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## *The Brave Little Tailor*

adapted for the stage from the Grimms fairy tale by Brian Guehring  
a play for 4-16 actors

Draft # 4.05

Everyday, the small, meek tailor in the village are bullied by his boss, smothered by his mother, and harassed by customers. This young tailor, however, dream of fighting dragons and during one vivid fantasy he manages to kill seven flies in one blow. Rumors buzz around the village until the king hears of a tailor who can kill seven giants in one blow. The tailor is brought before the cowardly king and his beautiful step-daughter. This meek tailor then must find his own courage (with the help of the princess) and battle a rampaging unicorn, two troublesome giants, and a fierce dragon.

The original script was developed through improvisational workshops in the fall of 2004 at the Omaha Theater Company. This 60 minute play was then produced by the Omaha Theater Company for Young People for school groups and public audiences in January 2005 with the following cast and production team:

### CAST:

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Little Tailor  | <b>Katie Grant</b>      |
| Master Tailor, Baker, King, Unicorn, Big Giant, Dragon | <b>Andrew McGreevey</b> |
| Ma, Jam Seller, Lady in Waiting, Princess, Dragon      | <b>Stephanie Kidd</b>   |
| Jester, Baker's Wife, Bigger Giant, Dragon             | <b>Konrad Case</b>      |

### PRODUCTION TEAM:

*Director:* **Janeve West**                      *Costume Designer:* **Kathryn Neary**  
*Set & Light Design:* **Mark Lewis** *Development Dramaturg:* **Michael Miller**

This next productions of this play included a Youth Production of Omaha Theater Company for Young People in the summer of 2008 with a cast of 20 young actors, a professional touring production with four actors by the Walnut Street Theater in Philadelphia during the 2008-2009 school year, and a large cast youth production by Town Hall Theatre in Dayton, Ohio during the fall of 2008.

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# *The Brave Little Tailor*

## **Characters**

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Little Tailor        | A small young man in his late teens. He is a dreamer, but he has been told his entire life that he is too small and too young to do anything. Therefore he has become unsure of himself. He is now an apprentice at the town's tailor shop to support his mother. He is an excellent fly swatter. |
| Ma                   | The tailor's over protective mother. She won't tell her son why her husband left, but she is terrified that her son might leave and be killed. She is also afraid to be left alone. She loves her son dearly.   |
| King                 | The inept ruler of the kingdom. He exudes confidence. This King thinks of himself first and will do anything to save himself from danger or trouble. He appears brave, but is actually quite spineless.   |
| Princess             | The King's step-daughter. She is good hearted and positive. She believes strongly in the tailor. She will become a good ruler, concerned more about the safety of the people than herself   |
| Jester               | The court jester who speaks the truth through verse. He is also the narrator of the story who pushes the characters along   |
| Master Tailor        | The overconfident, overbearing owner of the tailor shop.  |
| Baker's Wife         | An overbearing woman who believes the customer is always right and the employee is always wrong.  |
| Jam Seller           | A pushy, poor jam seller  |
| Baker                | The shy town baker  |
| Lady in Waiting      | The terrified lady of the court   |
| Unicorn <sup>1</sup> | A magical creature, normally harmless, who is on a rampage and destroying the town (and the Giant's farm)   |
| Giants <sup>2</sup>  | Two cruel, dim giants who bully the townspeople into providing them with food. They are bitter rivals.  |
| Dragon <sup>3</sup>  | A huge, ancient dragon who is a constant threat to the kingdom  |

## **Locations:**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Ye Olde Tailor Shoppe | an old shop full of clothes and fabrics. |
| the Town Square       | the gossip center of the village         |
| The King's Court      | the royal throne room                    |
| The Woods             | home of the unicorn                      |
| The mountain          | home of the giants                       |
| The Dragon's Lair     | home of the dragon                       |

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<sup>1</sup> possibly an actor in costume with canes in front to create 4 legged unicorn (a la Lion King)

<sup>2</sup> possibly actors with huge platform-esque shoes and oversized clothes or puppets

