse at you, saying, "Hey, stinking idiot! God will give you terrible trouble! Are you mocking justice?" say "baaa". Ha! I will say, "He's a decent fellow, he wants to talk to his animals", but let no other word come from your mouth. Be careful!

Thibault: It is in my interest to do so, , so I will be truly careful to do it, and I will do it very properly, I promise and affirm it to you!

Pathelin: But take care, hold tight to that promise, even to me, for no matter what I say to you, even unexpectedly, don't answer otherwise.

Thibault: Me? Never, by the sacrament! You may call me crazy if I say another word, to you or to anyone else, for no matter what I hear, I shall say "baaa", as you taught me.

Pathelin: By Saint John, this will take care of your adversary before tomorrow! But also, make sure my pay is good when it is done!

Thibault: Master, if I don't pay you as I say, never believe me again! But I beg you, pay diligent attention to your work for me!

Pathelin: By our Lady of Boulogne! I expect the judge to be seated, because he always sits down at six o'clock, or around there, but you come along after me, we won't go together.

Thibault: It is well said: so that no one sees that you are my advocate.

Pathelin: Our Lady help you, if you don't pay generously!

Thibault: God's truth, I'll pay you at your word, Master, there is no doubt about it. [*waves goodbye and turns away from Pathelin*]

Pathelin: Well, if it's not raining money, it's at least dripping! At least I will have something from him, if he wins, a penny or two, for my pain.

*

Narrator: Scene Eight, a law court, where Pathelin and Guillaume are before the judge, and Aignelet sits nearby.

Pathelin: Sir, God grant you good fortune and all that your heart desires.

Judge: You are very welcome, sir. Take your hat off, and here, have a seat.

Pathelin: I am well, sir, where I am; here I have more room.

Judge: If there's any business, let us get it done quickly so I can be free to go.

Guillaume: My lawyer is on his way, as soon as he finishes the little things he was working on, sir, and, if it please you, you would do well to wait for him.

Judge: I have cases to hear elsewhere. If your counterpart is present, speak for yourself, without further delay. Are you not the plaintiff?

Guillaume: I am.

Judge: Where is the defendant? Is he here in person?

Guillaume: Yes: see him there being silent, but God knows what he thinks.

Judge: Since you are present, both of you, state your case.

Guillaume: Hear, then, what I ask of him, Sir. The truth is that, for God and in charity, I fed him when he was a child, and when I saw that he was strong enough to go into the fields, to give him light work, I made him my shepherd, and put him to looking after my beasts. But, as truly as you are sitting there, my lord Judge, he has made such a mess of my sheep that without doubt...

Judge: One moment. Was he not your hireling?

Pathelin: Just so! Because if he had him working without pay....

Guillaume: [*recognizing Pathelin*] I disown God if it isn't you!

Judge: Why do you hold your hand up like that? Do you have a toothache, Master Pierre?

Pathelin: Yes, they wage such a war on me, I've never felt such pain. I dare not raise my head. For God, make them proceed!

Judge: Now, finish your argument, be quick.

Guillaume: [*to the audience*] It's him, nobody else, really! [*to Pathelin*] By God's cross! Wasn't it you to whom I sold six yards of cloth, Master Pierre?

Judge: What is he saying about cloth?

Pathelin: His mind wanders. He intends to get to his point, but he doesn't know how, because he's not learned enough.

Guillaume: I'll be hanged by the bloody neck if anyone else took my cloth!

Pathelin: How far afield this wicked man lies to make up a story! He means- he's very stubborn- that his shepherd sold the wool, so I've heard, from which the cloth of my gown was made. He says that the shepherd stole it and that he has been stealing the wool from his sheep.

Guillaume: God send me misfortune if you don't have it!

Judge: Peace! You are babbling! Don't you know how to come back to the point, without making the court listen to such nonsense?

Pathelin: I feel bad, but I have to laugh. He's in such a hurry he doesn't know where he left it; we have to get him back to the point.

Judge: Come, back to those sheep: what happened?

Guillaume: He took six yards! Nine francs' worth!

Judge: Do you take us for geese, or idiots? Where do you think you are?

Pathelin: By God's blood, he mocks you! And he looks like such a good man! But, I hope, let us examine the opposing side a bit.

Judge: You speak well. He can't help but know him. Come here! Speak!

Thibault: Baaa!

Judge: I don't need this stress. What "baa" is this? Do you think I'm a goat? Talk to me?

Thibault: Baa!

Judge: May God send you an infernal fever! Are you kidding?

Pathelin: I believe that he is mad, or daft, or that he wants to be among his beasts.

Guillaume: Damned if you're not the one, and no other, who had my cloth!... Oh, you don't know, Sir, by what malice...

Judge: Shut up! Are you a simpleton? Leave this infernal matter in peace, and let's get to the main point.

