

Hobthrush

Note: This song has a simple plucked accompaniment which could be played on violin, dulcimer or other plucked strings. Alternatively chords are suggested. The chant can be sung in between verses or throughout.



Chant:

Sto-ckings to be darned floors to be scrubbed I work my fin-gers to the

Dm A Dm A Dm A

bo - ne. bo - ne. 1. A black-bird sung - out - side the door, its voice like mol - ten

Dm A Dm A

(continue accompanying in this way)

ho - ney I said, "You'll not en - tice me out, not for gold or mo - ney, for

I have work to do in - side The li - lac tree - can bloom. I have a man - to

Gm D Gm D Gm D Gm Dm A

sa - tis - fy, a churn, a tub, a loom.

Dm A Dm A Dm

Chant:

Stockings to be darned,
floors to be scrubbed;
I work my fingers to the bone

1. A blackbird sung outside the door,
its voice like molten honey;
I said, "You'll not entice me out,
not for gold nor money,
for I have work to do inside.
The lilac tree can bloom:
I have a man to satisfy -
a churn, a tub, a loom.

2. I opened up the kitchen door:
scrubbed clean - the floor of slate;
all burnished were the candlesticks
above the glowing grate.
The saucepan was a-boiling
fresh corns upon the cob;
the water was a-scolding
in the kettle on the hob.

3. I came to love my Hobthrush well
who made my house so fine;
I left him gifts of spicy loaf
and elderberry wine:
he'd strip the beds without complaint
and polish up the floor,
until my husband caught a glimpse
of Hobthrush round the door.

4. "Ragged are his fusty clothes,
his jacket dull as sage;
tattered are his stockings,
his hat caved in with age."
I made a cap of scarlet felt
stuck with a pheasant's feather;
I knitted leaf-green stockings
sheer in any weather.

5. I cut a coat of velvet brown;
and left all by the hearth.
I came down in the morning
to the smell of fresh-turned earth.
The jacket gone, the stockings gone,
and gone the soft brown coat,
my house a mess - the liquid song
had left the blackbird's throat.