

# The Darning Needle

There was once a darning needle who thought herself so fine that she imagined she was a sewing needle.

'Just take care of what you're holding!' the darning needle said to the fingers that took it out. 'Don't drop me! If I fall on the floor I am capable of never being found again, I am that fine!' 'That's pushing it a bit!' the fingers said, and gave her waist a squeeze.

'Just look, here I come with my retinue!' the darning needle said and pulled a long thread after herself, though not one that had a knot.

The fingers guided the needle straight towards the kitchen-maid's slipper, where the leather upper had split and now was to be sewn together again.

'This is a base task!' the darning needle said. 'I'll never get through, I'll snap! I'll snap!' – and then she snapped. 'I told you so!' the darning needle said, 'I'm too fine!'

Now she's no use for anything, the fingers thought, but they had to go on holding her, the kitchen maid dripped sealing wax on her, and then inserted her in the front of her scarf.

'Look, now I'm a pin brooch!' the darning needle said; 'I knew I'd go up in the world; when one is something, one will always amount to something,' and she laughed inwardly for you can never outwardly see if a darning needle is laughing; there she now sat so proudly as if she was riding in a carriage and looking all around her.

'May I have the honour of asking you if you are made of gold,' she asked the pin next to her. 'You have a lovely appearance and your own head, but it is rather small! You must get it to grow more, for not everyone's end can be dipped in sealing wax!' and then the darning needle stretched up so proudly that she fell off the scarf into the sink, just as the kitchen maid was rinsing it out.

'Now we're off on a journey!' the darning needle said, 'I only hope I won't get lost!' But she did. 'I'm too fine for this world!' she said when she ended up in the gutter. 'I'm full of self-confidence though and that is always a small source of pleasure!' and the darning needle held herself erect and did not lose her good humour.

And all sorts of things sailed over it, sticks, straws, bits of newspapers. 'Just look at how they sail!' the darning needle said. 'They've no idea of what's sticking under them! I'm sticking, I'm sitting tight. Look, there a stick goes that thinks of nothing else in the world than "stick" and that is itself; there a straw floats, see how it turns, she how it sways! don't think so much about yourself, you could crash into the cobblestones! – there floats a newspaper! – everything printed in it has been forgotten yet it goes on spreading itself out! – I sit patient and still! I know what I am and how I will always stay!'

One day there was something glittering so delightfully close by, and then the darning needle thought that it was a diamond, but it was a piece of broken bottle and since it glittered the darning needle spoke to it and presented itself as a pin brooch! 'You are a diamond, I presume!' – 'Yes, something like that!' and then each believed about the other that they were really precious and they talked about how conceited the world was.

'Yes, I have lived in a young lady's case,' the darning needle said, 'and that young lady was a kitchen maid; on each hand she had five fingers, but I have never known the likes of anything

as stuck-up as those five fingers, and they were only there to hold me, take me out of the case and put me back in the case!

'Was there any glitter about them?' the piece of broken glass asked.

'Glitter!' the darning needle said, 'no, there was conceit! they were five brothers, all born "fingers", they stood erect next to each other, although they differed in length; the outermost one: *thumb*, was short and fat, he often broke ranks, and he only had one bend in his back, he could only bow once, but he said that if he was chopped off someone's hand, that person would be entirely unsuited for military service. First finger poked into sweet and sour, pointed at sun and moon, and he was the one that squeezed when they wrote; long finger looked over the other's heads; ring finger wore a gold ring round his stomach, and little finger didn't do a thing and was proud of the fact. It was all boasting and all amounted to boasting and I ended up down the drain!'

'And now we sit here glittering!' the piece of glass said. At that moment more water came into the gutter, it overflowed and carried the piece of glass off with it.

'Just look, now it's moved up in the world!' the darning needle said, 'I stay put, I am too fine, but that is my pride and most commendable too!' and it sat there erect and had many thoughts.

'I would almost believe I was born of a sun's ray, I am that fine! It would also almost seem as if the sun always seeks me out under the water. Ah, I am so fine that my mother cannot find me. If I had my old eye, which snapped, I think I might cry! – I wouldn't do so – crying isn't at all fine!'

One day some street urchins were lying raking around in the gutter, where they found old nails, small coins and the like. It was a messy pastime, but they took pleasure in it.

'Ow!' one of them said, he had pricked himself on the darning needle. 'There's a shaver here too!'

'I am not a shaver, I am a young lady!' the darning needle said, though none of them heard this; the sealing wax had fallen off it and it had turned black, but black makes one look thinner and so she thought that she was even finer than before.

'Here comes an egg-shell sailing along!' the boys said, and they fixed the darning needle to the shell.

'White walls and black myself!' the darning needle said, 'very becoming! one will be able to notice me! – I only hope I don't get seasick, for then I'll snap!' – but it didn't get seasick and it didn't snap.

'Having steel as one's stomach is good against seasickness and always remembering that one is a bit more than a human being! Now *mine's* completely gone! the finer one is, the more one can put up with.'

'Crack!' the egg-shell said, a loaded cart ran over it. 'Ooh, how it squeezes!' the darning needle said, 'How seasick I feel even so! I'll snap! I'll snap!' but it didn't snap, even though a loaded cart ran over it, for it lay full length – and there we can leave it lying!