

## The valiant little tailor

### Description

On a beautiful summer morning, a little tailor from Biberich was sitting on his workbench in front of his window. He was in a good mood, and while drawing his needle, he sang with all his strength an old ballad about a poor shepherd who had married the daughter of an emperor.

As he was in the last verse of his song, a peasant woman came by shouting:

– Good marmalade, for sale! Good marmalade!

This sounded good to the little tailor. He opened a window, put his head through the opening, and shouted in turn:

– This way, good woman, this way! and we'll get rid of your goods.

The woman climbed the three floors of the tailor's shop four by four, believing that she had indeed found an outlet for her business. This belief was confirmed when he made her open all her jars one after the other: plum marmalade, apricot marmalade, apple marmalade, pear marmalade, etc., etc.

The little tailor, stopping at the apricot marmalade, went and cut a wide, long slice of bread, and said to the peasant woman:

– Spread a good layer of apricot marmalade on it, and, when there was an ounce of it, bah! the day was good, it would do nothing.

The woman, who had taken the tailor's words seriously, and who thought that she was rid of at least half of her merchandise, dug into the apricot marmalade jar with her wooden spoon, and, as the tailor had asked, covered the bread from end to end.

– There! » she said, « that's enough for a kreutzer. The little tailor haggled for a moment, but finally decided to pay for his kreutzer. The peasant woman went away grumbling, but the tailor didn't pay any attention.

– It will be a little pleasant to eat, he said; but, before biting into it, I must finish my jacket.

And, in virtue of this good resolution, he put his toast near him, and continued to sew; but, as the toast was pulling his eye, he made bigger and bigger stitches. Meanwhile, the smell of the marmalade spread through the room and attracted the flies, which flew by the hundreds; so that, at the risk of what

could happen to them, the greedy ones fell en masse on the toast.

– Well, who invited you, you fools? said the little tailor.

And he tried to chase them away with a backhand. But the flies, frightened for a moment, left the toast only to return more numerous.

The little tailor feared that if he finished his jacket, no matter how big the stitches were, and if he let the flies have their way, no matter how little marmalade each one ate, he would find only the bread when the jacket was finished.

– Wait, wait, » he said, pulling out his handkerchief, « I'll give you some marmalade!

And he struck the looters without mercy.

When he had stopped striking, and all the flies that had survived the battle had risen to the ceiling, he counted the dead: there were no less than seven lying on their sides, three or four of them still wriggling.

– Decidedly, you are a proud fellow! said the small tailor in ecstasy in front of his own valour. By my faith! it is necessary that all the city knows what you have just made!

And at once the small tailor cut himself a belt from a piece of black cloth of which he was to make habit, jacket and breeches to the priest, and, on this belt, he pricked in big characters, with red thread: Seven at once!



The belt made, he buckled it round his waist, and found that he thus looked so valiant and boisterous, that he cried out:

– It is not the city alone that must know what I am, but the whole world!

Then, leaving his unfinished suit and the sheet intact, except for the belt he had borrowed, he ate the toast that had been the cause of all this excitement in the first place, and visited the house to see if he

could take anything with him. He found nothing but an old round cheese, (twice as big as an egg; so old, that it looked like a stone; he nevertheless put it in his pocket.

On his way out of town, he saw a lark struggling in a bush. He ran to the bird, saw that it was caught in the snare, pulled it out in time to save its life, and put it alive in his other pocket, closing it with a button over it.

Then he bravely set off along the path, and, as he was light and cheerful, he felt no fatigue.

His way led him to the top of a mountain, on the highest plateau of this mountain sat a giant. This giant was so big that he seemed like a living statue of which the mountain was only the pedestal. Anyone other than the valiant little tailor would have run away; he, instead, went straight to the giant.

– Hello, comrade! » he said, falling back to try to see his face. I bet you went up this mountain to see the world. I'm on my way to visit it; do you want to come with me? The giant lowered his head, looked for the little tailor with his eyes, finally found him, and, looking at him with a contemptuous air:

– You fool! » he said to him, « I'm going to go with a small man of your kind!

– Ah! that's how it is! said the little tailor.

And, opening his pourpoint, he proudly showed the colossus his belt, on which were written these words: Seven at once!



The giant read them, thought they were seven men whom the little tailor had killed at once, and felt a certain regard for him. However, he wanted to put him to the test, and, taking a stone in his hand:

– Here, do this, » he said.

And he crushed it so that drops of water came out.

– Well, » said the little tailor, « is that all? With us, this is called a child's game.

And, drawing his cheese from his pocket, he squeezed it so tightly that the water came out between his fingers.