<sup>3</sup> possibly a huge puppet with one actor manipulating head and other actors manipulating wings

## Possible Doubling for a different sized Cast:

- Cast of 4: Little Tailor  
Master Tailor/Baker/King/Unicorn/Big Giant/Dragon  
Ma, Jam Seller, Lady in Waiting, Princess, Dragon  
Jester, Baker's Wife, Bigger Giant, Dragon
- Cast of 5: Little Tailor  
Master Tailor/Baker/King/Big Giant/Dragon  
Ma/Lady in Waiting/ Dragon  
Princess/Unicorn /Jam Seller  
Jester/Baker's Wife/ Bigger Giant/ Dragon
- Cast of 6 Little Tailor  
Master Tailor/King/Dragon  
Baker/Unicorn/Big Giant/Dragon  
Ma/Lady in Waiting/ Dragon  
Princess/Unicorn /Jam Seller  
Jester/Baker's Wife/ Bigger Giant/ Dragon
- Cast of 9: Leads: 5 Brave Little Tailor, Princess, King, 2 Jesters (split lines into two parts)  
Chorus/Puppeteers: 4 Lady in Waiting/Dragon  
Ma/Jam Seller/Dragon  
Master Tailor/Baker/Bigger Giant/Dragon  
Baker's Wife/Unicorn/Big Giant/Dragon
- Cast of 13: Leads: 7 Brave Little Tailor, Princess, King, 4 Jesters,  
Chorus/Puppeteers: 6 Lady in Waiting/Dragon  
Ma  
Master Tailor/Big Giant/Dragon  
Baker's Wife/Dragon  
Baker/Bigger Giant/Dragon  
Jam Seller/Unicorn/ Dragon
- Cast of 16: Leads: 7 Brave Little Tailor, Princess, King, 4 Jesters,  
Chorus/Puppeteers: 9 Lady in Waiting/Dragon  
Ma  
Master Tailor/Dragon  
Baker's Wife/Dragon  
Baker/Dragon  
Jam Seller/ Dragon  
Big Giant/Townsperson  
Bigger Giant/Townsperson  
Unicorn/Townsperson

**\*to accommodate more actors, the Jester part can be split into 2 or 4 parts and the lines divided among the performers**

**\* with a large cast Lady in Waiting can be added into the Throne Room scenes and given a couple of the King's lines.**

**\*with a large cast, townspeople can be added to react to the King's speeches**

## *The Brave Little Tailor*

### Scene 1: Ye Olde Tailor Shoppe

*(The play opens with a simple little tune playing as the LITTLE TAILOR is working at the tailor shop. The LITTLE TAILOR isn't great at sewing, he often messes up or pricks a finger. But HE works hard, take his time, and does a good job. The JESTER is sneaking around and spying on the LITTLE TAILOR. The JESTER nods his heads and addresses the audience)*

JESTER

Have you ever felt tiny, little or small?  
Or heard "you're too young to do anything at all!"  
Have you been scared of something much bigger than you?  
Or felt there was nothing little old you could do?

Well don't be fooled by appearances and faces,  
Courage is found in the unlikeliest places.  
And many who are big and act so powerful and brave  
When faced with real danger may meekly behave.

You see courage is something we all find within.  
Courage comes from the heart when it is genuine.  
How did I learn this and know that its true?  
I learned it from a small boy and he'll show you, too.

Let me introduce you to this boy whose story I'll share.  
He lived a long time ago, when giants weren't so rare  
He also was told he was too small and too meek  
He had no confidence and rarely would speak

But then things started to spin out of control  
He had problems and trouble, all that rigamarole  
When danger found him, what did the small boy do?  
Well, sit back and watch and soon you'll know, too.

*(The LITTLE TAILOR holds up the simple shirt he has finished. HE is very proud of it. HE then puts in the “finished pile” which is very small. The LITTLE TAILOR sighs and looks at the pile of clothes he must work on. )*

LITTLE TAILOR

Sigh, I had better work a little faster, or I'll never get home. *(starting to sew)* Cut the fabric, thread the needle, sew the cloth . The same thing everyday. I shouldn't complain. I have a simple life and a steady job. No big problems. Just rude customers, a mean boss, a smothering mother, and pesky flies. *(waving away the flies)*. Now, a brave knight has real problems: jousting in battles, protecting the people and fighting evil villains.

