

# The Worthy Master Pierre Patelin

translated by

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## Scene I

*(On either side of the stage is a street scene. At the back, a curtain is partly drawn to each side showing the interior of PATELIN'S house. PATELIN sits in bed reading a large folio; on a chair next to the bed GUILLEMETTE sits mending an old dress. On a bench a little to one side are kitchen utensils: a frying pan, a broom, etc. On the bed lie a nightgown and a cap.)*

GUILLEMETTE: You have nothing to say now, I suppose, have you?... While I needs must mend rags a beggar would be ashamed to wear – and you, a member of the learned profession... a lawyer...!

PATELIN (*in bed*): There was a time when my door was crowded with clients... when I had plenty of work... and fine clothes to wear, too.

GUILLEMETTE: Of what good is that to-day – eh?

PATELIN: Wife, I was too shrewd for them. Men don't like people wiser than themselves.

GUILLEMETTE: Aye, you could always beat them at law... but that was long ago.

PATELIN: It hurts me truly to see you mending rags... and wives of men who are thick-skulled wearing golden-threaded cloth and fine wool. There is that draper's wife across the way....

GUILLEMETTE: Cease the cackling. (*Silently working for a while*) I'd give something rare and costly for a new gown on St. Mary's day. Heaven knows I need it.

PATELIN: So you do and so do I as well. It is not fit to see one of the learned profession walking about like a beggar on the highway. Ah! If I could only get some clients! I know my law well enough yet. There is not many a one can beat me at the finer points.

GUILLEMETTE: A fig for it all. Of what good is it? We are all but starved... and as for clothes-look. (*Holds up the dress she is mending.*)

PATELIN: Silence, good wife! Could I but have some business and put my head with seriousness to it... Who knows but the days of plenty would soon enough return!

GUILLEMETTE: There is not a soul in town but a fool would trust himself to you. They know too well your way of handling cases. They say you are a master... at cheating.

(*PATELIN rises, indignant.*)

PATELIN: They mean at law... at law, good wife. Ha, I should like to see a lawyer beat me at it... and... (*Suddenly stops, thinks for a moment, then his whole face lights up.*) I am going to market. I have just thought of a little business I have there. (*Gets out of bed.*)

GUILLEMETTE: Going to market? What for? You have no money.

PATELIN: I am going to market... on business... to the long-nosed donkey, our neighbour... the draper.

GUILLEMETTE: What for?

PATELIN: To buy some cloth....

GUILLEMETTE: Holy Saints! You know well he is more close-fisted than any other merchant in town. He'll never trust you.

PATELIN: Ah, that's just why I am going. The more miserly, the easier to gull; and... I have thought of something fine... that will get us enough cloth... both for you and me.

GUILLEMETTE: You must be mad.

PATELIN (*not heeding her*): Let me see.... (*Measuring her with his arm's length*) Two and one-half for you.... (*Measuring himself in the same way*) Three for me... and... What colour would you want it? Green or red?

GUILLEMETTE: I'll be pleased with any kind. Beggars can't be choosers. But don't think I believe what you say. I am not a fool. You'll never get any from Master Joceaulme. He'll never trust you, I am certain.

PATELIN: Who knows? Who knows? He might... and then really get paid... on Doom's-day.... Ho, ho....

GUILLEMETTE: Don't you think you had better make haste, lest all the cloth be sold?

PATELIN (*offended, walking off*): Wife, I forgive you. You are only a woman. I'll teach you a fine lesson now. If I don't bring home a fine piece of cloth—dark green or blue, such as wives of great lords wear, then never believe another word I say.

GUILLEMETTE: But how will you do it? You haven't a copper in your pocket.

PATELIN: Ah! That's a secret. Just wait and see. So... (*to himself as he walks slowly away*) two and one-half for her and three for me.... Look well to the house while I am away, wife. (*Exit.*)

GUILLEMETTE: What fool of a merchant'll trust him!... unless he is blind and deaf!

(*The back curtains are closed and now only the street scene is visible.*)

## Scene II

(PATELIN comes from his door and walks across to THE DRAPER'S table. THE DRAPER is just coming out with a pack of cloth and wools which he throws on the table. He busies himself arranging his goods. PATELIN looks on for a while and then goes right up to him.)

PATELIN: Ho, there, worthy Master Guillaume Joceaulme, permit me the pleasure of shaking your hand. How do you feel?

THE DRAPER: Very fine, the saints be thanked.

PATELIN: I am truly happy to hear that. And business?

THE DRAPER: You know how... one day one way, the other, altogether different. You can never tell when ill luck may blow your way.

PATELIN: May the saints keep it from your doors! It's the very phrase I often heard your father use. What a man he was! Wise! There was not an event in Church, State, or market he did not foretell. No other was more esteemed. And you – they say that you are more and more like him each day.

THE DRAPER: Do seat yourself, good Master Patelin.

PATELIN: Oh, I can well stand.

THE DRAPER: Oh, but you must. (*Forcing him to sit on the bench*)

PATELIN: Ah! I knew him well, your father. You resemble him, as one drop of milk another. What a man he was! Wise! We, among the learned, called him the weather-cock. Well-nigh every piece of clothing I wore came from his shop.

THE DRAPER: He was an honest man, and people liked to buy from him.

PATELIN: A more honest soul there never was. And I have heard often said the apple has fallen nigh the tree.

THE DRAPER: Of a truth, good Master... ?

