

A KNIGHT IN WELL WORN ARMOR

a play in one act

by Bethany Ferson

## CHARACTERS

**LITTLE ONE:** Female, age 8, old soul in a young body, has depth of character and is drawn to others who also reflect that.

**OLDER SISTER:** Female, age 15, exuberant, attracted to the glit and glamour of the attractive young knights.

**FATHER:** Male, early 40's, has a solid head upon his shoulders

**YOUNG KNIGHT:** Male, handsome, youthful and haughty.

**FLOWER SELLER:** Male, age unspecified.

**OLD SOLDIER:** Male, late 40's but aged beyond his years. Salt and pepper hair and beard. His skin is rough, made that way by years spent in harsh conditions, and many small scars crisscrossed it. A black cloth is tied around his head, completely covering his right eye.

**FAN GIRLS:** Three to four – a small crowd of young females.

**EXTRAS:** Peasants, lords, and ladies of all ages and walks of life.

## SETTING

Medieval spring festival. Vibrant colored tents, a flower sellers' stand, and a small jousting arena.

## TIME

Daytime in the spring of a temperate climate.

**SCENE 1**

(Spotlight on downstage right, dim lights over rest of stage. **FATHER**, **LITTLE ONE**, and **OLDER SISTER** enter from downstage right. **LITTLE ONE** is holding **FATHER**'s hand as they walk slowly towards down center stage. **OLDER SISTER** stays with them until downstage right center, then begins to look and move about on her own, enraptured by the sights around her. Behind them, **EXTRAS** walk quickly across from center stage and upstage right, to exit upstage and center stage left. Behind them is a long white screen/curtain stretched the full length of the stage.)

**LITTLE ONE**

(Looks at **EXTRAS** worriedly, holding tighter onto **FATHER**'s hand)

**FATHER**

(Looks down at **LITTLE ONE** with a smile)

It's alright, Little One, I'll let not you be lost. Your mother would have my hide!

**OLDER SISTER**

(Comes bounding back to **FATHER** and **LITTLE ONE**)

Look at all these people! I wonder where they all come from! Oh! Look at that knight and his horse! He must be one of the contestants for the jousting tournament. Isn't he magnificent?

(Lights fade to dark except for spotlight on family which goes dim. **FATHER**, **LITTLE ONE**, and **OLDER SISTER** walk from down center to up center stage. Shadow outline of **YOUNG KNIGHT** and a horse appear behind the white curtain from upstage right. **YOUNG KNIGHT** walks with head held high as **FAN GIRLS** follow along behind him, twittering, giggling, and waving their handkerchiefs when **YOUNG KNIGHT** looks at **FAN GIRLS**, wearing a knowing smirk when he looks forward again. Light fades back up as they walk off upstage left revealing the outlines of brightly colored tents on both side of stage and a short fence from upstage right center to upstage left center.)

**LITTLE ONE**

(Tugs on her **FATHER**'s sleeve)

Father, will anyone be hurt?

**FATHER**

It's a possibility, love.

**LITTLE ONE**

Then why do they do it?

**FATHER**

Many reasons. Could be for money, fame, the thrill of the sport, or because they've got something to prove, either to themselves or others.

(**FATHER** places a tender hand upon **LITTLE ONE**'s head, giving her dark locks a gentle tousle)

But don't worry too much, Little One. I'm sure they'll be alright.

**OLDER SISTER**

(Bounces up and down excitedly on her heels)

Can we look at the knights now? Please?

**FATHER**

(Laughs)

Alright, but don't get too far away from me. Heaven knows what will happen if we're separated.

(**LITTLE ONE**, **FATHER**, and **OLDER SISTER** begin walking from up center towards downstage left, **OLDER SISTER** acting exuberant, pointing and gesturing. Many **EXTRAS** mill about the stage, interacting with each other and the scenery as if at a fair. Downstage right as a small stand with flowers. **FLOWER SELLER** stands behind it with a bright smile, showing and selling his flowers to the **EXTRAS**)

**OLDER SISTER**

(Notices the **FLOWER SELLER**)

OH!!! Father! Father, look! Can I buy some flowers, please? I brought a little money with me, can I father? Please!