*(The Little Tailor starts to get into his fantasy and starts acting out the part of a knight with the needle as his sword).*

Wait? What is this? I am now being attacked by flying dragons. *(TAILOR starts treating flies like dragons)* I am surrounded. *(TAILOR ducks down away from flies)* I will have to sneak up on them... *(LITTLE TAILOR picks up bread with jam)...and... (he squishes the flies).*

*(LITTLE TAILOR looks at the dead flies)*

Hey, look at that! I killed seven in one blow! I killed seven in one blow! *(TAILOR shouts it out the window)* I killed seven in one blow!

JAM SELLER *(on street)*

What was that, kid?

LITTLE TAILOR

I killed seven in one blow.

JAM SELLER

Seven what?

LITTLE TAILOR

Oh...flies. Just flies. I just killed seven flies in one blow. Sorry. I should get back to work.

*(LITTLE TAILOR closes window)*

LITTLE TAILOR

I guess I got a little carried away there. Maybe Ma is right. I should probably stop reading those stories and putting crazy thoughts in my head. I'm such a little guy. I wouldn't stand a chance against a real dragon. I could never be that brave. Oh, well, back to work.

*(BAKER's WIFE walks by and sees JAM SELLER laughing. BAKER's WIFE is stuck up and in a hurry. She doesn't want to talk to dirty JAM SELLER)*

BAKER's WIFE

What's so funny?

JAM SELLER

Do you know the little tailor?

BAKER's WIFE

Unfortunately.

JAMSELLER

He says he killed seven flies in one blow.

BAKER's WIFE

Well, that shop is infested with flies.

JAMSELLER

Can you imagine that little runt attacking anything? He's scared of a mouse.

BAKER's WIFE

Those, too? Indeed.

JAM SELLER

Would you like to buy some jam? Just try it...

BAKER's WIFE

No.

JAMSELLER

Good day, then.

*(JAM SELLER leaves laughing. BAKER's WIFE is shaking her head as she enters the BAKERY. BAKER is working very hard and not paying a lot of attention to his wife's latest complaints )*

BAKER's WIFE

Are you even going to greet me?

BAKER

Sorry, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE

How many times do I have to tell you to talk to the customers. Make them feel welcome.

BAKER

If you say so, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE

That is why our sales are so poor.

BAKER

I'm sorry, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE

It's not all your fault, htough. The new king keeps raising the taxes. Things are so bad in this kingdom now, nobody can afford to buy anything.

BAKER

As you say, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE

I just came back from the tailor's shop. It's dreadful. The tailors are incompetent. The shop has an awful smell, and the place is infested with flies and mice. Are you listening?

BAKER

Of course, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE

The master tailor makes the little tailor take care of them. He just killed seven mice in one blow.

BAKER

Yes dear.

BAKER'S WIFE

It's the only thing he's good for. He's a terrible tailor.

BAKER

If you say so, dear

BAKER'S WIFE

Did I tell you the tailor tried to rob me? They're both crooks.

BAKER

I'm sorry, dear.

BAKER'S WIFE

Are you even listening to me?

BAKER

Of course dear.

BAKER'S WIFE

Hmph....Well, make sure you talk to the customers....

BAKER

Yes, dear.

*(BAKER'S WIFE exits to the back of the bakery where she lives with the Baker.  
A very nervous LADY IN WAITING enters)*

LADY IN WAITING

What a quaint, little, safe shop.

BAKER

Yes, dear....Oh, I mean...May I help you?

LADY IN WAITING

I thought I'd spend a day here in the country to calm my nerves. It's getting too dangerous near the palace. First there were wolves, then giants. Now a dragon is stirring again. I needed to get away from it all.

*(Pause)*



BAKER

Uh...Its no safer here.

LADY IN WAITING

Really?

BAKER

I heard the tailor shop was just robbed.

