



THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

In a faraway country way beyond the mountains and the sea, there was a very self-centred emperor. The only thing in the world he cared about was himself and his comfy life. Most of all, he loved his clothes. He kept changing clothes and dressing up, sometimes even a hundred times a day. All the money he got from his subjects to improve the empire, he wasted on luxuries, and especially clothes. The theatre had long since shut down because the actors couldn't afford new puppets or costumes. The army had been dissolved because the soldiers couldn't afford weapons or training. They had to sell all their horses because there was no money for hay and even the blacksmith had not made anything in a while, because he couldn't afford any iron. The people in the empire learned to fend for themselves because they expected no help from the emperor.

They lived their own ordinary lives under the castle. The most fun they ever had was meeting at the market in town. There was always a noisy crowd at the market, but the most excitement always came from foreigners bringing in a whole array of goods, such as the people had never seen before.

Once, two sly fellows pretending to be weavers appeared and went straight to the castle to see the emperor. When the guards heard that they were weavers bringing new fabrics to the emperor, they invited them in as honoured guests.

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The whole court came together to greet them with a fanfare.

“What are you bringing me, weavers? I hope it’s something special because I have very high standards,” said the emperor.

One of the clever men said: “We will weave you a fabric the likes of which the world has never seen.” The emperor smiled contentedly and listened to the weavers sing the praises of this extraordinary fabric. It was supposed to show the most beautiful colours in the world, with a pattern that nobody had ever used before. But the best came last: This fabric would be completely invisible to anyone who was stupid or lazy. If somebody wore a dress made from this fabric, he could immediately see who was dumb and who was smart, who was hardworking and who wasn’t. There was no need to continue. He immediately ordered his servants to give the amazing weavers the best lodgings and the best food and drinks.

Next morning, they took the weavers to the workshop so they could start. They asked for the finest silk and thread made of pure gold. Once they started working there was a loud racket from the weaving loom coming out of the workshop all day and all night. But in reality the looms were in fact empty. The sly men took the silk and the golden thread and hid it and they relaxed and napped for days and days with the looms weaving just air.

After a few days, the emperor decided to test his best advisor. He sent him to check how much fabric was finished. His heart was jumping with joy when he remembered that people who were stupid would never see the fabric at all. The advisor came to the door, knocked hesitantly, and waited for one of the weavers to open the door.

“Welcome, advisor,” said the weaver and invited him in. He pointed to the empty looms. “What do you think? Do you like this fabric?” he asked.

The advisor strained his eyes, then he squinted, but he couldn’t see any fabric at all. ‘Maybe I’m actually dumb, if I can’t see anything?’ he thought. He didn’t want to admit it, because the emperor could fire him if he found out.

After some time, he told them: “The fabric? Oh yes, it’s splendid. So fine and light.”

“And what do you think about this pattern?” inquired the weaver.

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“Very original. I have never seen anything quite like it,” said the advisor.

The weavers went on and on, listing the most exotic colours and decorative patterns, so that he could describe the fabric to the emperor.

The advisor went out, and on his way back he thought about what he should tell the emperor.

“So, my best advisor, have you seen the fabric?” asked the emperor.

“Yes, my lord. It’s really beautiful. I have never seen such extraordinary colours. And the print on it... so inspired. I am sure you will like it,” said the advisor uncertainly.

The emperor was very happy to hear those words and couldn’t wait for the fabric to be finished.

After some time the emperor decided to test another advisor. So he also sent him to see how the weavers were progressing. They welcomed him warmly and started explaining how their work was advancing. They told him about new pieces of the pattern and about the incredible colours. The second advisor stared at the empty looms, bulging his eyes, trying to focus, going cross-eyed, but he couldn’t see anything at all.

“Like what you see?” asked the weaver.

“Oh, yes. It is incredibly beautiful. I have really never seen such fabric anywhere in my life. The colours are unbelievable. And the softness!” the advisor gushed over nothing. In his mind, he was only asking himself what the emperor would do to him if he came back saying he had not seen any fabric. After all, he wasn’t brave enough to admit he couldn’t see it.

Soon, the whole empire started whispering about this amazing fabric. Everyone was curious about the beautiful garment that would be made from it.

One day, the emperor himself decided that he wanted to see the fabric. He called both his advisors, the servants and the guards and they all went to have a look inside the workshop. When they entered, the two advisors started raving about the fabric, and even though they were pointing at empty weaving looms, they kept admiring it. The emperor squinted, focused, gazed, but he couldn’t see any fabric at all.

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'Am I really that brainless? Am I not fit to rule? Oh, as if!' thought the emperor and joined in with the praising of the weavers, the colours and the patterns that he could not see but the advisors described to him.

"Indeed, I am very happy with this fabric," said the emperor looking at the empty looms. And so, the servants and the guards started nodding their heads appreciatively, even though they saw nothing on the looms, either. None of them wanted to lose their job.

"I will wear a garment made from this fabric at the ceremony next week," announced the emperor happily. The people in the room started clapping and whooping. They were all looking forward to the emperor's new clothes.

The day before the ceremony in town, the weavers started sewing new clothes for the emperor. They were measuring, cutting and sewing the invisible fabric with very serious and concentrated faces, as if they were really sewing.

In the morning, the emperor came with his advisors to pick up his new clothes. "Your lordship, the clothes are ready," said the weavers respectfully and pretended to hand him something. "Do us the honour of trying them on. They are as light as a cobweb, you won't even feel them on your body," said one of the weavers.

The emperor stripped down and the weavers helped him try his new clothes on. Even though their hands were empty, they acted as if they were putting on his trousers and his shirt. Finally, they also pretended to put on a cloak and tie a decorative ribbon. The emperor stood naked in front of the mirror, posing, and praising his new clothes.

"They really flatter your figure! And they fit you perfectly! The colours and the print, they really do look amazing," everyone rushed to praise him.

"Well, then I'm ready to appear in front of my subjects at the opening ceremony for the fair," said the emperor proudly.

And so, he did what he said. He went naked into streets full of people, walking as proudly as a peacock.

The crowds were gasping and shouting: "Amazing... what spectacular clothes. Don't they suit him fantastically? What a marvel."

Nobody dared admit that they couldn't see any clothes, because nobody wanted

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to admit that they were stupid.

But then, a little boy from the crowd shouted: “But the emperor is naked! He isn't wearing any clothes at all!”

And so, little by little the people started whispering that the emperor wasn't wearing anything.

And in a while, the whole crowd was shouting only one thing: “The emperor is naked!”

The humiliated emperor started thinking: ‘But how could all of these people be stupid?’

And then it hit him – these weavers were just ordinary liars who had fooled him completely. Well then, shame or no shame, the celebrations were already underway, and he had to walk his majestic walk.