



The Brave Tailor: a spooky tale

This story is adapted from a traditional Scottish tale (often known as *The Sprightly Tailor*)

In days gone by tailors would often travel from house to house making clothes as they went...

Props: musical percussion instruments of various kinds (see notes at the end), a waistcoat

[‘Stage directions’ are in brackets]

The Story

Jack was a tailor.

A travelling tailor.

He stopped at every house and made clothes for all the people. [Knock on different surfaces to indicate different houses.]

And the thing he made best was waistcoats. [Show everyone a waistcoat]

One day he went further than he had ever been before [knock loudly] – to the castle way up on the moor.

‘Come in. Come in,’ said the king. ‘Come in. I have heard about your waistcoats. Make me a waistcoat and I will give you five golden coins. But only if you make it in the dark tower.’

Now the dark tower was very dark.

And the dark tower was very windy [make the noise of the wind by whistling]

And the dark tower was full of spiders [make spidery noise by rubbing hands together]

And the dark tower was full of rats. [Make rat noise by ‘scrabbling’ fingers against the seat of your chair.]

And the dark tower was full of ghosts [make ghost noise]

[You could ask for other suggestions at this point and create sound effects to go with them.]

But the tailor didn't care. He didn't care one little bit.

He went pit-pat-pit-pat-pit-pat up the stairs to the top of the tower. [Tap hands on knees to make going-up-the-stairs noise.]

And it was dark.

And windy [wind noise]

And full of spiders [spider noise]

And rats [rat noise]

And ghosts [ghost noise]

But the tailor he just sat down and began to sew.

Stitch, stitch, twist, button. Stitch, stitch, twist, button. [Mime 'stitching' and 'twisting' with pretend needle in your hand.]

[Bones noise]

'What was that? What was that noise?' said the tailor

'It's my bones. Do you hear that tailor? Do you hear that?' said a voice from nowhere. [In a monster voice.]

'I do' said the tailor. 'I do. I hear that very well. I hear that, but I stitch this.'

Stitch, stitch, twist, button. Stitch, stitch, twist, button.

[Brains noise]

'What was that? What was that noise?' said the tailor

'It's my brains. It's my brains rattling in my skull. Do you hear that tailor? Do you hear that?'

'I do' said the tailor. 'I do. I hear that very well. I hear that, but I stitch this.'

Stitch, stitch, twist, button. Stitch, stitch, twist, button.

[Teeth noise]

'What was that? What was that noise?' said the tailor

'It's my teeth. It's my rattling teeth. Do you hear that tailor? Do you hear that?'

'I do' said the tailor. 'I do. I hear that very well. I hear that, but I stitch this.'

Stitch, stitch, twist, button. Stitch, stitch, twist, button.

[Feet noise]

‘What was that? What was that noise?’ said the tailor

‘It’s my feet. It’s my two muckle feet. And I’m coming to get you. Do you hear that tailor? Do you hear that? It’s my bones [noise] and my brains [noise] and my teeth [noise] and my two muckle feet [noise]. And I’m coming to get you tailor. I’m coming to get you. Do you hear that?’

‘I do’ said the tailor. ‘I do. I hear that very well. I hear that, but I stitch this.’

Stitch, stitch, twist, button. Stitch, stitch, twist, button. Stitch, stitch, twist, button. Stitch, stitch, twist, button. [Getting faster and faster]

The tailor finished the waistcoat, he ran down stairs. Pit-pat-pit-pat-pit-pat. [Very fast hands patting on knees]

He ran to the king:

‘Here’s your waistcoat king. Here it is!’

And the king gave him his five golden coins.

And the tailor set off down the road. And never saw the monster again. And lived happily ever after.

Notes on telling

Encourage your audience to join in as much as possible; for example with the noises in the tower and the ‘stitch, stitch, twist, button’.

The ‘stitch, stitch...’ refrain can be tapped out on the back of someone’s hand, if it seems appropriate. One finger taps for each ‘stitch’, the ‘twist’ is a wee circle ‘drawn’ with the finger and the ‘button’ another tap: tap, tap, circle tap; tap, tap, circle, tap. This will help anyone with more complex needs to be included in the rhythm of the story. Linger on the quiet ‘stitch, stitch’ bits of the story to mark the contrast with the loud scary monster.

The ‘stitch, stitch...’ refrain should get fast and frantic as the monster approaches, and the running down stairs should very fast. The breathless climax of the story is when the tailor flings the waistcoat to the king. Then there should be a wee pause before the king brings out the five gold coins.

The audience can help to make the monster by taking turns with the different instruments.

Notes on the Props

If possible use a real waistcoat. Old waistcoats fit in well with the atmosphere of the story. Vintage clothes shops usually have a good supply.

The instruments I use are as follows:

Bones: a wooden 'football rattle', of the kind that twists around and makes a ratchet sound.

Teeth: a wooden guiro

Brains: a seed shaker

My two muckle feet: small drum

However if you already have a music box then you can use whatever you have and just improvise. Brains might jingle instead of rattle, toe nails might clatter, and ears could flap in the breeze...! This story is very adaptable!

You could also add in:

A wee jingly pouch of money for the 'golden coins'

A big shiny cloak and crown for the king. [Choose someone to act out the role of the king]

A nice long measuring tape for the tailor. [Do lots of measuring at the beginning of the story]

I love to get feedback for my stories. If you have any comments or questions at all please just send me an email at: info@flotsamandjetsam.co.uk