PATELIN: It's not flattery, either. ( *Looking intently at him*) You do resemble him! No child was ever so like his father. Each marked the other. This is just his nose, his ears, nay, the very dimple on his chin.

THE DRAPER: Yes, they do say I look much like him.

PATELIN: Like one drop of water another.... And kindhearted! He was ever ready to trust and help, no matter who came along. The Lord knows he was ever the gainer by it. Even the worst scoundrels thought twice before cheating him.

THE DRAPER: A merchant must always take heed, good Master Patelin. You can never know whether a man is honest or not.

PATELIN: Aye, that's true. But he had a way of guessing whether it was an honest man he was dealing with that was a marvel to behold. Many a funny tale he told of it—when we sat over a bottle of wine. (*Feeling the cloth on the table*) What a fine piece of cloth! Did you make it from your own wool? Your father always used to weave his cloths from the wool of his own sheep.

THE DRAPER: So do I, sir. From the wool of my own sheep.

PATELIN: You don't say so! This is business in a manner I like to see it done. The father all over again.

THE DRAPER (*seeing the possibility of a sale*): Ah, worthy Master Patelin, it is a great hardship, indeed, to which I put myself because of this. And the loss and cost! Here a shepherd kills your sheep; I have a case against one of those scoundrels right now. The weavers ask pay like goldsmiths. But to me this is all of little account.... I'd attend to the making of each piece myself were it to cost ten times as much as I get in return.... So long as I please those who buy.

PATELIN: I can see this. It would make a fine gown.

THE DRAPER: You could not get a finer piece even in the city of Paris.

PATELIN: I am sorry I am not out to do any buying just now, though I am tempted to.

THE DRAPER: Business bad? Money scarce?

PATELIN: No, indeed not. I have a nice little sum of gold crowns even now, but I am about to invest them in something profitable.... It's as strong as iron, this cloth here. (*Examining it*)

THE DRAPER: You may take my word for it, Master, there is not a finer or stronger in town. What's more, it can be bought cheap just now. It's a fine investment. Wool is certain to go up.

PATELIN: Aye, it's a fine piece of cloth, Master Joceaulme.... But then I shouldn't... yet...

THE DRAPER: Come, Master Patelin, come. You need the cloth and have the money to buy. Then you'll invest a few crowns less. A man should always have a gown tucked away in the coffer. What would you say if some fine day, comes along the town crier shouting: there has been a new judge appointed and it is Master Pa...

PATELIN: You must have your little joke, worthy sir. Just like your father. I would pass his shop, a friendly chat... and then my purse was much lighter for it. But I never regretted it, never.

THE DRAPER: You wouldn't now, either. It's well worth buying.

PATELIN: It tempts me.... It would look well on my good wife, and I could use it well for myself.

THE DRAPER: It needs but your saying. Come, what's the word, Master?

PATELIN: Well....

THE DRAPER: It's yours even though you hadn't a copper.

PATELIN (*somewhat absent-minded*): Oh, I know that.

THE DRAPER: What?

PATELIN: I'll take it.

THE DRAPER: That's talking. How much do you want?

PATELIN: How much is it a yard?

THE DRAPER: Which do you like best? The blue?

PATELIN: Yes, that is the one.

THE DRAPER: You want a rock bottom price, no haggling. This is the finest piece in my shop. For you I'll make it twenty-one sous a yard.

PATELIN: Holy Saints! Master! What do you take me for, a fool? It isn't the first time I am buying cloth.

THE DRAPER: It's the price it cost me myself; by all the saints in Heaven.

PATELIN: That's too much—entirely too much.

THE DRAPER: Wool costs like holy oil now, and these shepherds are forever robbing me.

PATELIN: Well, there is truth in what you say. I'll take it at the price. I like to see every man make his honest penny. Measure it.

THE DRAPER: How much do you want?

PATELIN: Let me see. Two and a half for her, three for me, that makes five and a half.

THE DRAPER: Take hold there, Master, here they are. (*Measuring out*) One... two... three... four... five. I'll make it six. You'll not mind the few coppers more.

PATELIN: Not when I get something fine in return. Then I need a cap, too.

THE DRAPER: Would you like me to measure it backwards?

PATELIN: Oh, now, I trust your honesty. How much is it?

THE DRAPER: Six yards at twenty-one sous the yard—that's exactly nine francs.

PATELIN: Nine francs.... (*Under his breath*) Here it goes. Nine francs.

THE DRAPER: Yes, and a good bargain you got.

PATELIN (*searching his pockets*): No... I have but little with me, and I must buy some small things. You'll get your money to-morrow.

THE DRAPER: What!!!... No... No...

PATELIN: Well, good Master Joceaulme, you don't think I carry gold coin with me, do you? You'd have me give thieves a good chance to steal it? Your father trusted me many a time. And you, Master Guillaume, should take after your father.

THE DRAPER: I like my money cash.

PATELIN: It's there waiting for you, good Master Draper. You can come for it, I hope.

THE DRAPER: It's bad custom to sell on credit.

PATELIN: Did I ask you for credit: for a month, a week, a day? Come to my house at noon, and you'll find your money ready. Does that satisfy you?

THE DRAPER: I prefer my money cash, right on the purchase....

PATELIN: And then Master Guillaume, you have not been to my house for I don't know how long. Your father was there many a time—but you don't seem to care for poor folk like myself.