Guillaume: Indeed, Sir, but the case is all to do with me. However, by my faith, I won't say another word about it. There'll be another time. For now, I'll have to swallow it and pretend it doesn't matter. But this, I say, how I gave six yards... I should say, my sheep... I beg you, sir, forgive me... This good Master... I mean, my shepherd, when he should have been in the fields... he told me that I would have six gold crowns when I came... Devil! For three years my shepherd promised me that he would loyally guard my sheep, and would make

no scandal or villainy, and then... Now he denies me both cloth and money! Master Pierre, really! This scoundrel robbed me of the wool of my beasts; they were all healthy and he killed them, made them die by knocking them out and beating out their brains... when my cloth was under his arm, he went wandering off, and told me that I was going to get my six gold crowns at his house...

Judge: There is no rhyme or reason in this case. What's all this? You're interrupting one story with another. All in all, by God's blood, I can't get a sense of it. You blur cloth with babbles, then with sheep, all together! Nothing he says can be understood.

Pathelin: But I am very worried that he is withholding the salary of this poor shepherd.

Guillaume: By God, you would do better to remain silent! My cloth, as true as the Mass... I know better than anyone where my shoe pinches me! By God in heaven you have it!

Judge: What's wrong with him?

Guillaume: Nothing, my lord. Certainly, he's the greatest cheat. Oh, I'll keep quiet about it, if I can, and promise I will not speak of it, whatever happens.

Judge: No! But remember that! Now, conclude quickly.

Pathelin: This shepherd cannot respond to these accusations in any way without advice, and he does not dare or know how to ask for it. If it would please you to order it, I will be his counsellor.

Judge: For him? I don't think you'd get much for your efforts.

Pathelin: But I swear I want nothing from him; let it be for God's love. Now, let me find out what the poor thing wants to tell me, and if he doesn't know how he wants me to argue his case. If no one will

help him, we'll be here that much longer! Come here, my friend. Now if you could find... Do you understand my intent?

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: What is this "baa"? By the holy blood of God, are you crazy? Tell me your business.

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: What is this "baa"? Do you hear your sheep bleating? Listen to me, this is for your benefit.

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: Yes or no. It's easily done. That's well done- keep going! Will you do so?

Thibault: Baa

Pathelin: Speak up! You'll be in trouble, I suspect, if you don't.

Thibault: Baa

Pathelin: The only one madder than this man, is the one mad enough to bring such a madman into court! Ha! Sir, send him back to his sheep. He is crazy by nature.

Guillaume: Is he crazy? Holy Saviour of Asturias, he's madder than you are.

Pathelin: Send him to guard his beasts, without delay, never to return. Cursed be he who tries such a fool!

Guillaume: Will you let him return to the field before I can be heard?

Pathelin: God! Since he's crazy, yes! Whyever not?

Guillaume: But sir, at least let me first speak and conclude my case. That's not an abuse, I tell you!

Judge: It's all nonsense to ask fools not to be fools! The court won't be made to hear any more of your words.

Guillaume: Will they go away without being obliged to return?

Judge: And what then?

Pathelin: Come back? You've never seen anyone more foolish,; don't answer him . [*points to Guillaume*] And he isn't any better. Both are foolish and brainless. By the beautiful Saint Mary, the two of them haven't a quarter brain between them!

Guillaume: You took away, by deceit, my cloth, without paying, Master Pierre! By Saint Peter, that was not the action of an honest man.

Pathelin: I renounce St Peter of Rome if he is not completely mad, or becoming so!

Guillaume: I know you by your speech, and by your dress, and by your face. I'm not crazy, I am wise enough to know who will treat me well. [*to the Judge*] I will tell you the whole story, Sir, upon my conscience.

Pathelin: [*to the Judge, referencing the audience*] Hey, sir, silence them! [*to Guillaume*] Aren't you ashamed of arguing so much against this poor shepherd, for three or four old lambs or sheep which aren't worth two buttons? His story just gets longer and longer....

Guillaume: What sheep? That's an old song! It's to you yourself that I speak, to you! Give my cloth back to me, by the God who willed Christ to be born!

Judge: [*to audience*] Do you see? Now I'm in a fine position. Will he never stop braying?

Guillaume: I charge him....

Pathelin: Make him shut up! [*to Guillaume*] By God, it's not sound! Suppose he did kill six or seven sheep... or a dozen... and lie about it... have you really suffered so much? You have gained more than you've lost, in the time he was keeping sheep for you.

Guillaume: Look, sir, look! I talk to him about cloth, and he responds about sheep! Six yards of cloth, where are they, after you put them under your arm? Do you think you'll ever give them back to me?

Pathelin: Ha! Sir, will you have him hanged for six or seven woolly beasts? At least take a minute to catch your breath: don't be so unforgiving to the poor sorrowful shepherd, whose station is as low as a worm's!