**FATHER**

What do you want flowers for, my dear?

**OLDER SISTER**

To give to the knights when they enter the ring.

**FATHER**

I don't think you'll be able to just hand it to them. But since you're using your own coin, I suppose it could do no harm. Just don't spend it all.

**OLDER SISTER**

(Bounds happily over to flower stand)

**FATHER**

(Shakes his head as he watches **OLDER SISTER**, then looks down at **LITTLE ONE**)

Heaven help me if you turn out like your sister.

**LITTLE ONE**

Is what she's doing bad, Papa?

**FATHER**

No, not bad. Just silly.

**LITTLE ONE**

Oh. I won't be silly when I grow up, Papa. I promise.

**FATHER**

(Laughs)

Thank goodness for that! Let's follow your sister, shall we?

(**FATHER** and **LITTLE ONE** walk to down center, **OLDER SISTER** runs over to join excitedly, bouquet of flowers in her hand.)

**OLDER SISTER**

I should have enough for all of them now!

**FATHER**

I thought I said not to spend all your coin?

(**LITTLE ONE** lets go of **FATHER'S** hand and makes her way to the flower stall)

**OLDER SISTER**

I didn't, I have a little left.

**FATHER**

How much?

(**FATHER** and **OLDER SISTER** continue to squabble silently as **LITTLE ONE** reaches the flower stall. Lights go dim until only light is on **FLOWER SELLER** as he smiles kindly down at **LITTLE ONE**)

**FLOWER SELLER**

What can I do for you, young one?

**LITTLE ONE**

May I have a flower please?

**FLOWER SELLER**

Do you have any money?

**LITTLE ONE**

(Shakes her head)

**FLOWER SELLER**

(Looks behind him where a small pile of wilted flowers lay. He selects a large purple flower from the bunch which still had some life left to it, and hands it to the small child)

**LITTLE ONE**

(Smiles)

Thank you, sir!

**FLOWER SELLER**

(Pats **LITTLE ONE** on the head with a smile)

You're welcome, deary. Off with you now.

**LITTLE ONE**

(Holding her flower protectively before her, **LITTLE ONE** rushes back to her father's outstretched hand at downstage right center.)

(Stage lights up. Fence and flower stall is gone and now there is a line of tents down the center of stage, tents on the sides can be shuffled or remain the same. Down center has a small table to the left side of the front tent. **EXTRAS** mill about between the rows of tents. **YOUNG KNIGHT** and **FAN GIRLS** positioned between center and center stage left center)

**OLDER SISTER**

(Looks excitedly at the tents, pointing at them as they walk along the first row of tents.)

(**FATHER** and **LITTLE ONE** walk along behind her, **LITTLE ONE** keeping her flower close to her chest. At center stage right, **OLDER SISTER** see **YOUNG KNIGHT** and **FAN GIRLS** and darts off through the tents, disappearing into the **FAN GIRLS** crowd)

**FATHER**

Hey! Hold on now!

(Walks around to down center where the table is, stopping for a moment as he realizes how thick the crowd of **FAN GIRLS/EXTRAS** are around the **YOUNG KNIGHT**'s tent)

For goodness sake.

(Notices the table at down center and leads **LITTLE ONE** over to it. Takes **LITTLE ONE**'s shoulders in his hands as he kneels before her.)

Hold onto this table leg and do not let go of it for anything. I will come back for you once I have your foolish sister in hand. Understand?

**LITTLE ONE**

(Takes hold of the table leg)

Yes, Papa.

**FATHER**

Good girl, I'll be right back.

(**FATHER** stands and tries to make his way into the crowd, stage lights begin to go dim except for downstage)

**LITTLE ONE**

(Looks around anxiously, rising light over downstage left captures her attention)

**OLD SOLDIER**

(Downstage left a small weathered and worn tent sits. **OLD SOLDIER** sits on a short stool by a low table, the armor that he is taking great pains to polish is dented and nicked. It has been to battle, been repaired, and seen battle yet again for a good many years by the look of it. A row of uncolored lances stand against the tent beside a worn shield. A gleaming sword lies on a small table at his side. The **OLD SOLDIER** does not so much as spare **LITTLE ONE** a glance as he labored as hard as he could to make his armor regain some of its lost shine)

**FATHER**

(**FATHER** comes back from the dim light, **OLDER SISTER**'s hand firmly in his grasp, but she looks to be closer to laughter than tears. **FATHER** reaches for **LITTLE ONE**'s hand)

Let's get going, Little One.