THE DRAPER: It's we merchants who are poor. We have no bags of gold lying idle for investments.



PATELIN: They are there, Master, waiting for you. And my good wife put a fine goose on the spit just when I left. You can have a tender wing. Your father always liked it.

THE DRAPER: Perhaps.... It's true. I haven't been to your house for a long time. I'll come at noon, Master Patelin, and bring the cloth with me.

PATELIN (*snatching the cloth from him*): Oh, I would never trouble you. I can carry it.

THE DRAPER: But....

PATELIN: No, good sir, not for the wealth of the East. I would not think of asking *you* to carry it for *me*.

THE DRAPER: I'd rather... well... I'll soon be there, Master. I'll come before the noon meal. Don't forget the nine francs.

PATELIN: Aye, I'll not. And there'll be a bottle of red wine and a fine fat goose. Be certain to come. (*Exit.*)

THE DRAPER: That I will right soon. Ho, ho, ho—ha, ha, ha—the fool! A good bargain he got! Twenty-one sous the yard. It isn't worth one-half that. And on top of it a fine dinner... Burgundy wine and a roasted goose! For a customer like that every day! Now I'll take in my cloth. I'll soon to his house. (*Takes up the cloth and leaves.*)

## Scene III

*(The back curtains are drawn aside showing PATELIN'S chamber.)*

PATELIN (*running in*): Wife, wife... (*GUILLEMETTE enters, the old gown in her hand.*) Well, Madam... now... I've got it... right here I have it. What did I tell you?

GUILLEMETTE: What have you?

PATELIN: Something you desire greatly. But what are you doing with this old rag? I think it will do well for a bed for your cat. I did promise you a new gown and get you one I did.

GUILLEMETTE: What's gotten into your head? Did you drink anything on the way?

PATELIN: And it's paid for, Madam. It's paid for, I tell you.

GUILLEMETTE: Are you making sport of me? What are you blabbering!

PATELIN: I have it right here.

GUILLEMETTE: What have you?

PATELIN: Cloth fit for the Queen of Sheba. (*Displaying the cloth*) Here it is!

GUILLEMETTE: Where did you steal it? Who'll pay for it? What kind of scrape have you gotten into now?

PATELIN: You need not worry, good dame. It's paid for... and a good price at that.

GUILLEMETTE: Why, how much did it cost? You did not have a copper when you left.

PATELIN: It cost nine francs, fair lady... a bottle of red wine... and the wing of a roasted goose.

GUILLEMETTE: Are you crazy? You had no money, no goose!!!

PATELIN: Aye, aye, that I did. I paid for it as it behooves one of the learned profession of law: in promissory statements. And the merchant who took them is no fool either, oh, no; not a fool at all; but a very wise man and a shrewd....

GUILLEMETTE: Who was he? How...

PATELIN: He is the king of asses, the chancellor of baboons our worthy neighbour, the long-nosed draper, Master Joceaulme.

GUILLEMETTE: Will you cease this jabbering and tell me how it happened? How did he come to trust you? There is no worse skinflint in town than he.

PATELIN: Ah, wife! My head! My knowledge of the law! I turned him into a noble and fine lord. I told him what a jewel his father was; I laid on him all the nine virtues thick as wax, and... in the end he trusted me most willingly with six yards of his fine cloth.

GUILLEMETTE: Ho, ho, ho, you are a marvel! And when does he expect to get paid?

PATELIN: By noon.

GUILLEMETTE: What will we do when he comes for the money?

PATELIN: He'll be here for it and soon to boot. He must be dreaming even now of his nine francs, and his wine, and the goose. Oh, we'll give him a goose! Now you get the bed ready and I'll get in.

GUILLEMETTE: What for?

PATELIN: As soon as he comes and asks for me, swear that I've been in bed here for the last two months. Tell it in a sad voice and with tears in your eyes. And if he says anything, shout at him to speak lower. If he cries: "My cloth, my money," tell him he is crazy, that I haven't been from bed for weeks. And if he doesn't go with that, I'll dance him a little tune that'll make him wonder whether he is on earth or in hell.

*(PATELIN puts on his nightgown and cap. GUILLEMETTE goes to the door and returns quickly)*

GUILLEMETTE: He is coming, he is coming; what if he arrests you?

PATELIN: Don't worry; just do what I tell you. Quick, hide the cloth under the bedclothes. Don't forget. I've been sick for two months.

GUILLEMETTE: Quick, quick, here he is.

(PATELIN gets into bed and draws the curtains. GUILLEMETTE sits down and begins to mend the old dress. THE DRAPER enters.)

THE DRAPER: Good day, fair dame.

GUILLEMETTE: Sh... Speak lower.

THE DRAPER: Why? What's the matter?

GUILLEMETTE: You don't know?

THE DRAPER: Where is he?

GUILLEMETTE: Alas! Nearer to Paradise than to Earth. (*Begins to cry.*)

THE DRAPER: Who?

GUILLEMETTE: How can you be so heartless and ask me that, when you know he has been in bed for the last eleven weeks?

THE DRAPER: Who?

GUILLEMETTE: My husband.

THE DRAPER: Who?

GUILLEMETTE: My husband—Master Pierre, once a lawyer... and now a sick man... on his death-bed.

THE DRAPER: What!!!!

GUILLEMETTE (*crying*): You have not heard of it? Alas! And...

THE DRAPER: And who was it just took six yards of cloth from my shop?

