

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

Not so long ago there was an Emperor who liked new clothes that he spent too much of his money on clothes, so that he could always be elegantly dressed. He didn't much care about inspecting the soldiers, nor about going to the theatre, nor about other events, unless he had something new to wear. He could change his gown ten times a day and he would still have plenty of new gowns to show off.

One day two swindlers entered the glorious city. No one noticed their appearance because so many people from all over the world came and went every day. They told everyone they met that they knew how to make the most beautiful, delicate and amazing cloth that anyone had ever seen. The clothes they made, they claimed, were so fine that they were visible only to the most refined eye and invisible to those who were unusually stupid.

The emperor was excited to see the new cloth, and paid the two swindlers a large amount to set up two looms. Then the tricksters asked for the finest gold and silk thread to be delivered. The emperor ordered it in, but little did he know that the packages of these expensive materials went right into pockets of the swindlers. They pretended to work hard at the empty looms until late at night.

"Those weavers should soon be ready with the cloth," the Emperor thought, and sent his first minister to check because he was unsure whether he would be able to see the fabrics. The Emperor waited for his minister to come back with news. The citizens of the city also couldn't wait to see whether the minister was stupid.

The honest minister went to the weavers, who were working all day at their empty looms. He couldn't believe his eyes when he saw the looms were empty and there was no fabric on any of them. "I can't see anything at all," he thought to himself, but he bit his tongue, because he was afraid to admit it and be shown to be stupid.

"Would you like to come closer and see the amazing colors and the excellent pattern," they asked.

The wise old man was speechless: he was too stupid to see the cloth! He wondered how that was possible. Of course, we know that he couldn't see anything, because there was nothing to see! "Tell us what you think of it, isn't it beautiful?" asked one of the weavers. "Oh yes, it is, of course!" The old minister was so shocked by the discovery that he was not fit to be a minister that he hurried to answer positively. "What a pattern, what colors!" The minister was looking at the empty looms. "Thank you! We work really hard to achieve such excellence," the swindlers lied and asked for more silk and gold thread, which they would again steal. "Sure," the minister said and left the room mumbling, "I'd better go quickly and tell the Emperor how impressed I am with it..."

When he returned to the palace, the first minister had no other choice but to lie, because he was considered the wisest man in the kingdom after the Emperor. He couldn't admit that he hadn't seen anything and so he said that he loved the cloth, but it wasn't quite ready yet.



The Emperor waited a couple more days, before he said another honest man to check upon the weavers' work. The man left and soon arrived, but the same thing happened to him that had happened to the minister. He gazed and he peered through the looms, but in vain. The looms were empty. Again the two swindlers waited for the visitor's opinion and again they asked "Isn't it lovely?" and "Have you ever seen such beautiful patterns before?" until the poor noble man had to nod his head in agreement. "I don't think I am stupid," the man thought, "but I don't see the clothes. That's strange. I can't let anyone find out though." He praised the invisible fabric and stated that he was very happy with the beautiful colors and unique pattern. To the Emperor he said, "I couldn't believe my eyes."

The whole town were talking about this splendid cloth, and the Emperor wanted to see it for himself while it was still on the looms. Joined by the group of trusted men, among who were the two who had been to the weavers before, he set out to see the two swindlers. He found them weaving with all their might, but without a thread in their looms. The two men who the Emperor had sent before voiced their approval at once.

"So these two can see it and I can't?" thought the Emperor. "I can't see anything. This is terrible! And they see it! That's even more terrible," thought the Emperor and nodded in approval, afraid that he might be a fool himself. He even gave the two weavers the title "Sir". Everyone else, following the Emperor's advice, started admiring the great clothes and some of the men advised his majesty to wear them on the day of the procession.

The day of the procession came and the swindlers announced that they had finished and that the Emperor's new clothes were ready!

His Majesty arrived with his noblemen as soon as he heard the news. The two swindlers acted as if they were lifting clothes from the looms and presented the garments one by one. "Here are the trousers, and this is the shirt and finally - the coat! They are so light that one would think he has nothing on, but that's why they are so exquisite." Everyone agreed, although they couldn't see anything, because there wasn't anything to be seen.

"If your Majesty would like, we will help you put on your new clothes," the swindlers said. The Emperor took off his clothes and the two men pretended to dress him and to fasten the coat, while he was looking at the mirror. When ready the swindlers said that they have never seen anyone dressed more beautifully before.

"Magnificent! That cut, the fabric, the color!" noblemen on all sides were exclaiming. When he was all dressed up, the Emperor took a last look of admiration in the mirror and certain that his new clothes looked fantastic, he started the procession. Two noblemen reached for the floor to pick up his coat as if it was really there and the procession started.

Everyone in the streets was cheering and admiring the Emperor's new clothes. "Have you seen such lovely clothes before? Aren't they perfect for him?" Although nobody could see the clothes, everyone was ashamed to admit it, for that would prove him a fool or unfit for his position.

"But he isn't wearing any clothes," a little child said. "Don't listen to him, he is a silly little boy," said the father of the child. But then another person, who heard what the child said whispered to his friend, "He has nothing on." And then a third person repeated his words and soon the whole city was crying out "The Emperor has no clothes on!"

The Emperor trembled, because he thought that the people might be telling the truth.

"Oh, well, the procession has got to go on," he thought and kept on walking proudly in his underwear, while the noblemen carried his invisible coat.