**LITTLE ONE**

(Points towards **OLD SOLDIER**)

Papa, who is he?

**FATHER**

Who?

(turns to see **OLD SOLDIER**, understanding washing over his face)

**FATHER**

He's an old soldier, Little One. One who's come back from the war.

**LITTLE ONE**

What war, Papa?

**FATHER**

(releases his hold on **OLDER SISTER**'s hand, kneeling before **LITTLE ONE**)

Long before you were born, there was a great war.

(spotlight only on downstage, light rises from behind white curtain at back of stage, dark silhouette miming out scenes of **FATHER**'s words)

Many men were recruited to fight; some willingly, some not. Many of them lost their lives, and a great many more came back wounded or scarred, inside and out. He is one that has come back alive from the war, but not without cost. That cloth around his head means he can't see out of his one eye anymore. But they fought for this country, they fought for this people, for their families, for all to have a life to live. He's a hero, Little One, worthy of respect, no matter how he looks. He's given more than you can ever guess or know, so you and I can live.

**LITTLE ONE**

(lights come up, looks over at **OLD SOLDIER**, then looks around as her **FATHER** stands, taking note that none of the **EXTRAS** seem to give the **OLD SOLDIER** more than a glance.)

(**FATHER**, **OLDER SISTER**, and **LITTLE ONE** walk downstage along as **EXTRAS** fill in the spaces on downstage, making the crowd seem thicker, until the three of them are forced to walk single file through the throng. A man in a hurry bumps into **LITTLE ONE**, moving on without even sparing her a glance. The purple flower she'd been holding slips from her grasp from the jostle and **LITTLE ONE** hurriedly walks back and kneels to pick it up before it can be trampled. **FATHER** and **OLDER SISTER** fade away into the crowd until they disappear offstage. Standing, **LITTLE ONE** turns to **FATHER** at downstage right center but he is not there; neither is **OLDER SISTER**. **LITTLE ONE** tries to push her way forward, but is forced back by the sheer amount of **EXTRAS**. **LITTLE ONE** can only move back and forth with the flow of the crowd, desperately clutching her flower close to her chest to keep it safe until she is finally able to escape the flow of the crowd. **EXTRAS** start to thin a little, moving back towards rows between tents.

Lights dim except for downstage. **LITTLE ONE** begins to look a little panicked and in obvious distress as being lost and alone. Passing her arm across her eyes to wipe her eyes, she bites her lips, stands up straighter, and starts to make her way into the crowd, looking for her family, occasionally calling out for **FATHER**, until she ends up at downstage left center and sees **OLD SOLDIER** still working on his armor and weapons. **LITTLE ONE** looks around once more, looks at the flower in her hands.

Everyone freezes and all sounds stop. Stage lights go dark. Spotlight on **OLD SOLDIER**. Sound effects of young men panicking and dying in war, with panicked horses, clashing of steel. Smoke/ fog effect behind **OLD SOLDIER**. After three beats, sound effects and fog immediately cut off, and stage lights return as **LITTLE ONE** walks over to stand before **OLD SOLDIER**)

#### **OLD SOLDIER**

(Does not acknowledge **LITTLE ONE** for a few moments, then stops his polishing and looks up curiously at the child before him)

#### **LITTLE ONE**

(Takes a deep breath and extends the flower to **OLD SOLDIER**)

For you, hero. Thank you.

#### **OLD SOLDIER**

(Hesitantly, **OLD SOLDIER** extends his hand and gently takes the flower from **LITTLE ONE**. He twirls it slowly between his fingers, looking to be caught up in an old memory or thought. Stepping to the side, **LITTLE ONE** sits down and takes up his helmet and runs a dirty rag across it. **OLD SOLDIER** gently sets the flower on his little table and watches **LITTLE ONE** work for a few moments

before going back to his equipment. A good while passes in silence as they work together to get him ready for the tournament. Soon the horns rang out, signaling for the people to assemble at the castle's arena.)