GUILLEMETTE: Alas! How am I to know? It was surely not he.

THE DRAPER: You must be dreaming, good woman. Are you his wife? The wife of Pierre Patelin, the lawyer?

GUILLEMETTE: That I am, good sir.

THE DRAPER: Then it was your husband, who was such a good friend of my father, who came to my shop a quarter of an hour ago and bought six yards of cloth for nine francs. And now I am here for my money. Where is he?

GUILLEMETTE: This is no time for jesting, good sir.

THE DRAPER: Are you crazy? I want my money, that's all.

GUILLEMETTE: Don't scream. It's little sleep he gets as it is, and here you come squealing like a dying pig. He has been in bed for nigh twelve weeks and hardly slept three nights.

THE DRAPER: Who? What are you talking about?

GUILLEMETTE: Who! My poor sick husband. (*Weeps.*)

THE DRAPER: Come! What's this? Stop that fooling. I want my money, my nine francs.

GUILLEMETTE (*screaming*): Don't scream so loud. He is dying.

THE DRAPER: But that's a lie. He was at my shop, but a quarter of an hour ago.

PATELIN (*groaning from behind the curtain*): Au, au, au...

GUILLEMETTE: Ah, there he is on his death-bed. He has been there for thirteen weeks yesterday without eating as much as a fly.

THE DRAPER: What are you talking about? He was at my shop just now and bought six yards of cloth... blue cloth.

GUILLEMETTE: How can you make sport of me? Good Master Guillaume, don't you see how he is! Do speak lower. Noise puts him in agony.

THE DRAPER: It's you who are howling. Give me my money, and I'll not speak at all.

GUILLEMETTE (*screaming*): He is deadly sick. This is no time for fooling. Stop screaming. What is it you want?

THE DRAPER: I want my money, or the cloth... the cloth he bought from me only a little while ago.

GUILLEMETTE: What are you talking about, my good man? There is something strange in your voice.

THE DRAPER: You see, good lady, your husband, Pierre Patelin, the learned counsellor, who was such a good friend of my father, came to my shop but a quarter of an hour ago and chose six yards of blue cloth... and then told me to come to his house to get the money and....

GUILLEMETTE: Ha, ha, ha, what a fine joke. You seem to be in good humour to-day, Master Draper! To-day?... When he has been in bed for fourteen weeks... on the point of death! (*She screams louder and louder all the time.*) To-day, hey! Why do you come to make sport of me? Get out, get out!

THE DRAPER: I will. Give me my money first... or give me my cloth. Where is he with it?

GUILLEMETTE: Ah me! He is very sick and refuses to eat a bite.

THE DRAPER: I am speaking about my cloth. If he does not want it, or hasn't the money, I'll gladly take it back. He took it this morning. I'll

swear to it. Ask him yourself. I saw him and spoke to him. A piece of blue cloth.

GUILLEMETTE: Are you cracked or have you been drinking?

THE DRAPER (*becoming frantic*): He took six yards of cloth, blue cloth.

GUILLEMETTE: What do I care whether it is green or blue? My husband has not left the house for the last fifteen weeks.

THE DRAPER: May the Lord bless me! But I am sure I saw him. It was he I am sure.

GUILLEMETTE: Have you no heart? I have had enough of your fooling.

THE DRAPER: If you think I am a fool...

PATELIN (*behind the curtain*). Au, au, au, come and raise my pillow. Stop the braying of that ass! Everything is black and yellow! Drive these black beasts away! Marmara, carimari, carimara!

THE DRAPER: It's he!

GUILLEMETTE: Yes, it is; alas!

THE DRAPER: Good Master Patelin, I've come for my nine francs... which you promised me....

PATELIN (*sits up and sticks his head out between the curtains*): Ha, you dog... come here. Shut the door. Rub the soles of my feet... tickle my toes.... Drive these devils away. It's a monk; there, up he goes....

THE DRAPER: What's this? Are you crazy?

PATELIN (*getting out of bed*): Ha... do you see him? A black monk flying in the air with the draper hanging on his nose. Catch him... quick. (*Speaking right in THE DRAPER'S face, who retreats*) The cat! The monk! Up he flies, and there are ten little devils tweaking your long nose! Heigh, ho! (*Goes back to bed, falling on it seemingly exhausted.*)

GUILLEMETTE (*in loud lamentations*): Now see what you have done.

THE DRAPER: But what does this mean?... I don't understand it.

GUILLEMETTE: Don't you see, don't you see!

THE DRAPER: It serves me right; why did I ever sell on credit? But I sold it, I am certain of that, and I would swear 'twas to him this morning. Did he become sick since he returned?

GUILLEMETTE: Are you beginning that joke all over again?

THE DRAPER: I am sure I sold it to him. Ah, but this may be just a cooked-up story. Tell me, have you a goose on the spit?

GUILLEMETTE: A goose on the spit! No-o-o-o, not on the spit! You are the nearest.... But I've had enough of this. Get out and leave me in peace.

THE DRAPER: Maybe you are right. I am commencing to doubt it all. Don't cry. I must think this over for a while. But... I am sure I had six yards of cloth... and he chose the blue. I gave it to him with my own hands. Yet... here he is in bed sick... fifteen weeks. But he was at my shop a little while ago. "Come to my house and eat some goose," he said. Never, never, will I trust any one again.

GUILLEMETTE: Perhaps your memory is getting wobbly with age. I think you had better go and look before you talk. Maybe the cloth is still there.