LADY IN WAITING

Robbed? Oh, dear. What happened?

BAKER

Seven crooks tried to rob it. Seven big men. The little tailor apprentice killed all of them in one blow.

LADY IN WAITING

Seven in one blow?

BAKER

Yes.

LADY IN WAITING

I thought it would be safe here.

BAKER

Would you like to buy some bread?

LADY IN WAITING

It's not safe anywhere.

*(LADY IN WAITING leaves the bakery as BAKER shrugs. JESTER comes bounding on and taps the LADY IN WAITING on the shoulder. SHE jumps and shrieks.)*

LADY IN WAITING

Don't scare me like that!

JESTER

There once was a lady in waiting  
Whose fears were quite devastating  
She jumped at each sound  
Each rumor she found  
And the jester found her fascinating.

LADY IN WAITING

Why are you following me? Is there more bad news?

JESTER

Calm your fears, now don't lose your head!  
To here I just came to buy gingerbread.

LADY IN WAITING

What has happened to this kingdom? It used to be safe. The old king knew how to deal with problems. Now there are wolves and robbers and dragons. Even the small villages aren't safe. The tailor shop here was attacked by seven giants.

JESTER

Now why would the giants steal from that shop?  
Do they make jumbo pants that are tip-top?

LADY IN WAITING

No, you buffoon! Don't you realize? The giants are going to kill us all! The tailor's apprentice killed all 7 giants in one blow. But I'm sure there are more of them out there. We're all going to die!

*(LADY IN WAITING runs off screaming)*

JESTER

Seven giants in one blow? It must be a lie.  
That small little boy could barely hurt a fly.  
But could there be more to him than I see  
Could the solution to all of our problems be he?  
I will bring him to court, that's what I'll do  
We'll test his courage and his intelligence, too.

*(JESTER scampers off)*

SCENE 3: The King's Throne

*(KING is addressing the commoners)*

KING

So have no fear, little peasants. I am a strong, fearless king. Since I took over for my father-in-law 5 years ago, our kingdom has faced many problems, but we will meet these troubles and conquer them! I assure you I will not rest, until this kingdom is safe! Now return to your homes and sleep in peace knowing that I am in charge.

*(CROWD roars and KING enters his private throne room away from the crowd  
HE is immediately nervous)*

KING

Oh, did you see the look on the peasants? They hate me! As soon as they find a strong leader, I know they'll storm the castle to overthrow me. *(taking out his escape plans)* Now if they attack from the north, I can try to escape through the secret passageway in the basement. If they storm the castle from the south, I could only use the escape route from the library.

*(JESTER comes in. KING screams in fear and hides. Then he realizes its the  
JESTER and he relaxes)*

Oh, its just you.

JESTER

Here is our inferior king  
Who is bad at almost ev'rything  
He can not fight beasts  
Or even hold feasts,  
But he's excellent at escaping!

KING

Ha! Ha! Tell me again why I don't behead you.

JESTER

How could a king feel threatened by a poor joker?  
Unless, as a ruler, he were only mediocre?

KING

I don't feel up to your confusing poetry, today, Jester. Report to me your findings of the villagers. How do they feel? Are they getting ready to revolt? Is there any one who is a threat to storm the castle? Any strong leaders out there?

JESTER

The peasants are frightened, depressed and scared;  
But not one traitorous plan have they dared.  
But rumors abound of a brave tailor, though,  
Who killed seven giants in one single blow.

KING

Seven giants in one blow? Well, bring him here, Jester. I must meet this braggart and see what everyone is talking about.

JESTER

I'll bring him to you as quick as a wink.  
And you can judge if he's a hero or fink.  
*(JESTER scatters out)*

KING

A brave warrior? That's the last thing I need. I wonder how big he is. Seven feet tall?  
*(PRINCESS enters)*

PRINCESS

Step-father, terrible news!

KING *(very scared)*

What?

PRINCESS

A unicorn is loose!

KING

Oh, I thought it was something scary.

PRINCESS

This is terrible. The unicorn is on a rampage. By the north woods.