**EXTRA**

The jousting tournament is about to begin. All contestants are to come to the arena, ready to joust.

**OLD SOLDIER**

(Stands and begins to put on his armor. **LITTLE ONE** steps up on the stool, then the table, holding the helmet at the ready for him. **OLD SOLDIER** notices, and hesitantly leans his head forward for **LITTLE ONE** to place the helmet on his head. She does so as carefully as she can. **LITTLE ONE** and **OLD SOLDIER** share a smile)

**FATHER**

Little One!

(Rushes forward from behind one of the tents to **LITTLE ONE**'s side, taking her off of the table.)

Thank goodness we found you! We've been worried sick!

(**OLDER SISTER** walks out from behind same tent, obviously not quite as worried as her father about her sister's welfare and stands behind **FATHER** keeping an obvious distance between her and **OLD SOLDIER**. **FATHER** faces **OLD SOLDIER**)

**FATHER**

I hope she wasn't bothering you.

**OLD SOLDIER**

No, not at all.

(**OLD SOLDIER** gives a short but sincere bow to **LITTLE ONE**)

Thank you for your aid, little missy.

(**OLD SOLDIER** turns and walks off downstage left.)

**OLDER SISTER**

(**OLDER SISTER** waits until **OLD SOLDIER** is gone, then loops her arm through **FATHER**'s, pulling him forwards. Tents along centerstage are gone and fence is back. Lights go up on stage showing **EXTRAS** lined up along the fence already, facing the white screen)

Come on! We'll miss the opening ceremonies at this rate!

(**FATHER**, **OLDER SISTER**, and **LITTLE ONE** try to make their way towards the fence through the crowd of **EXTRAS** and **FAN GIRLS**. As they push through the crowd, the sounds of jousting can be heard overhead and the **EXTRAS** cheer while others moan at the results. **FATHER**, **OLDER SISTER**, and **LITTLE ONE** finally manage to find a place just at up center stage along the fence. The outline of **YOUNG KNIGHT** on a horse appears behind the curtain on upstage right. **FAN GIRLS** and **OLDER SISTER** as well as random **EXTRAS** cheer wildly at his appearance. He waves to the crowd. **OLD SOLDIER** and his horse's outline appear on screen on upstage left. **FATHER**, **LITTLE ONE**, and a few more **EXTRAS** cheer and clap for him. **OLDER SISTER** does little more than give a lackluster clap.)

**LITTLE ONE**

(Tugs on **OLDER SISTER**'s sleeve, making her bend down so she can hear her over the din of the crowded arena.)

Why aren't you cheering for the hero?

**OLDER SISTER**

What? You mean that old man in dinged up armor on that shabby horse?

(scoffs, looking over at **YOUNG KNIGHT** preparing to charge **OLD SOLDIER**)

He's not going to win. He's hardly even presentable. I don't understand why they would let him in when there are so much better men out there. Do you understand, Little One?

**LITTLE ONE**

(**LITTLE ONE** doesn't answer but looks out to where **OLD SOLDIER** is readying to charge his opponent.)

**OLD SOLDIER**

(**OLD SOLDIER** holds his shield and lance at the ready in fingers that knew their weight and handling well. His horse might not have been as beautiful as the rest, but he knew his master's commands and was not afraid of heading into battle. When the two knights hit and lances shattered, it was not the **OLD SOLDIER** that was knocked but the **YOUNG KNIGHT** from his seat. **OLD SOLDIER** doesn't so much as flinch when the blow comes. An awed hush falls over the crowd as the **YOUNG KNIGHT** rises from the dirt.)

**LITTLE ONE**

(**LITTLE ONE** looks at her sister whose eyes are open wide, her mouth hung open just the slightest bit in disbelief. **LITTLE ONE** smiles at her sister's goofy face.)

Now I understand. I understand you're being silly.

**END**