*(Exit THE DRAPER, across the front stage and into his shop.)*

PATELIN *(getting up cautiously and speaking low)*: Is he gone?

GUILLEMETTE: Take care, he may come back.

PATELIN: I can't stand this any longer. *(Jumps out.)* We put it to him heavy, didn't we, my pretty one, eh? Ho, ho, ho. *(Laughs uproariously.)*

THE DRAPER *(coming from his shop, looking under the table)*: The thief, the liar, the liar, he did buy... steal it? It isn't there. This was all sham. Ha, I'll get it, though. *(Runs toward PATELIN's house.)* What's this I hear... laughing!... the robbers. *(Rushes in.)* You thieves... I want my cloth.... *(PATELIN, finding no time to get back into bed, gets hold of the broom, puts the frying pan on his head and begins to jump around, straddling the broom stick. GUILLEMETTE can't stop laughing.)*

THE DRAPER: Laughing in my very nose, eh! Ah, my money, pay....

GUILLEMETTE: I am laughing for unhappiness. Look, how the poor man is, it is you who have done this, with your bellowing.

PATELIN: Ha.... Where is the Guitar?... The lady Guitar I married.... Ho, ho. Come, my children.... Light the lanterns. Ho, ho, ha.... *(Stops, looking intently into the air.)*

THE DRAPER: Stop your jabbering. My money! Please, my money... for the cloth....

GUILLEMETTE: Again.... Didn't you have enough before? But.... Oh....  
(*Looking intently at him*) Now I understand!!! Why, I am sure of it. You are mad... else you wouldn't talk this way.

THE DRAPER: Oh, Holy Saints... perhaps I am.

PATELIN (*begins to jump around as if possessed, playing a thousand and one crazy antics*): Mère de dieu la coronade... que de l'argent il ne me sonne. Hast understood me, gentle sir?

THE DRAPER: What's this? I want my money....

GUILLEMETTE: He is speaking in delirium; he once had an uncle in Limoges and it's the language of that country.

(*PATELIN gives THE DRAPER a kick and falls down as if exhausted.*)

THE DRAPER: Oh! Oh! Where am I? This is the strangest sickness I ever saw.

GUILLEMETTE (*who has run to her husband*): Do you see what you have done?

PATELIN (*Jumps up and acts still wilder*): Ha! The green cat... with the draper. I am happy.... (*Chases THE DRAPER and his wife around the room. GUILLEMETTE seeks protection, clinging to THE DRAPER.*)

GUILLEMETTE: Oh, I am afraid, I am afraid. Help me, kind sir, he may do me some harm.

THE DRAPER (*running around the room with GUILLEMETTE clinging to him*): What's this? He is bewitching me.

PATELIN (*trying to explain the signs to THE DRAPER, who retreats. PATELIN follows him, whacking the floor and furniture and occasionally striking THE DRAPER. Finally THE DRAPER gets on one side of the bed, and PATELIN on the other. In that position he addresses him in a preachy, serious voice*): Et bona dies sit vobis magister amantissime, pater reverendissime, quomodo brulis?  
(*Falls on the floor near the bed as if dead.*)

GUILLEMETTE: Oh, kind sir. Help me. He is dead. Help me put him to bed.... (*They both drag him into bed.*)

THE DRAPER: It were well for me to go, I think. He might die and I might be blamed for it. It must have been some imps who took my cloth... and I came here for the money, led by an evil spirit. It's passing strange... but I think I had better go. (*Exit.*)



(THE DRAPER goes to his shop. GUILLEMETTE watches, turning every moment to PATELIN who has sat up in bed, warning him not to get out.  
When THE DRAPER disappears, she turns around and bursts out laughing.)

PATELIN (*Jumping out*): Now, wife, what do you think of me, eh?  
(*Takes the cloth.*) Oh! Didn't we play a clever game? I did not think I could do it so well. He got a hot goose, didn't he? (*Spreading the cloth*) This'll do for both and there'll be a goodly piece left.

GUILLEMETTE: You are an angel. Oh, ho! And now let us go and begin to cut it up.

(*Both exit, and the curtain is drawn.*)

## Scene IV: The street scene.

(THE DRAPER *comes from the shop with a piece of cloth under his arm. He is much upset. Looks once more under the table for the cloth which PATELIN took.*)

THE DRAPER: These hounds.... I'll get them yet. Here's a fine piece of cloth! Only the fiend himself knows who took it—and then that shepherd. To think of it... robbing me for years. But him I'll get surely. I'll see him hanged, yet. (AGNELET *appears from the other side.*) Ah, here he comes....

THE SHEPHERD (*stutters, thick voice; a typical yokel*): God give you a good day, sweet sir. I greet you, good sir.... I was not sure it was you, good sir....

THE DRAPER: You were not, eh? You knave; but you will soon know for certain... when your head is on the gallows... high up...

THE SHEPHERD: Yes, good sir... no... I saw the constable... and he spoke to me that you want to see me.

THE DRAPER: Oh, no! Not I, my fine thief... but the judge.

THE SHEPHERD: Oh, Lord! Why did you summon me? I don't know why. I never killed your sheep.

THE DRAPER: Oh, no, you are a saint. It's you, you mangy dog... all the while you were robbing me of my sheep. But now you'll pay for it with your head. I'll see you hanged.

THE SHEPHERD: Hang by the neck! Good Master, have pity.