The giant, seeing the color, had taken the cheese for a stone. He didn't know what to say, not having believed that such a puny being was capable of such a feat.

Then the giant bent down, picked up a stone and threw it so high that the eye almost lost sight of it.

– Come on, little man, he said, try to do the same.

– Well launched! said the dwarf. But, as high as your stone went up, it had to fall down. Well, look at that. I am going to throw one, me, which will not fall again.

And, pretending to bend down and pick up a stone on the ground, he rummaged in his pocket, took the lark, threw it in the air, and it, happy to be free, went up, up again, up again, and did not come down.

– Ah! ah! » said the tailor, « well, what do you say, comrade?

– Bravo! » said the giant; « but now we'll see if you're fit to carry a certain weight.

– Put the world on my shoulder, » said the little tailor, « and I will not change it to the other side for an hour.

The giant led the little tailor to a huge oak tree that was uprooted and lying on the ground.

– Help me carry this tree out of the woods, if you are big enough, » he said.

– Gladly, answered the little tailor: put the trunk on your shoulder; I will carry the end with all the branches. You will not deny that it is the heaviest, I hope?

The giant did not deny it, put the trunk on his shoulder, while the little tailor sat quietly on a branch; and, as the giant could not turn around to look behind him, he had to carry the oak and the tailor alone, sweating blood and water, while the tailor whistled cheerfully: Three companions crossed the Rhine, cheerful and carrying their heads high!... absolutely as if carrying this enormous oak was a trifle.

After walking for some time, dragging this heavy burden, the giant, all out of breath, stopped.

– Listen, » he said, « I have to drop the tree; I can't go any further.

The tailor jumped to the ground, took the end of the last branch between his arms, as if he had always carried it and still carried it, and said to the giant:

– You are a stout-looking fellow, and yet you cannot carry your share of this tree? Come, come, you are not strong, my good man.



They continued on their way. The giant, ashamed of his disappointment, was silent, while the little tailor, alert and cheerful, went with his nose to the wind, proud of his superiority over the colossus. They passed a cherry tree. The giant took the tree by the top, where the ripest fruits were hanging, bent the top and put it in the little tailor's hand, saying to him:

– Hold this branch and let's eat some cherries.

But the little tailor was far too weak to hold the bent tree, so that when the branch straightened up, it took the little tailor off, and he went over the top of the tree and luckily fell on the other side into ploughed land, where he was not hurt.

– What is this? » said the giant. Don't you have the strength to hold this weak shrub?

– Well! replied the little tailor, it is well, when one has crushed a stone that water came out of it, thrown a stone so high that it did not fall back on the ground, carried an oak so heavy that it almost crushed you, it is well to bend an unfortunate cherry tree! No; I jumped over it, as you could see; try to do the same, you.

The giant tried; but as he caught his feet in the branches, he fell heavily and full length into the field where the little tailor had landed on his feet.

– Ah, by Jove, » he said, « since you are such a good companion, come and spend the night in our cave.

– Gladly, said the little tailor without hesitation.

And he followed the giant.

As he entered the cave, the little tailor saw a dozen giants dining. Each one was holding, by his hind legs, either a sheep, a calf, a deer or a roasted deer, and was biting into it. The little tailor looked around him, and, seeing the immense cave, said to himself:

– Pest! here is something a little larger than my workshop.

Then, taking a piece of bread and a slice of venison, he ate his supper, went to drink from the spring, and returned quietly to the cave, saying to the giant:

– Here, where shall I sleep? The giant showed him a bed that was as big as twelve or fifteen billiard tables placed one after the other. The little tailor began by stuffing himself into it; but, finding the bed too big for him, he went down the other side and elbowed his way into the alley.

When midnight came, the giant who had introduced him to his companions got up quietly and, believing him to be in a deep sleep, took an iron bar and, with one blow, broke the bed in two.

– Well! » he said after this great feat, « I think I have done with this grasshopper for once.

At daybreak, the giants left for the forest, and they had already completely forgotten the little tailor, when they saw him coming to them joyfully and singing.

– Seven at a time! » they said when they saw him; « there are only twelve of us, so he wouldn't have enough for two!

And they ran away as if they had the devil himself on their heels!

The valiant little tailor did not amuse himself by running after the giants, whose company he did not care for too much, and went on his way alone, walking straight ahead; for he did not care where he went.

After walking from daybreak until noon, he came to the garden of a beautiful palace, which seemed to him to be that of the king of the country, and, as he was tired, he lay down on the grass and fell asleep.