Guillaume: Yes, you've turned the "worm" around very well! The Devil made me sell cloth to such a man! [*to the Judge*] Please, Sir, I charge him-

Judge: I absolve him as you request, and forbid you to proceed with it. A fine thing, to plead against such a fool!... Go away to your beasts.

Thilbault: Baa!

Judge: [*to Guillaume*] You show clearly what you are, Sir, by the blood of our lady.

Guillaume: Please, my lord, listen to me! I charge him-

Pathelin: Can't he be quiet about it?

Guillaume: It's you I'm dealing with! You deceived me falsely, and carried my fabric away by stealth, with your pretty talk!

Pathelin: [*to Judge*] I appeal! Will you listen to this, my lord?

Guillaume: God! You are the most grievous liar.... [*to the Judge*] Sir, whatever I say-

Judge: That's enough stupidity from both of you: it's just nonsense. God bless me, I hope I never see this again. [*to Thibault*] Go away, my friend, and never return, no matter if an officer brings you a warrant. The Court absolves you: do you understand clearly?

Pathelin: Show your gratitude.

Thibault: Baa!

Judge: Ah, well. Go away and don't worry, all is well.

Guillaume: But is it right for him to leave? Just so?

Judge: Yes. I have business elsewhere. You are too much of a nuisance, and you won't make me stay a moment longer, I'll see to that. Do you want to come to supper with me, Master Pierre?

Pathelin: [*references his "toothache"*] I can't.

Narrator: The Judge leaves.

Guillaume: What a remarkable liar you are! Tell me: will I ever be paid?

Pathelin: For what? Are you crazy? Who do you think I am? By my blood, I've been trying to figure out who you take me for?

Guillaume: Indeed!

Pathelin: Good sir, if you will but hold on, I will tell you, without further delay, who you think I am: you think I am the town fool? But look, that's not me, for he isn't shaved, as I am, with a bald head!

Guillaume: Do you consider me a fool? It is you, your own person, none but you: your voice announces it, and don't believe otherwise.

Pathelin: My and myself? No, really, different opinions aside, could it have been John of Noyon? He looks somewhat like me.

Guillaume: The Devil it was! He doesn't have that witless face, it's not so bland. Did I not leave you sick at home?

Pathelin: What logic! Why should I be sick? What illness do I have? Confess your stupidity, it's so clear now.

Guillaume: It's you! Or I renounce Saint Peter! You, and no one else, I know it well, for the absolute truth!

Pathelin: But I don't believe it, because, certainly, it wasn't me. For one and for all, I never took even half a yard from you! I don't have that nature!

Guillaume: I will go back to your house, and we'll bloody well see if you're there! We won't discuss it any more here, if I find you there!

Pathelin: By our Lady, by that logic you will know it well!

Narrator: Guillaume exists.

Pathelin: [*to Thibault:*] Ah, Aignelet!

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: Come here, come on. Did that not work well?

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: Your part is over, you don't have to say "baa" anymore; there isn't any need. Did I perform well? And didn't I counsel you well?

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: Hey now! There's no one left to fool! Speak loudly, don't hide yourself.

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: It's time for me to go. Pay me!

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: Truth to tell, you have done your duty very well, and your demeanor was perfect. What really moved it along was that you held back from laughing.

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: Why do you keep saying "baa"? Don't say it anymore. Pay me well and swiftly!

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: Why "baa"? Speak smartly now, and pay me!

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: You know what? I'll tell you. Please, without any more bleating, what do you say to paying me? I don't want any more of your silly "baas". Just... pay me!

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: Are you mocking me? Is that how you're going to be? By my oath! You will pay me, do you hear? If you don't, go away! But now, the money!

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: You're kidding. [*to himself*] Am I to have nothing else?

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: You're so very eloquent. Who do you think you're trying to kid? Don't you know who I am? Don't babble your "baas" to me anymore, and pay me!

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: Will I not get any other money? Who do you think you're playing with? And I was so kind in praise of you, but let me now be truly proud of you!

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: Are you making me eat crow? How sad! Have I lived so long that a shepherd, pretending to be a sheep, a villainous knave, is laughing at me?

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: Shall I have no other word? If you're doing it to amuse yourself, say so, don't make me argue about it again. Come and have supper at my house.

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: By Saint John! You're right. The goslings lead the geese to graze. [*to himself*] I wanted to be master of all the deceivers here and elsewhere, the smartest of rogues and the givers of words of payment,

to be rendered on the Day of Judgement, and a shepherd from the field surpasses me! [*to Thibault*] By Saint James, if I could find an officer I'd have you taken away!

Thibault: Baa!

Pathelin: Baa yourself! I'm damned if I don't see a good officer coming! May he be my next target if he doesn't imprison you!

Thibault: If he finds me, I forgive him!