THE DRAPER: Pity, eh? And you had pity when you were robbing me of my cloth... I mean my sheep. Thief, scoundrel, you robber... where is my cloth... my sheep?

THE SHEPHERD: They died of sickness, sir....

THE DRAPER: You lie, you caitiff, you stole them, and now....

THE SHEPHERD: It is not so, good Master. I swear. On my soul....

THE DRAPER: You have no soul, you thief. By all the saints, I'll see you dangling this Saturday....

THE SHEPHERD: Good and sweet Master, won't you please make a settlement... and not bring me to court?

THE DRAPER: Away, you thief. I'll make you pay for those six yards... I mean those sheep. You just wait. (*Walks off in a fury.*)

THE SHEPHERD: Oh, Lord! I must quickly find a lawyer.... I've heard of Master Patelin... they say no man is better at gulling. It's here he lives. (*PATELIN comes just then from his house. When he sees AGNELET he tries to get back, fearing it may be THE DRAPER, but on hearing his voice he stops.*) Ho, there, Master! Is it you who are Master Patelin, the lawyer?

PATELIN: What is it you want of him?

THE SHEPHERD: I have a little business for him.

PATELIN: Oh! is it that! Well, I am Master Patelin. Good man, tell me the nature of your business. Is it anything pertaining to the law?

THE SHEPHERD: I'll pay well.... I am a shepherd, good Master. A poor man, but I can pay well. I need a lawyer for a little case I have.

PATELIN: Come this way, where we can talk lower. Some one might overhear us... I mean disturb us. Now, good man, what may your business be?

THE SHEPHERD: Good Master Lawyer, teach me what to say to the judge.

PATELIN: What is it you have done, or has some one done you an injustice?

THE SHEPHERD: Must I tell you everything... exactly as it happened?

PATELIN: You can tell me the truth. I am your lawyer.... But, good friend, counsel is costly.

THE SHEPHERD: I'll pay all right. It's my master whose sheep I stole who summoned me to the judge. He is going to have me hanged because I stole his sheep. You see.... He paid like a miser.... Must I tell you the truth?

PATELIN: I have told you once. You must tell me how everything really happened.

THE SHEPHERD: Well... he paid like a miser... so I told him some sheep had the hoof sickness and died from it... and I buried them far... far... away, so that the others shouldn't get it. But I really killed them and ate the meat and used the wool for myself—and he caught me right so that I cannot deny it. Now I beseech you... I can pay well—though he has the law on his side... tell me... whether you cannot beat him. If you can, I'll pay you in fine, gold crowns, sweet Master.

PATELIN: Gold crowns!!! H'm, what's your name?

THE SHEPHERD: Agnelet, a poor shepherd, but I have a few crowns put aside. You just...

PATELIN: What do you intend to pay for this case?

THE SHEPHERD: Will five... four crowns be enough, sweet sir?

PATELIN (*hardly able to contain himself for excitement*): Ah!... Hm... well... that will be plenty seeing that you are a poor man. But I get much greater sums friend, I do.... Did you say... five?

THE SHEPHERD: Yes, sweet sir.

PATELIN: You'll have to make it six. I may tell you, though, that your case is a good one, and I am sure to win it. But now tell me, are there any witnesses the plaintiff can produce? Those who saw you killing the sheep?

THE SHEPHERD: Not one...

PATELIN: That's fine.

THE SHEPHERD: But more'n a dozen.

PATELIN: That's bad. Hm, let me see now... no... (*He seems to hold a deep and learned debate with himself.*) No... but.... The book says otherwise. (*Suddenly his face lights up.*) I've got it... aye, what a wonderful idea! Two ideas in one day! You can understand a sly trick, can't you, fellow?

THE SHEPHERD: Can I? Ho, ho, ho, ho....

PATELIN: But you'll pay as you promised.

THE SHEPHERD: Hang me if I don't. But I can't pay if I hang, ho, ho, ho....

PATELIN (*gleefully*): Now, first, you have never seen me; nor heard of me....

THE SHEPHERD: Oh, no, not that....

PATELIN: Silent until I have finished. Second you mustn't talk a single word but "Baa." (*Imitating the bleating of a sheep*) Only bleat like your

sheep. No matter what they talk to you. Just say Baa.... Even if they call you an idiot, or villain, or fool, don't answer anything but Baa... just as if you were a sheep.

THE SHEPHERD: Oh, I can do that.

PATELIN: Even if I talk to you, say nothing but Baa.... And if they split roaring at you, just say Baa.... The rest you leave to me. I'll get you out for certain.

THE SHEPHERD: I'll surely not say another word. And I will do it right proper.

PATELIN: Your case is as good as won. But don't forget the seven gold crowns.

THE SHEPHERD: I'll sure not, wise and sweet Master Patelin.

CRIER (*is heard from afar*): The court, make room....

PATELIN: Ah, here they come. Don't forget Baa.... I'll be there to help you. And... the money... don't forget that.

*(Attendants, Constables, Town Clerks and Villagers enter.*

*Two Clerks carry a seat for THE JUDGE, which is placed in the centre of the stage.*

*THE JUDGE, fat and grouchy, comes to the front, looks about for a moment, then goes to his seat and sits down.)*

THE JUDGE: If there is any business to be done, come to it; the court wants to adjourn.

PATELIN: May heaven bless you and grant you all you desire.

THE JUDGE: Welcome, sir. May the saints give you plenty of clients.