In the meantime, people passing by examined him, for they recognized him as a stranger, and they read on his belt: Seven in one go.

– God in heaven, » they said, « what is such a slayer doing here in the midst of peace? It must be some hero of great renown!

They went to announce it to the king, saying to him that, if some war were to break out, it would be a useful man and that it was, consequently, important not to let him leave. This advice seemed good to the monarch, who sent one of his courtiers to the sleeper, charged with making his offers to enter his service.

The envoy did not dare to wake up a man who looked so terrible, for fear that he would have a bad awakening, and he remained standing in front of him, waiting for him to open his eyes.

The tailor, after having kept the king's messenger waiting for a good hour, finally began to stretch, scratch his ear and wink. The courtier then made his commission, offering him, on behalf of the king, all sorts of advantages, if he agreed to accept a rank in the army.

– Pardieu! answered the small tailor, I came only for that; but I warn you that I will not accept a rank



below that of general in chief.

– I believe well that it is that which the king intends to offer to Your Excellency, answered the courtier; in addition, if you want to follow me to the palace, where His Majesty awaits you, you will not delay to be informed on this subject.

The little tailor, on this promise, followed the courtier to the palace. The king awaited him; he received him with the greatest honors, gave him the title of provisional general-in-chief, assigned him a salary of twenty thousand florins and lodged him in one of his castles.

But all the other officers of the crown were very indisposed against him; they were jealous of this rapid fortune, and would have wanted him at all costs.

– What will become of us? they said to each other. If we ever have a quarrel with such a fellow, he is capable, if he strikes, of killing seven of us with each blow; that is what none of us can allow. They then resolved to all go to the king, and to give His Majesty a collective resignation.

– We are not made, they said, to live with a man whose motto is: Seven at a time!

The king was very distressed to see that, for a man of such great value undoubtedly, but on the whole of so mediocre appearance, he was going to lose his most faithful servants; he cursed the facility with which he had fallen in love with the newcomer, and admitted aloud that he would have liked to be rid of him; but he did not dare to give him his dismissal, because he feared that he would rout his army, would not stun his people and would not take away his throne.

After much hesitation, he finally came up with an idea. He told the little tailor that, since he was such a great hero, the state of peace in which we lived must be tiresome for him, and that, if he was, he had a proposal to make.

– By my faith, said the small tailor, I began to be tired myself of my laziness and ashamed of my idleness. Tell the king that I will go, as soon as I have had my breakfast, to listen to the proposal that he has to make to me.

But the king did not care to be in front of such a terrible man. He told him not to bother, and that he would receive his proposal at home.

Indeed, the same courtier who had come the first time to seek the small tailor, reappeared before him. He was in charge of the proposal of the king.

The king informed his general-in-chief that in a forest of his kingdom, of which he had sent him a map, there lived two enormous giants who lived only on blood and robbery, fire and sackcloth, and who were causing the greatest ravages in the country.

They were so dreaded that no one dared to cross this forest, or if someone crossed it by chance, he considered his life in danger as long as he did not leave it.

If he killed these two giants, he would give his only daughter in marriage, and she would bring him half his kingdom as a dowry. Besides, the king offered the valiant little tailor a hundred horsemen for help and escort.

– Oh! oh! said the one to whom this proposal was made, here is something that suits me perfectly! I know the giants, I have had dealings with them and I care about them like that. The little tailor clicked his thumb.

– And the proof, » he continued, « is that I have no need of the hundred horsemen that the king has offered me. I will go to the giants alone, I will fight them alone and kill them alone: he who kills seven at once is not afraid of two giants.

So the little tailor set out, and as the king had insisted on the hundred horsemen, he left them at the edge of the forest, saying to them:

– Stay here; I'll send the two fellows away, and when it's over I'll come back and tell you.

The hundred horsemen, who did not ask for anything better than that their general-in-chief do the job alone, remained at the edge of the forest, while he bravely dashed into the thickest of the thicket.

But, as he advanced into the forest, he slowed his pace, looking cautiously around him; so that he finally caught sight of the two giants, who were lying asleep under a tree and snoring away.

The little tailor, who was not lazy, did not lose a moment; he stuffed his pockets with stones and climbed the tree at the foot of which his enemies were lying, a tree which, by chance, was so branchy that it was almost impossible to see him through the foliage.

When he reached half the height of the tree, the little tailor crawled on a branch and stopped just above the face of the sleepers, and from there dropped a stone, then two, then three on the eye of one of the giants.

This one, at the first, felt nothing; at the second, almost nothing; but, at the third, which was a little bigger, he opened his eye, and pushed his neighbor, saying:

– Why do you amuse yourself by tickling my nose while I sleep? It annoys me.