KING

I was hunting in the north woods this morning, and I saw no rampaging unicorn.

PRINCESS

She just trampled the village farm. She destroyed the all the crops!

KING

Well, that's not my problem. The royal garden is still safe.

PRINCESS

We have to do something. The villagers are low on food as it is.

KING

I thought unicorns were supposed to be nice and kind.

PRINCESS

They are. Normally, they would never do harm to us. Something horrible must have happened. We have to do something about it. She may harm the villagers next.

KING

Don't worry, princess. There is a brave warrior in town. He killed seven giants in one blow. Such a brave man such as that is the perfect candidate to solve this problem.

*(JESTER enters with LITTLE TAILOR. The LITTLE TAILOR bows)*

LITTLE TAILOR

Your majesties!

JESTER

I'm back with the tailor as you can see  
He's a bit smaller than I thought he would be

KING

This is the man whom you spoke of? *(KING laughs)* Jester, you know how to tickle my funnybone.

LITTLE TAILOR

Your majesty?

KING

Sorry, young tailor! I have heard of your incredible exploits.

LITTLE TAILOR

You mean my tailoring skills?

KING

No, your extermination efficiency. I heard that you killed seven in one blow. Is this true?

LITTLE TAILOR

Oh, why yes I did kill seven in one blow. It's not that impressive, though.

KING

Oh come now, if it is true, it is quite impressive.

LITTLE TAILOR

Oh it is true. I killed seven in one blow. It is the most I've killed in one wave of the arm, but I've killed that many before. It usually takes me two or three swings.

PRINCESS

Really?

JESTER

Don't be so modest, tell them your tale  
How against those foes, you did not fail

LITTLE TAILOR

Well, OK. Last evening, I was working in the tailor shop, when I heard them come in. They can be really noisy and its hard to work when they are around.

PRINCESS

You weren't scared?

LITTLE TAILOR

Naw, I fight them all the time. The tailor shop seems to attract them.

KING

Really?

LITTLE TAILOR

I find the best technique is to just ignore them. Let them get comfortable, then they'll settle in and let their defenses down. Then when they least expect it, attack! I didn't mean to yell it out the window that night. I usually don't tell people about it.

PRINCESS

Why not?

LITTLE TAILOR

I didn't think anyone would care. But even I was excited that night. Seven in one blow. That was a first. Even for me.

KING

But you're so small.

LITTLE TAILOR

I am small. But I guess I never thought you had to be really big to stop them. Maybe being small makes it easier for me.

KING

It is an impressive story. I'm not sure I believe you, though. You may have made it up.

LITTLE TAILOR

No, its the truth.

KING

Well you can prove it by helping me.

LITTLE TAILOR

Anything you say.

KING

There is a rampaging unicorn in the village farm. It is very dangerous. I want you to kill it.

PRINCESS and LITTLE TAILOR

What?

KING

I'll give you 2 bags of gold to kill the unicorn.

PRINCESS

You can't kill the unicorn. It is a magical creature. My grandfather declared that anyone who harms a unicorn will be locked away in the dungeon.

KING

Well, I am the king now and I decree that this unicorn is a menace to the kingdom and needs to be killed.

PRINCESS

No! We must find out why it is so angry and upset!

KING

I have made up my mind. The unicorn must be killed!

PRINCESS

You are a terrible king!

*(PRINCESS runs out)*

KING

Children. What do they know about ruling a kingdom? So, take this royal bow and arrow and be off with you, little tailor. Go kill the unicorn.

LITTLE TAILOR

I couldn't.

KING

Of course you can, unless you've been lying.

LITTLE TAILOR

No, sir, I don't lie.

KING

Well if you can kill seven giants in one blow, then you can capture one unicorn.

LITTLE TAILOR

Seven giants? SEVEN GIANTS!

KING

Bring me back the unicorn horn, or never show your face in my kingdom again!

*(JESTER drags out the scared, dumbstruck LITTLE TAILOR )*

Now that little runt will either run away scared or be killed by that mad unicorn. Either way, I won't have to deal with him again.