*(THE DRAPER now comes running in. PATELIN suddenly realizes that it is against him that THE SHEPHERD must be defended and expresses uneasiness. He hides himself behind the crowd.)*

THE DRAPER: My lawyer is soon coming, Your Worship. He has a little business elsewhere which is detaining him.

THE JUDGE: You must think I have nothing to do but to wait for your lawyer. You are the plaintiff, aren't you? Bring your complaint. Where is the defendant?

THE DRAPER: Right there, Your Worship; that lummox shepherd, who has been hiding behind that good citizen there as if he couldn't say Baa.... But, Your Honour, it's in fear of justice.

THE JUDGE: Both being present! I will examine you. ( *To THE DRAPER*)  
Tell me all the facts of your case. Was he in your hire?

THE DRAPER: Yes, Your Lordship. He killed my sheep and after I treated him like a father....

THE JUDGE: Did you pay him a good wage?

PATELIN (*edging up sideways, and covering his face with his hand*): Your Lordship, I have heard it said that he never paid him a copper for his work.

THE DRAPER (*recognizing PATELIN*): By all that's holy.... You....!!!???'Tis he and no other.

THE JUDGE: Why do you cover your face, Master Patelin?

PATELIN: Oh, Your Lordship, I have a terrible toothache.

THE JUDGE: I am sorry for you, for I had one myself the other day. I'll tell you a fine cure, Master. Hold your feet in cold water wherein are three hoofs of a red cow from Gascogne. This'll draw the ache into the nails of your toes and you can then rid yourself of it with great ease by cutting them. 'Tis a sovereign remedy. Try it and see, Master. But let us go on. Come, Master Draper, I am in a hurry.

THE DRAPER (*not heeding THE JUDGE but still staring at PATELIN*) It's you, isn't it? It's to you I sold six yards of cloth. Where is my money?

THE JUDGE: What is that you are talking about?

PATELIN: His mind is clouded, Your Lordship. He is not accustomed to speaking clearly. Perhaps the defendant will enlighten us. You....

THE DRAPER: I am not speaking clearly!! You thief... liar....

PATELIN: Your Worship, I think I understand him now. It's strange how incoherently those who have no legal training speak. I think he means he could have made six yards of cloth from the sheep the shepherd is supposed to have stolen or killed.

THE JUDGE: Aye, so it would seem. Come, Master Guillaume, finish your tale.

PATELIN: Get to the facts as the judge directs you.

THE DRAPER: And you dare talk to me like that!

THE JUDGE: Master Guillaume, come to your sheep.

*(During the rest of the court scene PATELIN works always so as to attract the attention of THE DRAPER every time he tries to talk of his sheep, and so diverts his attention from that and leads him to talk of the cloth. Whenever THE DRAPER talks of his case, PATELIN either sticks his face up to him or places himself in such a position that THE DRAPER must see him.)*

THE DRAPER: You see, Your Lordship... he took my six yards of cloth this morning... the thief....

THE JUDGE: Do you think I am a fool? Either you come to the point or I'll dismiss the case.

PATELIN: Your Worship, let us call the defendant. He, I am sure, will speak clearer than this draper.

THE JUDGE: Yes, that will be wise. Step forward, shepherd.

THE SHEPHERD: Baa... aa....

THE JUDGE: What's this? Am I a goat?

THE SHEPHERD: Baa... aa....

PATELIN: Your Lordship, it seems this man is half-witted and thinks himself among his sheep.

THE DRAPER: He can talk, and he is not half-witted, either... but a thief like you. It was you who took my cloth!

THE JUDGE: Cloth! What are you talking about, anyhow? Now, you either get back to your sheep or I'll dismiss the case.

THE DRAPER: I will, Your Lordship, though the other lies as near to my heart, but I'll leave it for another time. That shepherd there... he took six yards of cloth... I mean, sheep. Your Honour must forgive me. This thief... my shepherd, he told me I would get my money... for the cloth as soon... I mean this shepherd was to watch over my flocks and he played sick when I came to his house. Ah, Master Pierre.... He killed my sheep and told me they died from hoof-sickness... and I saw him take the cloth... I mean he swore he never killed them. And his wife swore he was sick and said he never took the cloth.... No, that shepherd there.... He took the sheep and made out that he was crazy.... I don't know what....

THE JUDGE (*leaping up*): Keep quiet; you don't know what you are talking about. You are crazy. I have listened to your idiotic talk about

sheep, and cloth, and wool, and money. What is it you want here? Either you answer sensibly, or... this is your last chance.

PATELIN: There is surely something strange about this poor man's talk, and I would advise that a physician be consulted. At times, though, it seems as if he were talking about some money he owes this poor shepherd.

THE DRAPER: You thief! You robber! You might at least keep quiet. Where is my cloth? You have it.... You are not sick.

THE JUDGE: What has he? Who isn't sick? Are you going to talk of your business or not?

THE DRAPER: He has it, certain. But I'll speak of this later. Now, I'll attend to this thief, this shepherd.

PATELIN: This shepherd cannot answer the charges himself, Your Lordship. I will gladly give my services to defend him.

THE JUDGE: You won't get much for your pains.

PATELIN: Ah, but the knowledge that I am doing a kind and honest deed, and then I may be able to stop this haggling which annoys Your Lordship so much.

THE JUDGE: I'd be greatly thankful.

THE DRAPER: You'll defend him... you thief... you...