– You are dreaming, » replied the other. I sleep with my fists closed and don't think of tickling you.

And the two giants went back to sleep.

Then, the small tailor threw on the chest of the second giant a stone, then two, then three.

–What does that mean, » asked the second giant, « and what are you doing to my chest?

– In truth, » replied the other, « I don't care for you any more than I do for the Great Turk. And they exchanged some more sharp words; but, as they were both tired, they went back to sleep a second time.

The little tailor then chose his biggest stone and threw it with his greatest strength at the nose of the first giant.



– Ah! it is too strong! cried this one while jumping on his feet like a furious, and, this time, you will not say that it is not you!

And he fell upon his companion, who, already in a bad mood himself, returned his blows without explanation, so that by dint of hitting each other, they soon entered into such a rage, that they tore up the trees to make clubs, and knocked each other down until both fell dead.



Then the little tailor, jumping presciently down from his tree:

– I am very lucky, » he said to himself, « that they did not pull down the tree on which I was perched. I would have had to jump like a squirrel on the neighboring tree; but bah! I am so light!

He drew his sword, gave each of the two giants a pair of enormous blows to the chest, then left to join his escort.

– La! » he said to the horsemen, « that's done. I dispatched my two rogues; it was hot there; but what could they do against a man like me, who kills seven at once?

– Are you not wounded, general? asked the horsemen.

– Good! that's all we need, answered the valiant little tailor; thank God they didn't touch a single hair on my head.

The horsemen could not believe what they were hearing; but, at the urging of the little tailor, who was leading them, they entered the forest, where they found the two giants bathed in their blood, and all around them the trees uprooted and the earth completely shattered.

The horsemen looked at each other, saying with their eyes:

– Peste! It seems that it was hot. What a fellow our general-in-chief was!

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The little tailor cut off the two heads of the two giants, attached them to the saddle and rode back into the city in triumph, followed by his hundred horsemen.

The king, hearing of his return from a messenger that the tailor had sent to greet him on his behalf and announce the victory, came to meet him at the edge of the forest.

There, the little tailor demanded from him the fulfillment of his promise, that is to say the hand of his daughter and the abandonment of half of his kingdom; but, as the king regretted to have made this promise :

– ‘Before I give you my daughter and half my kingdom,’ he said to him, ‘you must perform one more brilliant deed.

– What? » asked the little tailor.

– In another of my forests, answered the king, there is a unicorn which causes enormous ravages; it is necessary that you bring it to me alive for my menagerie.

– I make fun of the unicorn, neither more nor less than of the two giants; seven at once! it is my currency, said the small tailor.

He took two ropes of equal length and a wagon, harnessed to two oxen, to put the unicorn in when it was taken, and kept his hundred horsemen, not to help him take the unicorn, but only to guide him to the forest where he hoped to meet it.

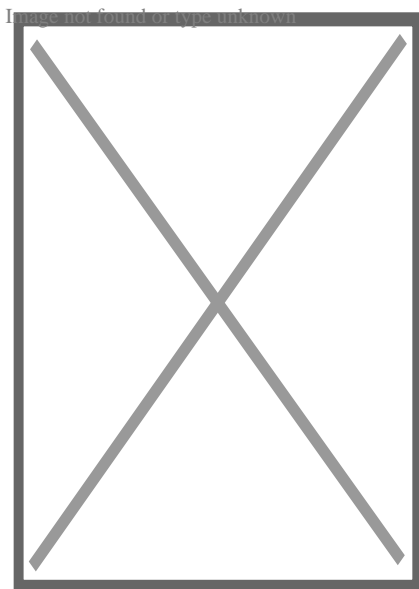
Once in the forest, he did not need to look for her long. The unicorn, on seeing him, ran at him to pierce him.

– Very soft, very soft, the beautiful! says the small tailor, let us not go so quickly.

And he stopped against a tree, waited until the unicorn was no more than ten steps away from him, and passed quickly to the other side of the tree. The unicorn, which was coming to pierce him, stuck its horn so deeply into the tree that before it had time to pull it out, the little tailor had tied its four legs with its two ropes.

– Ah! I’ve got the bird, » he said, coming out from behind his tree. And, with the point of his sword, he freed the horn from the tree. The unicorn, feeling its horn released, wanted to flee; but, as it had the four legs solidly bound, it fell to the ground and could not get up. Then the little tailor returned to his riders and said:

– Bring the cart, the beast is taken.



