THE EMPEROR’S NEW CLOTHES

CAST
NARRATOR
THE EMPEROR
HIVES, The Butler
SNIP and STITCH, The Tailors
VARIOUS COURTIERs/COUNSELORS/SUBJECTs

1 NARRATOR: Once upon a time in a faraway land there lived
2 an emperor who was very vain. All he cared
3 about in the world were his fine clothes, and
4 all he thought about was how to get finer
5 ones.

6 EMPEROR: Now, what’s this called again?

7 HIVES: A zoot suit, your majesty.

8 EMPEROR: There, how does it look?

9 HIVES: Very becoming, your majesty.

10 COURTIERs: “Very nice”, “Lovely”, etc.

11 NARRATOR: He was always the first to take up the latest
12 fashion; he was never satisfied with anything
13 less than the best.

14 HIVES: Your Nehru jacket has arrived, your majesty.

15 EMPEROR: Splendid, help me on with it. Well, what do
16 you think?

17 HIVES: On you it looks good, your majesty.

18 COURTIERs: “Very nice”, “Lovely” etc.

19 NARRATOR: The emperor’s fame as a lover of fashion
20 spread far and wide, and one day two strangers
21 presented themselves at the palace.

22 HIVES: Messrs. Snip and Stitch, your majesty. Master
tailors.
SNIP: Snip.

STITCH: And Stitch at your service, your majesty.

SNIP: We are the finest tailors in the world, your majesty, so, of course, we wanted to serve the one person in all the world who could fully appreciate our talents.

EMPEROR: Quite right, quite right.

COURTIERS: “Quite right”, “Yes, quite right”, etc.

STITCH: We propose to create for your majesty a suit of clothes such as the world has never seen. A suit of clothes made from a singular fabric that we alone know how to make.

SNIP: This cloth is fashioned from diamonds—

STITCH: And gold—

SNIP: Rubies, pearls—

STITCH: And gold—

SNIP: Emeralds, amethysts, opals—

STITCH: And gold—

SNIP: And, of course, gold.

STITCH: Of course.

EMPEROR: Oh, of course.

COURTIERS: “Of course, of course.”

SNIP: But the most remarkable property of this cloth is that it cannot be seen by fools or people who are unfit for the office they hold.

STITCH: Think of the possibilities, your majesty.


COURTIERS: “Quite right, quite right”
EMPEROR: I must have this suit. You must make it for me. Money is no object. Instruct the Imperial Treasurer that all the gold and the finest gems from the treasury shall be placed at these tailors’ disposal.

HIVES: At once, your majesty.

NARRATOR: The tailors took over a room in the palace and set to work at once. Now these tailors were not tailors at all, but swindlers who—

STITCH: I beg your pardon. Entrepreneurs.

NARRATOR: --Who were filling their own pockets with the gold and jewels given to them. Day after day they pretended to weave their remarkable cloth on looms that were, in fact, empty. They measured the emperor for a suit they would never make.

SNIP: Inseam: 22

STITCH: Inseam: 22

SNIP: Waist: 54

EMPEROR: Oh, wait, wait. (takes an enormous breath)

SNIP: Waist: 54

STITCH: Waist: 54

NARRATOR: They spent long hours in their workroom cutting and sewing nothing at all. From time to time the emperor would send members of his court to visit the tailors and report on their progress.

SNIP: See the quality, my lords? The delicacy of the weave?

STITCH: Note the color. I’ll wager you’ve never seen color like that before.
NARRATOR: The courtiers were shocked to see nothing on the looms and nothing in the hands of the tailors. They did not want to appear fools or unfit for their offices, so ...  

COURTIERS: Lovely. Exquisite. Striking color. etc.  

NARRATOR: And when they reported back to the Emperor ...  

EMPEROR: How are my master tailors getting on?  

COURTIERS: Lovely. Exquisite. Striking color. etc.  

NARRATOR: At last the day arrived when the tailors pronounced:  

SNIP: Your majesty, your suit of clothes is finished.  

EMPEROR: Excellent! Bring it in, bring it in. Oh, Hives, help me off with this leisure suit.  

HIVES: Very good, your majesty.  

NARRATOR: With great ceremony, the tailors carried the imaginary outfit into the emperor's private chambers.  

STITCH: Here it is, your majesty.  

NARRATOR: The emperor could see nothing at all, but not wanting to be thought a fool ...  

EMPEROR: Oh, wonderful! A masterpiece!  

COURTIERS: “A masterpiece”, “Lovely”, etc.  

NARRATOR: The tailors helped the emperor to dress in his new clothes.  

SNIP: Breeches ... spats ... blouse ... weskit ...  

STITCH: Don’t forget the cummerbund, your majesty.  

SNIP: And the frock coat.  

NARRATOR: The emperor dutifully put on each invisible article of clothing they handed him.
EMPEROR: How do I look?

HIVES: Stunning, your majesty.

SNIP: Regal.

STITCH: Imperial.

COURTIERS: Oh, definitely regal. Very imperial, etc.

EMPEROR: Yes, I do, don’t I?

NARRATOR: A great procession had been planned so the emperor could show off his splendid new clothes to his subjects. People from all over the country lined the streets of the city.

The emperor appeared at the head of a long train of attendants and courtiers. The crowd could see no clothing at all on the emperor, but, disinclined to appear fools to their neighbors ...

CROWD: (half-hearted cheering: just enough so they can’t be accused of not cheering.)

NARRATOR: But one young boy, sitting on his father's shoulders to get a better view, called out:

BOY: Look, Papa, the emperor has no clothes on!

CROWD: (Gasps followed by silence)

NARRATOR: The emperor commanded his train to stop. He looked slowly down at himself, and then up at the little boy who had called out those fateful words. And then ...

EMPEROR: Guards! Away with that boy!

NARRATOR: The emperor had the boy and his entire family arrested and thrown into the dungeon, to be beheaded the next day. The procession then continued, and one by one ...
Crowd: (Cheering is much more enthusiastic than before. Continue under lines and then fade out.)

Narrator: For the rest of the people had learned, you see, the difference between seeing what you saw and saying what you saw. And they, at least, lived happily ever after.

Emperor: Hmmm. Seems a bit chilly.

Courtiers: Chilly. Yes, your majesty. Very Chilly, etc. (fade out)