THE JUDGE: Now, Master Guillaume, you keep quiet or I'll have you put in the stocks. I have listened long enough to your idiotic gab. Proceed, Master Patelin.

PATELIN: I thank Your Lordship. Now, come on, my good fellow. It's for your own good I am working as you heard me say. Just because I would do you a kind deed. Answer everything well and direct.

THE SHEPHERD: Baa... aa...

PATELIN: Come, I am your lawyer, not a lamb.

THE SHEPHERD: Baa...

PATELIN: What's Baa... ? Are you crazy? Tell me, did this man pay you money for your work?

THE SHEPHERD: Baa...

PATELIN (*seemingly losing his temper*): You idiot, answer, it's I, your lawyer, who is talking to you. Answer.

THE SHEPHERD: Baa...



THE DRAPER ( *who has listened open-mouthed and bewildered*): But, Your Lordship, he can talk when he wants to. He spoke to me this morning.

PATELIN (*severely*): Everything happened to you this morning, Master Joceaulme. Now it seems to me, it would be far wiser for you to send this shepherd back to his sheep; he is used to their company far more than to that of men. It does not look as if this fool had sense enough to kill a fly, let alone a sheep.

THE DRAPER: You... you... robber... liar!!!

THE JUDGE: I honestly think they are both crazy.

PATELIN: It seems as if Your Lordship is right.

THE DRAPER: *I am crazy!?! You scoundrel! You robber! Where is my cloth? They are both thieves....*

THE JUDGE: Keep quiet, I say.

THE DRAPER: But, your Lordship!

THE JUDGE: All you get is vexation, in dealing with dolts and idiots, so says the law. To finish this wrangling the court is adjourned.

THE DRAPER: And my cloth... my money... I mean my sheep! Is there no justice? Will you not listen to me?

THE JUDGE: Eh, listen to you, you miser? You dare scoff at justice? You hire half crazy people, and then you don't pay them; then you bellow something about cloth which has nothing to do with the case and expect me to listen to you?

THE DRAPER: But he took my cloth... and he killed my sheep. I swear to you. There he stands, the thief. (*Pointing to PATELIN*)

THE JUDGE: Stop your bellowing. I discharge this half-witted shepherd. Get home and don't ever come in my sight again no matter how many bailiffs summon you.

PATELIN (*to THE SHEPHERD*): Say thanks to His Lordship.

THE SHEPHERD: Baa....

THE JUDGE: By all the saints, never have I come upon such a nest of idiots!

THE DRAPER: My cloth gone... my sheep....

THE JUDGE: Huh! You.... Well, I have business elsewhere. May I never see your like again. The court is adjourned. Good day, Master Patelin.

PATELIN: A joyous day to you.

(All leave except PATELIN, THE DRAPER, and THE SHEPHERD.)

THE DRAPER: You thieves... you scoundrels! You.... You....

PATELIN: Don't shout yourself hoarse, good Master Joceaulme.

THE DRAPER: You stole my cloth and played crazy... and now it was because of you that I lost my sheep....

PATELIN: A fine tale! Do you think any one will believe you?

THE DRAPER: I am not blind. Didn't I see you dancing this morning? I saw you....

PATELIN: Are you so certain? Good sir, it may have been Jean de Noyon. He resembles me very much.

THE DRAPER: But I know you when I see you. You screamed and acted mad, shouting a tale of dogs and...

PATELIN: Perhaps you imagined it all. Go back to my house and see if I am not *still* there.

THE DRAPER (*looks much puzzled*): I'll go to your house and if I don't find you there, I'll go to the judge and see to it that he listens to my story. I'll get a lawyer from Paris. (*To THE SHEPHERD, who has been standing at a safe distance*) You thief! I'll get you yet. (*To PATELIN*) I'll go to your house now.

PATELIN: That's a wise action.

(Exit THE DRAPER.)

PATELIN: Now, Agnelet, my fellow. What do you think of me? Didn't we do a fine piece of work?

THE SHEPHERD: Baa....

PATELIN: Yes. Ho, ho—wasn't it great!

THE SHEPHERD: Baa....

PATELIN: No one is near now; your master is gone. It was a great idea, wasn't it, this legal stroke? You may speak now without fear.

THE SHEPHERD: Baa...

PATELIN: I said you could speak without fear, no one is near. Where is the money?

THE SHEPHERD: Baa...

PATELIN: I can't stay with you all day. What is this game?

THE SHEPHERD: Baa...

PATELIN: How now? Come, I have business elsewhere.

THE SHEPHERD: Baa...

PATELIN: What do you mean? You are not going to pay?

THE SHEPHERD (*with a grin*): Baa...

PATELIN: Yes, you played your rôle well, good Agnelet. But now it's over. Next time you may count on me again. Now my money; the six crowns.

THE SHEPHERD: Baa...

PATELIN (*sees the game now, stops. In a somewhat pathetic voice*): Is that all I am going to get for my work?

THE SHEPHERD: Baa...

PATELIN (*getting furious*): I'll have a bailiff after you, you thief... you scoundrel... you robber....

THE SHEPHERD: Ho, ho, ho... Baa...! The judge said I need never come back. And—ho, ho, ho, I never knew you... Baa... aa...! (*Runs out.*)

PATELIN (*silent for a time, then grinning pathetically*): Alas! 'Tis only paying me in my own coin... Nevertheless 'twas a fine idea... (*Exit.*)