And they put the unicorn in the cart, and the little tailor brought it back to the king. However, the king did not want to give the winner the doubled salary and he put a third condition on it.

Before celebrating his marriage, the little tailor had to get control of a huge boar that was not inferior to the one in Calydon.

This boar caused great damage in a third forest belonging to the king. The king hesitantly made this proposal to the little tailor; for he felt that the latter, if he were of bad will, was entitled to refuse it; but the little tailor, always valiant, answered:

– Gladly, sire; by my faith, it is a child's game to take the boars.

The king gave him the hundred horsemen; but, as for the unicorn, as for the two giants, the little tailor did not allow them to enter the wood. He entered alone, to their great satisfaction, because they knew the boar: once they had tried to take him and he had received them in such a way as to remove the desire to return.

The valiant little tailor, who believed that courage does not exclude caution, began by getting acquainted with the place.

He found that about a hundred paces from the boar's crib there was a small Gothic chapel with windows so narrow that one had to be slim and trim as he was to pass through them. An entrance closed by a good oak door was opposite the windows.

– Good! said the little tailor, here is a mousetrap all found.

And, from the threshold of the chapel, he began to throw stones with all his strength into the bramble where the boar was standing. One of these stones hit the monster. It stood up on its hind legs, and then it seemed to the little tailor that his enemy was four feet high. As for its size, it was in proportion.

But none of this frightened the little tailor, who continued to attack the animal, while provoking it with

his cries.

The boar looked around with its small eyes covered with long hair, but shining under those long hairs like carbuncles.

Then, seeing the little tailor, he melted on him while making clack his teeth.

But just as the boar was entering the door, the tailor was leaving through the window. The boar tried to do the same, but the window was too narrow.

While the boar was trying in vain to get through the opening, the tailor quickly went around the chapel and came back to close the door, so that the boar, as the tailor had said, was indeed caught as if in a mousetrap.

Then the little tailor led his hundred horsemen to the chapel, so that they could see his prisoner. Then he went with them to the king, telling him that he did not have to worry about the boar any more, and that in eight days the monster would be dead of hunger, unless he preferred to go and shoot it himself, for his pleasure, through the windows of the chapel

This time, the king had to surrender, and he finally gave his daughter to the valiant little tailor along with half his kingdom. It goes without saying that he did not do this without regret; but, if he had known that, instead of being a great warrior, his son-in-law was only a poor little tailor, he would have had even more regret!

The marriage was made with great magnificence, but with little joy, on the part of the bride and the father-in-law at least; because, for the people, it was very satisfied to see itself protected by such a valiant defender.

Some time after, the young queen heard in the night her husband who dreamed aloud.

– Boy, » he said, « finish me this jacket and mend me these breeches, otherwise I will give you of my aune on the ears.

She saw in which alley her husband was born, and the next day she went to tell her father everything, asking him to rid her of a husband so unworthy of her. The king consoled her.

– Leave the door of your bedroom open next night, he said to her; my servants will stand in the corridor, and, when your husband is asleep, they will garrote him, and we will embark him on a ship that will carry him to the other end of the world.

This word made the young woman very happy, for she had only married the little tailor under duress. But the king's squire, who had heard everything and who had befriended the little tailor because of his courage, told him the whole plot.

– That's fine, » said the valiant little tailor.

And in the evening, he went to bed as usual, next to his wife. When she thought he was asleep, she got up, opened the door softly and went back to bed without a sound.

The little tailor, who was pretending to be asleep, then said aloud:

– Boy, finish me quickly this breeches, and mend me this vest, otherwise I give you of my aune on the ears; me, meanwhile, I will give a good beating to those who come to stop me. Mordieu! I killed well seven of them at once! I exterminated well two giants! I garroted well the unicorn! I took well the boar! and I would be afraid of this heap of mirmidons which is in front of my door! Come on, seven at once, he shouted, seven at once!

On hearing these terrible words, which promised them a swift and inevitable death, especially according to what they knew, or rather what they thought they knew of the strength and courage of the little tailor, those who had come to arrest him fled in all haste and as if they had had an army on their heels, so that, in the future, no one dared to rub shoulders with King Seven-One-Two, for that was what the people called him.

A year later, the old king died, and to the delight of the people, King Seven-One-Two inherited the other half of the kingdom.

I know where this excellent king reigns, my dear children; only I do not want to say, since they live so happily under his laws, that, if his residence were known, all the other peoples would desert their kingdom to go and live in his.

*German tale from the fourteenth century collected by the Grimm brothers and translated by Alexandre Dumas. Public domain illustrations: Arthur Rackham and others.*

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